

It seems that we are captured in the heat of combat – Counterplea by Samuel Peleg

If we are to believe dialectics, then the meeting between the thesis of conventional journalism and the antithesis of peace journalism should create a constructive fusion that will produce in turn, a more lucid, more invigorated and more updated synthesis of journalism. This blessed blending could enjoy the premise of the "old" and the promise of the "new". In the current head-bashing between Loyn and Hanitzsch on the one side and Lynch and me on the other, it seems that we are captured in the heat of combat rather than enjoying the excitement of the blending.

Part of the sparks flare from seemingly uncalled for personal allusions and remarks. They do not serve each of us right. For example, Hanitzsch (2007b) protests my language of using words like "attack" and "assault" in criticizing Loyn's and his articles on peace journalism. These nouns were used figuratively to denote eight or nine objections advanced by the two authors against peace journalism using among others concepts such as irrelevant, miscalculated, naive and lacking an epistemological basis. The reference to assault was not meant in the moral sense of the "dark side" against the "good guys" but was raised to indicate the totality of criticism, which was directed not only at implications and practices of the new theory but also at its very essence and *raison d'être*.

When Hanitzsch (2007b, 2) is uncomfortable with my observations he indicates that "This is the peace activist (in Peleg) that speaks out and not the scholar" as if to suggest that peace activists cannot really engage in analytical and methodical erudite debates perhaps because they are preoccupied rubbing shoulders with sweaty companions in town squares and check-posts. In my case at least, being an activist has made me a better scholar and being a scholar has made me a better activist. But this cco debate is not really about me or anybody else of the discussants in this interesting, but occasionally frustrating, deliberation. It is about a new and imperative idea's right to exist. The history of ideas is fraught with such arguments and dispute about the necessity of innovations. The fault-lines were usually drawn between the advocates of change and the guardians of the familiar, or as Charles Tilly (1978) calls them – the challengers and the incumbents.

Inundating the discussion with disagreeable adjectives such as "bizarre", "dubious" and "dishonest" with regard to my rejoinder, cannot cloud sincere and profound doubts I raised concerning Hanitzsch's approach to peace journalism. But as *soft answer turneth away wrath* (proverbs 15:1) I will do my best to grapple with the Loyn and Hanitzsch response in a mild and evenhanded manner.

If Hanitzsch is so sensitive to being cited correctly, as indeed he should be, he will probably notice that my point about the true nature of journalism (Peleg, 2007, 1) was not a quotation of his words but the general impression that emerges out of his and Loyn's initial articles, and I gather several statements to back this impression up. When he writes, for example, that the journalism quadrant in his model is based on the professionalism mode, which "emphasizes objectivity, neutrality and detachment" (Hanitzsch, 2007a, 4), it reflects a lot of what Hanitzsch believes journalism should be in a quite essentialist manner, despite his claim that he is not "sure what the true nature of journalism is" (Hanitzsch, 2007b, 2). Moreover, if he doesn't have a view of the true nature of journalism, how come he is so certain about the meaning of "good journalism"?

Hanitzsch's analytical distinction of various types of public communication, helpful and intriguing in its own right, still pushes peace journalism out of the box that designates journalism toward the PR box especially when "journalists start to actively

engage in conflict resolution" (Hanitzsch 2007a, 4). So it is indeed a certain way of action which sets peace journalists apart from actual journalists, for a lack of a better word. Conversely to his claim, I interpreted Hanitzsch's writing quite accurately: he certainly accredits the distinction between journalism and PR to what he terms communication goals, but he also adds the activism factor to accentuate the difference. This additional factor is precisely where peace journalism (of the "interventionist" kind) fails to make the grade, according to Hanitzsch's analysis.

David Loyn flatly rejects my comment that conflict prevention is everyone's job. Perhaps I was too general, and thus let me rephrase my statement: preventing conflicts is *everyone who cares* job; and journalists, with their potential to influence public opinion, certainly can. Journalists are what Gamson and Modigliani (1987) call "political sponsors" – they update their readers' political agenda, stimulate their worldview and inspire opinions and values. As such they can contribute a great deal to the contraction of conflict by shrinking public support to leaders and initiatives which espouse belligerent tendencies.

Objectivity keeps surfacing as a tender bone of contention between exponents and antagonists of peace journalism. Hanitzsch contests my defiance of objectivity as the centerpiece for good journalism by admitting that he never regarded it as a proper alternative. However, in every description he supplies of professional journalism, objectivity primes. My examples of Mephisto and Auschwitz may have been staggering, as I myself clearly stated, but they were deliberately chosen to hone the point of how the seemingly naïve façade of objectivity can turn sour in the most extreme cases. I, deplorably but emphatically, disagree with Loyn's assertion that my reference to Baudrillard's analysis was bogus. To far too many people in the world, Auschwitz had definitely been an armchair diversion. To numerous onlookers, the death camps were never actually a part of the Second World War but a sinister and clandestine undercurrent concealed by the glorified blaze of battle and the mundane technocratic machinery of evil (Arendt, 1965). In such a context, I certainly hope Loyn will be more congenial to my theoretical reference.

Loyn (2007, 1) comes to grips with my fictitious Auschwitz report by dissecting it to details: "And who is his hypothetical reporter – a Nazi, a German working in the underground, or a foreigner? If it was the latter, then this reporting might have shortened the war, since at the time the full horror of the death camps was not public knowledge in Britain". But this comment is utterly irrelevant: none of these putative reporters (except, of course, the first option Loyn raises, a Nazi, perhaps someone like the bureaucratic genius Adolph Eichmann, who was "just doing his job". He could have, no doubt, dispatched a brilliant dispassionate and impartial report of a body count) could have been "neutral and objective" in such unbearable circumstances. One simply cannot describe carnage of innocent human beings and remain detached and remote. Worse yet is to camouflage such aloofness as being a professional etiquette: this is making a mockery of the quintessence of morality. By using the honorable Richard Dimbleby's famous Bergen-Belsen description as an example, Loyn inadvertently validates my point: this is a touching and mesmerizing illustration of a keen observer, a cry out against brutality and pointless massacre in a dignified, non tempestuous manner. In other words, this is peace journalism at its best.

Loyn characterizes me and many advocates of Peace Journalism, who I am proud to be associated with, as constantly wanting the world to be better than it is. I passionately admit to that burden and I think it is a noble one, to reiterate Hanitzsch's terminology. Peace journalism is not about shooting the messengers (was that pun intended? We are talking *peace* journalism...) but about sending a message to the shooters that their deeds will not be glorified nor rewarded.

I honestly don't understand the distinction between metaphysical and procedural perceptions of objectivity: the latter is a corollary of the former and is guided by it. No one acts objectively unless he or she believes in the merits of objectivism as a goal and as a principle. One does not posit objectivism at the core of journalism if one perceives objectivism as a mere procedure. Even more puzzling is Hanitzsch's (2007b, 3) concern of "the journalist who identifies the victim and the perpetrator, good and evil, and when it is the journalist decides if a 'genocide' ... is taking place". Who then, should identify and decide: the readers? An international tribunal? If reporters cannot be trusted of being able to distinguish right from wrong, how can they be entrusted with deciding between factual and fictional and having their goals internally defined, as belonging to the journalism quadrant requires? And besides, how complicated is it to identify a genocide when coming across one? I think Hanitzsch's worry, in this respect at least, is exaggerated.

The insistence on peace journalism being principally an updated version of good journalism, and therefore, it is redundant at best and bogus and a "hijacker of good journalism's values" at worse, is erroneous. Peace journalism is not simply good journalism in other words. It is based on a unique and innovative premise that conflicts can be avoided, de-escalated and even resolved by a prudent, profoundly analyzed and fairly written journalistic coverage. In Loyn and Hanitzsch's opinion, this is out of the reporter's jurisdiction. Perhaps the distinction should be stated as the difference between how conflict reports should be written and how they should be read. Peace journalism is geared toward demystifying the mystic of violent conflicts and it operates under the onus of profound social responsibility. It does not advocate peace or conflict resolution, but it is certainly inspired by their prospects. And this is by far a different creature than "good journalism": If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, you can be reasonably sure it is a duck and not merely a fine specimen of the birds' family of Anatidae.

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