

# Censorship in the Crimean War Photography A Case Study: Carol Pop de Szathmari and Roger Fenton\*

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**Abstract:** *The research base of the present study is the censorship applied to Carol Popp de Szathmari's and Roger Fenton's photographs taken in the Crimean War. Being at its debut as war photography, photography offers a positive perspective on reality in contrast with the dramatic perspective as it was rendered in the written media by the special war correspondent William Russell Howard. The Crimean casualties were caused by epidemics and the improper organisation rather than by physical combat as such, and photography immortalises only the idyllic aspect of the troops ignoring the terrible suffering caused by the hostilities. In order to understand this contradictory aspect, an insight of the phenomenon imposes itself as a necessary requirement with a view to the clarification of the way in which censorship functioned at the time, the causes that determined it, and its influence on the way photography is understood.*

**Keywords:** *photography, Crimean War, censorship, Carol Popp de Szathmari, Roger Fenton.*

## Censorship – term definition

Etymologically, the word derives from the latin “censura”, describing the action of carrying out by a group of officials the census of the Roman population and their entire property. This was first attested in 443 B.C. (Marian Petcu 2005, 9). A

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first aspect can be depicted from this succinct definition, namely the idea of control of an individual or of a group based on information possessed by the Empire's political and administrative government. Historically, censorship preceded the theoretical frame known today and took the form of a gradual process that was not determined in any way on basis of the chronologically acquired connotations. In antiquity, the political and religious authorities applied censorship based on protective considerations, namely to prevent the reputation of an individual, of a group, and of a city from being put under threat and attack. It also implied the protection of traditional values and the promotion of moral success, elements of stability and power for the entire community. The Athenian-Spartan confrontation made Pericles declare Athens to be very different from Sparta due to the former's attitude that promoted the freedom of thought and of expression. Plato says in „The Republic“ that justice needs censorship in order to be able to protect art and politics from unworthy attitude (Seymour Martin Lipsed 1997, 189). In this respect, we can refer to the preventive aspect of censorship, which consists in the elimination of all inopportune elements subsequent to which a nation could promote cultural welfare, or welfare of any other nature, as fruit of individual or collective intellectual effort (Marian Petcu 2005, 10). Today, any democratic state takes all the necessary measures in order to protect the freedom of expression and national security. The lucrative perspective of censorship coincides with the neutralisation of that information and imagery that could lead to instigation or put human freedom under threat. The complete ban on the circulation of rumours or even of true facts which could endanger human stability in any way by inducing anxiety is justifiable. Censorship is predominantly defined according to human interaction and applied to it in hierarchic configuration, it claims a type of subordination free of demur, and it should not be confused with national security. Any state has its own code system that is meant to protect national assets irrespective of their nature, and, though kept secret from public opinion, they are not in disagreement with the government's decisions as they rely on the credibility of the constitutional policy that is applied to the benefit of all the nation's citizens. When WWI started, the British press had absolutely no restrictions imposed on it by the political and military government due to the fact that they trusted that it would preserve its sense of patriotism as it would not want to feed the public with nationally valuable information much in the tone of "L'Express"'s slogan from the early 70s, "the right to know and the courage to keep silent" (Jean-Noël Jeanneney 1997, 128). The actors who were responsible with the staging of censorship at the time were the governors and the governed, the dominant class and the exploited one. There is seldom solidarity or consensus between these parties. They obscure information from each other, each with the intention of enforcing their own decisions and gaining power, intention which, if made public, would never ensure them legitimacy.

In this sense, censorship is synonymous with the government's policy of lies and on propaganda that denies the civilians' contribution to the freedom of thought and of expression. Palliative of any form of government, political, military, religious, or civil, censorship pursues the same purpose, that of reality distortion, or of information obscuring, to which the citizens would be entitled to have access. The institutionalisation by the totalitarian regimes of censorship of either race or class has given it a pejorative meaning, in that it attached to it numerous ways of coercion that meant to annihilate any adversative message for the promotion of the cult of personality and of party monopoly.

Since this study sets as major objective a scientific approach to the censorship of early war photography, the focus being on the iconic language and on the causes underlying its transmission. During the Crimean War, photography had among other things, a documentary significance. It represents the incontestable evidence of effective participation in the event. Moving beyond the limits of the simple informative act, it indicates the venue of a specific event, speaks of the people involved in it, everything being directed towards the consolidation of its message's credibility. Through modern technology any picture can be faked or the modified. Soon after war photography had appeared, it became possible for the photographic cliché to be customised too. An clear example, which highlights the retouch techniques, can be found in "Le Monde Illustré", which published Carol Popp de Szathmari's „Palicar et tzigane", a picture taken during the Crimea War (see fig. 1). The photograph belonged to his personal album and was described by Auguste Devanux as "highly original and full of character", being also praised by the magazine as a piece that was worthy of the wealth and variety of the entire



Fig. 1. M. Ch. de. Szathmari, Palicar et tzigane, in „Le Monde Illustré", no. 28/24 octobre 1857

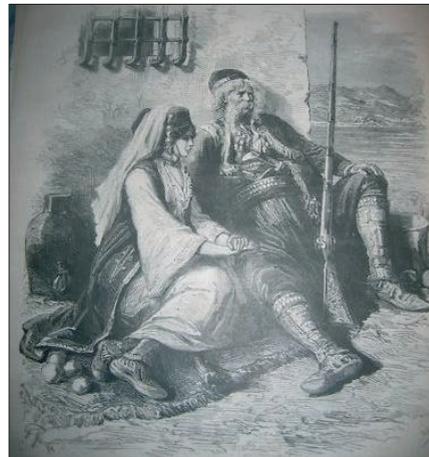


Fig. 2. Dessin de M. G. Janet d'après la croquis de M. Charles Yriarte, „Types bosniaques-Garde-frontière entre Knin et Livno", in „Le Monde Illustré", no. 967/23 octobre, 1875.

album. The photo depicts an old soldier resting his gun on his left foot while sitting on a blanket next to an olive-skinned harem girl. Eighteen years later, following the Herzegovina war, for want of a field reporter, the magazine designers took over the idea of representation from Carol Popp de Szathmari's photograph, but, applying the lithographic technique, they operated substantial changes on the background, the legend, and the characters so as to make them appropriate for the national character (see fig. 2) (Adrian Silvan Ionescu 2001, 167-168).

With the exception of art photography, in which case modification is emotionally and aesthetically motivated, newspaper photography has got to be impartial. In media photographs, visual message conditioning is achieved by means of **elimination** and **addition**.

In case of film cameras as well as in that of digital cameras, elimination procedures are enhanced primarily through framing. The frame proposes the recording of a detail taken from reality assembly which is immortalised by the objective, very much in the manner in which a piece is detached from a puzzle. Known to be an operation that is performed prior to the immortalisation of the image on the negative, after the shutter has been depressed, the framing of reality depends on the photographer's intention to mislead, or to mystify reality. If the photographer wishes to immortalise an invincible army, he will retain only the portraits of the soldiers, armed and clad in their bright uniforms, filed in orderly fashion, and will avoid images of wounded people or eviscerated bodies. The war's brutal reality, as it appears rendered by dead bodies and material waste, the grotesque and the terror of the event, may be left out, the photographer placing himself behind the combat lines, where he can focus only on troop movement, soldiers dressed in neat uniforms, or on the easy-goingness of the soldiers. The comments accompanying the photographs taken during the Crimean War were often accompanied by criticism over the elimination of the dramatic perspectives. The photographer is compared with someone watching a group of picnic goers (Fabian, R; Adam, H. C. 1983, 77), and less with a witness of some disastrous events. The addition procedure implies an intervention performed on the plane of the image meant to produce, or create a practically inexistent referent. The total reconstruction of Carol Pop de Szathmari's picture through addition distorts the text-image relation, thus infringing information deontology. The incompatibility between a present legend and a retouched image makes itself guilty of inaccurate information rendering.

### **Preliminaries**

The Crimean War (1853-1856) was started by the two great powers, Russia and Turkey, subsequently joined by other powerful countries of the time, such as Great Britain, France and Sardinia-Piedmont, excepting the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which declared its neutrality.

The conflict points out those elements that are specific of both a traditional and a modern war. From a technical and strategic point of view, the confrontation takes place based on the same principles that underlay the previous wars, with equipment consisting of swords, pistols and flintlock rifles that date back to the Napoleonic wars, to which the famous siege canons are added, the French brand, the Louis IV model, with cavalry charges and infantry attacks arranged in a perfect sequencing of parade events, accompanied by brass band music while they were making progress right towards the deadly shelling of the enemy's rifles. (Adrian-Silvan Ionescu 2001, 181). Even though in a military sense the register remains the same, due to the use of non-standard, muzzle filling weaponry, two important compartments of the extra-military domain suffer, however, substantial reformation:

**Transport.** For the first time in a large scale war, the train and the steamship are used for troop and provision transportation. A railway that connected Balaclava Gulf to Kadiköi and to the batteries of Sevastopol, and which was devised by the Irish engineer James Beatty, facilitated the transport of daily provisions – translated into figures, 112 tons of food, fodder and fuel – necessary for the troops. The steam ship, invented by Robert Fulton, an American engineer, in 1807, navigates along the eastern shores of the Black Sea, the White Sea, the Baltic Sea, and heads towards the Middle East through the Pacific Ocean, which represented a notable advantage for such a widespread distribution of allied troops inside the conflict zones. (Adrian-Silvan Ionescu 2001, 6).

**Means of communication.** Along with the use of the electric telegraph, invented by Samuel Morse (1844), photography is also used as a means of data transmission from the battlefield. Once the conflict breaks out, telegraphy will become better represented in the east. In 1855, March 10-22, Romania inaugurates the telegraph line Bucharest-Giurgiu that was to connect it with Austria and France. At this event special war correspondents such as William Russell Howard, Edwin Lawrence, Godkin, James Carlil etc. participate, sent by important newspapers such as "The Daily News", "The Times", "The Illustrated London News", "Illustrirte Zeitung", "L'Illustration", and photographer reporters such as Carol Popp de Szathmari, Roger Fenton, Robertson, Langlois, Felice Beato, Méhédin, Durand-Brager, who had come to offer valuable illustrative material (Adrian-Silvan Ionescu 2001, 24). If so far access to battlefield information had been conditioned by the transport, communication finally becomes autonomous due to electrification and manages to attain optimal speed for message transmission to distant territories.

Apart from political causes, which have led to this war, there is the incontestable reinforcement of the political-military war by the media war. According to von Clausewitz, a war's fate is determined by three important elements: the government, who defines and establishes the war objective, the army, who accomplishes it, and the human factor, who supports both (Michael Kunczik 2002, 74). The press enters

this equation as a balancing element for the force distribution regarding the access, the war message management, and the decisional factors, who often promote the executive's self-satisfaction.

For the first time in a large scale war, the conflict between the interests of the press and those of the military-political censorship became clear, the interest of the press being to inform the public in detail. Taking into account the expansionist tendencies of the Russian Empire, the joining of Turkey by the allied forces was initially encouraged and supported by the British press guided by the principle a "just and necessary war." Eventually, the catastrophes that came along with the conflict determined the press to adopt a reverse position and become the enemy of the state, stirring with this attitude the indignation of the public opinion. (Michael Kunczik 2002, 72). In this way, the press, especially the British press, was meant to be seen as an instrument of Victorian propaganda, yet also as the victim of a strong military censorship. Censorship functioned along three channel of expression:

- a. The employment inside the military batteries of a coded system of language that used symbols taken from the idyllic reality in sharp contrast with the tragedy behind the front lines. Thus, irrespective of their rank, they would all refer to war in the same ironic way by calling it "the walk", the little outing in the countryside," or by the French word "bataille." In any case, the war was defined as a competition between two sport teams with impeccably dressed players on either side. (Michael Kunczik 2002, 76).
- b. The enforcing of the "general order" rule that, on February 15, 1856 was to mark the beginning of the military censorship in press history. This rule stipulated the reporter's subordination to the military administration. Any act of insubordination brought about the reporter's expulsion, or a penal fine. The information to be published was carefully verified, the officers being allowed to adapt the news message to their own vision of the war. (Michael Kunczik 2002, 76).
- c. The sending to the war site of art reporters and of journalists under the close attendance of officers. Constantin Guy, a French artist, obtained access to the frontline and camps attended by Major Tombs and by Captain Austin. William Simpson, a lithographer, and Roger Fenton, a photographer. Beside these proofs, officers from the allied troops got the privilege to publish their correspondences, which contained information about boats, landscape descriptions, notes about cultural and regional issues and none providing concrete reference regarding the casualties and the destructions of the war. These measures were meant to put into practice what General William Codrington related in a letter to Lord Panmure: "you will destroy the rivalry for news-mongering which exists among the agents of different newspapers" (Michael Kunczik 2002, 76).

## Dramatic facts about the Crimean War

The war reportages were rather numerous at the time, yet we will only include here the information revealed by William Howard Russell, the first professional war correspondent. Delegated by John Delane, editor-in-chief with *The Times*, on basis of his remarkable experience as war reporter in Schleswig-Holstein, while relating about the Danish uprising from Idstedt and insisting on the situation of the casualties, the details Russell offered to the press about the atrocities of the war stood proof of his deep involvement and high professionalism. On September 16, 1853, he accompanied a British division to Gallipoli and Varna. He participated in the Alma conflict, in Sevastopol, Balaclava, and Inkerman. Russell managed to a great extent to stir the civilians' revolt against the present situation and to involve the British army in the conflicting territory (Michael Kunczik 2002, 71). Russell Howard succeeded in impressing by the employment of a special style, the reader getting the feeling of direct participation in the events due to the vivid depiction of the combat. The credibility of his reports was sustained by the chronological rendering of the events, Russell coming with detailed presentations doubled by strong emotional comments, as it results from "The light brigade assault," which appeared in „The Times“ on November 14, 1854. "At ten past eleven our light brigade started to move ahead. From about 1200 yards, from thirty iron muzzles, the entire enemy line was spitting fire all over them in a blaze of smoke and flame. All of a sudden among our lines breaks were created, dead men and horses, horses galloping without their horsemen across the field. Already laid to the ground but with a flash of steel above their heads, these brave men flew towards the batteries' smoke with a triumphant hurray, which, for many of them meant also their death shout. And before they vanished before the eyes, the field was already scattered fully with their dead bodies. At eleven thirty five, there was not a single living British soldier left in front of the Moscow cannons, only dying ones or mere dead bodies." (Michael Kunczik 2002, 73).

The event focuses on the extermination of one of the most famous British brigades near Sevastopol. The richness of details makes the reader absorb them rapidly, and, at the same time, integrate himself in the war atmosphere dominated by the smoke rising from the inimical explosions. Russell Howard is aware of the war tragedy and renders the atmosphere of death as accurately as possible. In this article the mixture of the sense of patriotism with the pictures about extermination enhances the message of the apocalyptic scenes, in which death is real and inevitable.

William Howard Russell had no hesitations to render the situation of the casualties from the Balaclava battle: "Most of them were dying, eyes closed, mouths open and faces terribly contorted. Barely their weak breathing, a flimsy mist that one could identify in the icy cold, indicated that there was still a flicker of life in them." (Michael Kunczik 2002, 73). The image depicted by the reporter's pen matches the desolate scenery, where death is the absolute ruler. His story breaks the frames of the usual

evasive press narrative, governed with an iron fist by the political power, in that it tries to inform the public about the truth of a war scattered all over with dead bodies, his purpose being to touch the most sensitive strings of the readers' heart so that they can react against the sufferings caused by the injustice of war.

William Russell Howard entered a conflict with the army officers by leading a personal war, fuelled by mutual accusation. The officers would incriminate him of sending information they regarded as an ace in the sleeve in favour of the enemies that helped them to get to the key of the military strategies. It is true that Russell Howard's ardent involvement in the description of the events represents an advantage for the Russian Empire, who got to know the positions, the fortifications, and the weak points of the French-British troops, fact which determined Tsar Nicolai I declare: "We are not in need of spies for we've got «The Times»" (Adrian-Silvan Ionescu 2006, 7). The British correspondent started to be seen as a *persona non grata* by his country's officers because he was faster in reaching the scene of battles by far. "I must not omit to mention that «The Times» reaches Sevastopol before we get it here in our camp: so what with the electric and the times, our enemy has many advantages over us" (Michael Kunczik 2002, 75). His determination was qualified as destructive by the political and military government. Abandoned by both camps, Prince Albert and Queen Victoria call him a traitor, an incapable journalist, and Sidney Herbert, the British secretary said the following: "I trust the army will lynch «The Times'» correspondent" (Michael Kunczik 2002, 74). The British army under authority of Lord Reglan, whose opinions were hostile to Russell's, cause him a lot of inconveniences: his ration of food was cut, his tent torn down, and finally he was sent out from the camp to live with the servants and the workers.

William Howard Russell's activity as a journalist was especially valuable out of several considerations:

1. He defined the special correspondent in a deontological way as being a true professional. Even though he wrote during the permanent threat of risky and stressful events, his style is not marred by shallowness but is rather expressive of an honest intention of rendering the events in a chronological, impartial and empathic manner. His newspaper articles live up to the modern journalist's exigencies. They were published in a two-volume book entitled *About War*.
2. The transparency of information about the causes of failures recorded during the hostility campaign in Sevastopol and Balaclava. An adversary of the military power, he is among the first correspondents to enter a direct conflict with it, mercilessly sanctioning the allied officers' incompetence caused by the lack of experience and senescence of the military staff. He never hesitated to incriminate the inefficient actions taken by Reglan, whom he considered to be "utterly incompetent to lead an army." (<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Jrussell.htm>)

3. He alone brought incontestable popularity to "The Times", demolishing "The Illustrated London News", the opposing newspaper's position and captivating the interest and sympathy of numberless readers, who initially did not display much interest in the Crimean War. A member of an English pious family said the following: "The declaration of war addressed to Russia was the first breath from outside to have entered our Calvinist reclusion. My parents agreed to read The Times, which they had not done before, and thus we started to comment enthusiastically about life in exotic lands, places which my father and I were looking up on the map." (Susan Sontag 2011, 50). The troops' carnage, the terror and the so many dramatic aspects rendered by the force of living word, would have remained completely unknown to us if it Russell Howard had not been an eye witness in the Crimean War.
4. Promotes the concept of civic press fighting for man's rights and liberty. His reports on the death by cholera and malaria of many a British, made Mary Seacole, who had heard of the terrible plagues, enrol as a nurse, only to be eventually rejected by the reticence of the Victorian mentality regarding the presence of women on the battlefield. The perseverance that characterizes his articles generates a public protest as a result of which the government had changed its attitude and agreed to Florence Nightingale's and a group of 38 nurses' request to serve in Turkey. Russell's articles had led to serious attacks inside the government through the voice of the Liberal John Roebuck, who requested an investigation for the army on account of the fact that due to the epidemics, out of a total of 23,000 persons, only 9,000 were apt to fulfil their duties. The vote victory brings about Count Aberdeen's resignation, by then Prime Minister (<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Jrussell.htm>)

### **The photographic activity of the two photojournalists covering the Crimean war**

The activity of the two photographers was directly and indirectly facilitated by the political will of the time. Carol Szathmari and Roger Fenton were protected on the battlefield by the troops by higher order.

The 1853 stationing of Russian and Turkish troops in Bucharest offered Szathmari the chance to take pictures of officers of both camps in his personal studio. In 1854 he witnesses the Russian-Turkish confrontation in Dobrogea, Silistra, and Greater Walachia. As court painter and photographer, there is no evidence that Prince Gregory Ghica had commissioned war images for public display. The opportunity of taking photographs meant to confirm his witnessing of certain events related to the war mostly conferred to him by his Austrian citizenship which inevitably meant his impartiality in the aforementioned conflict. Secondly, his diplomatic talent won him the favours of Tsar Nicholas I as well as Sultan Abdul Medjid. In 1848 he sent

both of them a painting with the Russian Army and the Turkish Army, respectively, with the result that Russians awarded him a medal, a ring and a letter of appreciation, while the Turks issued a brilliant firman, the sultan thus bestowing upon him the grace and protection of the heavens and the earth (Arvay Arpad 1975, 98).

It is difficult to trace back the route of Carol Szathmari for lack of evidence, since his travel journals kept by the Library of the Romanian Academy were destroyed during the Nazi bombardment of Bucharest. During his travels he created a 200 photos album, offering a copy to every great sovereign of Europe. In 1855 he started his European tour with a stop in Vienna where he was rewarded by Franz Josef with one hundred gold coins and the Cultural Merit. During the same year he also received honours from Napoleon III in Paris and was awarded the great golden medal with the Crimean ribbon by Queen Victoria “as testimony of Her Majesty’s appreciation” (Arvay Arpad 1975, 98). The Paris Exhibition which completed his trophy collection with yet another gold medal also meant for Carol Szathmari a national and international popularity unparalleled any previous exhibition.

Roger Fenton was officially declared the photographer of the Crimean War by the British Government. Sent by the order of Prince Albert and Queen Victoria in March 1855, the photographer was given the mission of present the development of the war and the involvement of the British Army from an idyllic perspective. His photographs were supposed to respect the motto given by the Royal Family “No dead bodies” (Michael Kunczik 2002, 74).

His activity was meant, on one hand, to present an optimistic view of the war, in contrast to the desolate image created by the printed press through its representative William Russell Howard, and to increase his popularity as war photojournalist, on the other hand. By mutual agreement, Roger Fenton pledged to present, during a four month period, pictures of slow-moving soldiers in an album which he would sell on return, and some of whose negatives he would publish in the “The Illustrated London News” (Susan Sontag 2010, 51). Sponsored by the Manchester publisher Thomas Agnew, he receives a mobile horse-drawn laboratory, two assistants, and five cameras. While witnessing the historical reality of the war in Balaclava and Sevastopol, Roger Fenton successfully accomplished his mission of embellishing the faces of the slaughter, taking more than 300 photographs and offering a history a precious documentary material.



Carol Pop de Szathmari, Turkish bashibazouk participating in the Crimean war, 1854

## Case Study

In the next part I will tackle the causes of the transmission and the consequences of receiving the idyllic vision of the two photographers, reproduced by means of their negatives. Due to the large number of photographs, I have chosen the representative images of the albums for debate. The predominantly critical aspect which is aimed at the content of the clichés, is that of scene selection, as they only present heroic commanders at the forefront of their troops, fearless soldiers, the positioning of the camps, and battlefields, with no pictures of the long agony of the wounded, the mutilated, the cholera sufferers, and the horrible disorganised supply services of the allied armies. The immense human suffering brought about by the war was completely avoided by the photographers. What caused positive orientation of the photographs and how should it be perceived?

### **Carol Szathmari, Turkish bashibazouk participating in the Crimean war (1854)**

This photography called “Palicar et tzigane” published in the Parisian magazine “Le Monde Illustré” impressed the chronicler Auguste Devanau, who appreciated it so much that he dedicated an exclusive article to praising the Transylvanian photographer. The image highlights the portrait of the rough old bashibazouk holding his rifle on his left foot, lying on a saddle blanket next to a swarthy young odalisque, in a slightly lascivious posture. Considered a sample worthy of reflecting the richness of the entire album, the portrait photography is not limited to the reproduction of a dress or a typology defined by the social convention of the subjects, but renders a certain originality and character (Adrian-Silvan Ionescu 2001, 166-167).

The exposure is impressive, while the light highlights the details of the two characters’ clothes. Due to the shadows around the eyes were are unable to decipher the clear view of the portraits in order to understand a little bit of the physiological and psychological state of the characters. The concordance between the modest dress and the legend of the photograph confirms the social convention of the portraits, namely of the bashibazouks. This category of people were no part of any Turkish military hierarchy, instead, the bashibazouks were considered voluntary soldiers without pay, who used to live entirely off looting. They were considered violent and anarchic people, who had no second thoughts about trespassing any social convention.

The message communicated by this photograph, keeping in mind the position of the people, is one of active rest, inadequate to a state of war. Being in a moment of rest, their enigmatic looks, glancing in different directions, is impressive due to its lack of any trace of anguish. The rifle of the old bashibazouk, the only defining element for the war, does not attract the viewer’s attention, since, given his occupation, it had always been and indispensable object for him. The only thing to attract the

attention and spread feelings of compassion is the old age of the bashibazouk, a contemporary of the events of the war.

### **Roger Fenton- Valley of the Shadow of Death, 1855**

A well-known photograph by Roger Fenton is the “The Valley of the Shadow of Death”, repeatedly restored, even by Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center from The University of Texas at Austin. Even though he created two clichés here, from the same tripodic position next to Sevastopol, only the second one, presenting the road with more cannonballs has seen greater popularity paired with numerous harsh criticisms. As for the history of these photographs, the author himself left us precious clues in the correspondence with his wife. The clichés were taken on 23 April 1855 in a place generically called “The Valley of the Shadow of Death”, due to the strategically placed Russian batteries which used to launch numerous cannonballs towards any visible person in order to stop the allied advance towards Sevastopol. The photographer arrived there sometime between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. and spent half an hour at a short distance from the road where he took the two photographs and picked up a cannonball as a present to his wife. During his stay two shots were fired without putting them in great danger, but which prevented them from entering the valley (<http://rogerfenton.dmu.ac.uk>).



Fig. 1, 2. Fenton, Roger, *Valley of the Shadow of Death*, 1855

The name of this place was taken over from Officer Tennyson who, inspired by the consolation of the psalmist, conceived a poem with the same title, thus evoking the disaster which had taken place in the month of October of the previous year when 600 British soldiers of “The Charge of the Light Brigade” had been killed in a Russian ambush.

The correspondence of Roger Fenton is extremely important, for it helps to identify the photographed place in the context of two almost similarly named places, namely Valley of the Shadow of Death to the East of Sevastopol and Valley of Death to the West of Sevastopol. The poem describing the attack refers to the second location, while the photograph to the first location. The presentation in the commemorative photograph of a tortuous road, littered with stones and cannonballs, splitting the

barren field and merging with the skyline gave birth to two controversies; was there a need for two frames taken from the same position and which one was the first to be taken? The questions regard the same cause referring to fabrication or non-fabrication of reality since the photographer was accused of rendering the reality he witnessed on arrival in one photograph, while doctoring the second in order to exaggerate the imminent danger in the area. This investigation started with Haworth-Both, the former curator of photography at the Victoria & Albert in London in a paragraph from his book, *Old and Modern Masters of Photography*, further investigated by Ulrich Keller in his book, *The Ultimate Spectacle: a Visual History of the Crimean War*, where he dedicated an entire chapter, "The Valley of the Shadow of Death: The triumph of Photography", and revisited by Susan Sontag in her book, *Regarding the pain of others*. They all assert that his second image, the one presenting more cannonballs, was premeditatedly staged under the command of Fulton who had ordered the soldiers to arrange the cannonballs in order to induce originality to the drama. Even if Ulrich Keller hesitated to say that it was a forgery, he did label the photograph as a deception, for it was meant to create the impression of a great danger when this wasn't the case. This point of view is speculative and relies only on imagining the intent of Roger Fenton without any documentary evidence. The authors think that it must have been the logical intent of Fenton to take the cannonballs from the left side of the road in order to move them to the surface of the road rather than the opposite, but Fenton or anyone else in his entourage made no mention of it in any diary or correspondence (Errol Morris 2007, 6). Contrary to this perspective, Gordon Baldwin, a curator at the Getty in Los Angeles, considered that the first photograph was the one with the cannonballs on the road, mentioning that he did not order their rearrangement since he was under threat from the Russian cannons. In his study called "The Hundred Greatest Photographs" he explained how the British soldiers used to gather the cannonballs which they would load on the back of their horses in order to take them back to their camp and recycle them (Errol Morris 2007, 6). Therefore, when Roger Fenton first arrived he was met by the reality of the first photograph, that is, with road littered with cannonballs, while the second cliché was taken after their collection, when cannonballs are to be seen only on the left side of the road. Beyond these opinions, the issue of the altered image and the unaltered image is not as important as the message it's conveying. The panorama in both images is incredibly clear, of an exceptional clarity, even after 150 years, but the reality it describes is not relevant to the specific of the historical space. The photography is a portrait of the absence, of death without the dead (Susan Sontag 2011, 52). The existence of the cannonballs, the only evidence able to confirm the reality of the war, is slim and barely able to suggest the tragic significance of a space which, at a certain time, had been covered in corpses. The absence of the characters gives the photography a lack of vivacity.

## The possible causes that determined the idyllic presentation of the photos

The rudimentary component of the Daguerreotype cameras allowed the photoreporting of war achievement in difficult conditions. The bulky device, with a tripod, heavy to carry, without motion sensors that would catch the dynamics, reproduced the memory of those that are no longer among us. Without lenses with a large focal length that would facilitate the capturing of details in the distance, the photographer was in danger of getting himself killed because of the huge risk that the closeness to the conflict area represented. The disadvantages inventory was completed with the long exposure time and developing of photos. Even if there was a reducing of time by nine seconds, as was the case of five seconds calotype, if the weather was sunny, the photographer still had to immediately process the glass plate that was to be exposed. Wet collodion process depended on the existence of a mobile laboratory, installed in a carriage which acted as an obscure camera, kitchen and bedroom as well (Gâlmeanu Alex 2010, 82). But with all these poor conditions, the photographing of corpses or of people that were in agony was not impossible. The negative of an unknown photographer from the American-Mexican war catches our attention with a dreadful site regarding the leg amputation of a soldier. Six years after the Crimean War, Mathew Brady gathered a whole repertoire of civil war images. Both, the above mentioned photographers, had benefited of the same technique and had used the same method of exposure of the negatives.



Mathew Brady, *Civil War*, 1863



Photographaer Unknown, *Amputation*,  
Mexican-American War, Cerro Gordo, 1847

**The banning of photos that depicted the suffering caused by war.** The political powers of the time were interested only in approving and rewarding the pictures and photos that promoted the support for the sacrifice of the soldiers, based upon honour and patriotism. Images representing dead soldiers were classified as taboo subjects. Under the pretext that suffering would have produced panic among the masses, the political powers had restricted the providing of full reality in order to impose their point of view. The romantic perspective of the war where victory belongs to the powerful and defeat to the weak, imposed a rigorous selection of

the photographed subject. An image of suffering and death does not correspond to the imperialist vision. The Imperial Court refused the validation and publication of images that could corrupt authority of the executive and of the army, accused several times of losing war control. Can the suffering of those on the battle field create panic among the ordinary people? It certainly can, but there was always place for dialogue in order to re-establish balance. The order that Roger Fenton had received from Prince Albert of not taking photos of dead soldiers represented a conscious exclusion of a representative part of the reality of the war. Therefore the information that the large public received was based on half-truth, on a lie, and the lie was, is and will be the easiest self-defending political powers' weapon.

**The artistic presentation of the war.** The photo captures the moment and brings a perspective on the reality captured. The dual purpose of the photo is to say something about what can one see and something about the one that sees the picture. (Voicu Bojan; Gicu Serban 2011, 88). Unlike Roger Fenton, a lawyer, Carol Pop de Szathmari was a painter. For both, the Crimean War is the culmination of their popularity rewarded with many medals. While Roger Fenton ended his career as a photographer at this moment, Carol Pop de Szathmari also participated in the War of Independence (1877) as the king's photographer, Carol I, to whom, at the end of the war, he offered an album. The resemblance between this album and the one from the Crimean War lies in the lack of images of war atrocities and representation showing portraits of military troop movements and places where battles took place. All these tell us something about the profile of the artist. The Romantic-idealistic tendency which shows paintings of life, interest in fresh, lively movement concentrated in colour harmony, cleverly chosen, is found in his photos (Arvai Arpad 1977, 177). He is interested in depicting life and force and not the opposite of those. Portraits of the Crimean War generals, the famous painting with the portrait of Alexandru Ioan Cuza and many others of king Michael represent the symbol of power and patriotism, issues that should remain in the living consciousness of the viewers.

Carol Pop de Szathmari had not adopted realistic the perspective used by Mathew Brady in the civil war to illustrate the unpleasant, brutal deeds of defeated soldiers with painful faces turned towards the viewers. (Susan Sontag 2011, 55). The different approaches warn us that the photographers are connected to the world in a private way trying to capture the reality in a subjective way, without the claim of getting to the ultimate truth, but only to part of it. Therefore what is to be considered truthful and interesting can be regarded by the others fake and uninteresting. This argument is excusable for Szathmari as a painter, therefore he did not need a specific order from the emperor as Fenton did to take photos as demanded because for him prospects were converging, but only goals were divergent. Whereas for the photographer Szathmari there is no justification since his deontology claims the gathering of all the pictures from his proximity. Victory and defeat, joy and suffering are all part of the same war reality. Idealization of one over the other produces distrust and disgust.

The words of captain Panoit Moruzzi, chief of the Greek slave legion, written to his wife underline the disillusionment of patriotism idealized in the Crimean War: "Black ideas haunt you, military glory and honor seem ridiculous, because, here, there is no moment of excitement that would pull you out from the battlefield. It's a constant, systematic battle, that lasts from morning to night, day and night and you don't feel like thinking of patriotism and fame" (Adrian-Silvan Ionescu 2006, 180).

The journalistic message, conditioned and transmitted through photos of Crimea, did not have the desired effect in the viewer's perception. Even if the photo did duplicate the real object, the painting had done this long before, its message is evaluated through the credibility source in relation to the textual source. The realism of William Russell Howard eclipses Carol Pop de Szathmari and Roger Fenton's idealism. Text proved that image was surpassed, since the first offered real information, whereas the second offered familiar information. The journalistic photo has to wait until its meaning of illustrating the written text is proven.

One of the consequences resulting from the study of dramatic censorship in the Crimean War photos is the indubitable confirmation that Lie does not evolve, it only improves its technique. The purpose of the Victorian censorship in the authoritarian regime is the same as the one in the totalitarian regime, the difference lies only in the fact that photography can better hide reality.

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