

# RIVISTA MILITARE



ESERCITO

SINCE 1856

SELECTION  
OF

2023



English Version



**ESERCITO**  
esercito.difesa.it

# RIVISTA MILITARE



MINISTRY  
OF DEFENSE

Publisher  
Difesa Servizi S.p.A. – C.F. 11345641002

ARMY GENERAL STAFF  
General Affair Division

Managing director  
Colonel Giuseppe Cacciaguerra

Editor in chief  
Lieutenant Colonel Pierfrancesco Sampaolo

Coordination of publishing activities  
And editorial staff  
Rossella Borino Esposito, Marcello Ciriminna, Raimondo Fierro, Vincenzo Gebbia, Andrea Maria Gradante, Mariangela La Licata, Annarita Laurenzi, Maria Perillo, Igor Piani, Ignazio Russo.

Secretariat and distribution  
Claudio Angelini, Gaetano Chianese, Christian Faraone, Alessandro Serafini, Ciro Visconti.

Head Office  
Via di San Marco, 8 – 00186 Roma  
Tel. 06. 6796861

Administration  
Difesa Servizi S.p.A.  
Via Flaminia, 335 – 00196 Roma  
Administrative Services  
of the Army General Staff  
Via Napoli, 42 – 00187 Roma

Printing  
28° reggimento "Pavia"  
Viale della Liberazione, 7 – 61120 Pesaro (PU)  
Tel. 0721. 30319

Annual Subscription  
Italy: 18,00 Euros  
Abroad: 18,00 Euros (plus shipping costs)

The cost of a back issue is Euro 4.00 (plus shipping costs to be paid by the customer).  
The customer must pay the amount on the postal account 000029599008 in the name of Difesa Servizi S.p.A. or by bank transfer to Difesa Servizi S.p.A. – Iban code: IT 37 X 07601 03200 000029599008 – BIC/SWIFT code BPPIITRRXXX.

Registration in the Civil Court's Press-Register of Rome n. 944 of 7 June 1949

ISSN 0035-6980

PDF: Marcello Ciriminna

Copyright 2022 All rights reserved

WEB ADDRESSES  
Internet: [www.esercito.difesa.it](http://www.esercito.difesa.it)  
Intranet: [www.intranet.esercito.difesa.it](http://www.intranet.esercito.difesa.it)

E-MAIL ADDRESSES  
presentazione proposte editoriali  
[statesercito@esercito.difesa.it](mailto:statesercito@esercito.difesa.it)  
invio materiale e comunicazioni:  
[rivistamilitare@esercito.difesa.it](mailto:rivistamilitare@esercito.difesa.it)  
abbonamenti:  
[rivistamilitare.abbonamenti@esercito.difesa.it](mailto:rivistamilitare.abbonamenti@esercito.difesa.it)

# English Version



The "Rivista Militare" is a training ground for thought aimed at disseminating and informing on what concerns military culture and all the issues and aspects which may refer to it. The "Rivista" focuses on the Army through debate and free and direct participation.

**"The ground that science does not gain is inexorably conquered by ignorance". (L. Mezzacapo)**

The ideas expressed in the articles are personal to the authors and have no reference to official guidelines. All personal data provided is treated following current privacy protection regulations. The publisher declares he is ready to regularise any copyright due to the reproduced images of which it has been impossible to find the source or legitimate owner.

Translations by the interpreters'team,  
Protocol and External Relations Branch, IT-Army General Staff.





Dear readers,  
Here we are with our second English-language issue, presenting a selection of the best articles of 2023, which means that a whole year has already passed: for us, it has literally flown by. The goal we strive for — as always — is to provide high-profile information and be a free think tank open to everyone and, therefore, not only to 'insiders'. In these few lines, I would also like to mention the prestigious award received from the European Military Press Association: 'The Best Military Picture 2022'. This recognition rewards so many efforts and spurs us on in our daily work.

In the pages you will browse, you will find various topics: post-humanism to war reporters, app warfare to artificial intelligence. Finally, take advantage of the podcasts we have prepared for you, some of which are in English.

I wish you a good reading.



The Director,  
Col. Giuseppe Cacciaguerra





**R  
M  
1**

<b>G. CACCIAGUERRA, M. SCAFATI</b>	
<i>When cities are the target</i>	4
<b>G. CUCCI</b>	
<i>Posthuman and Trans-Human</i>	8
<b>G. CACCIAGUERRA</b>	
<i>War reporter</i>	12



**4**

**R  
M  
2**

<b>A. SPADA</b>	
<i>The App war</i>	16
<b>G. ZAUNER</b>	
<i>Back to the future</i>	20
<b>A.M. ISASTIA</b>	
<i>The 8<sup>th</sup> march and women</i>	24

**R  
M  
3**

<b>P. SAMPAOLO</b>	
<i>Victory vertical</i>	28
<b>G. SCOTONI</b>	
<i>Earth and water</i>	32
<b>A. RUSSO</b>	
<i>Understanding a conflict</i>	36



**20**

# SUBSCRIPTIONS 18 € 1 YEAR SUBSCRIPTION (6 OUTLETS)

For payment:

The amount must be paid to the postal account

000029599008 made out to:

Difesa Servizi S.p.A.

by bank transfer payable to Difesa Servizi S.p.A.

- IBAN code IT 37 X 07601 03200 000029599008

- BIC/SWIFT code BPFIITRRXXX

send receipt of payment to:

[rivistamilitare.abbonamenti@esercito.difesa.it](mailto:rivistamilitare.abbonamenti@esercito.difesa.it)



Discover your GADGET



## 33 € 2 YEARS SUBSCRIPTION (12 OUTLETS)



## 46 € 3 YEARS SUBSCRIPTION (18 OUTLETS)





# Selection of 2023

42



<b>A. STARTARI</b>	40
<i>Everyday Women, women you don't expect</i>	
<b>A. SCIUCCHINO</b>	42
<i>With the newborn child</i>	
<b>G. CACCIAGUERRA</b>	44
<i>Good or bad</i>	



<b>U. BROCCOLI</b>	48
<i>The war cry which frightened the romans</i>	
<b>A. MARGELLETTI</b>	52
<i>Infantry: at running pace</i>	
<b>I. PIANI</b>	53
<i>The best photo is from Italy</i>	
<b>P. PUCCI</b>	54
<i>The women's war</i>	



<b>F. VANDER</b>	56
<i>War and peace</i>	
<b>G. CACCIAGUERRA</b>	60
<i>Intelligent machines</i>	
<b>A.M. ISASTIA</b>	62
<i>Female beauty over the centuries</i>	



28



54



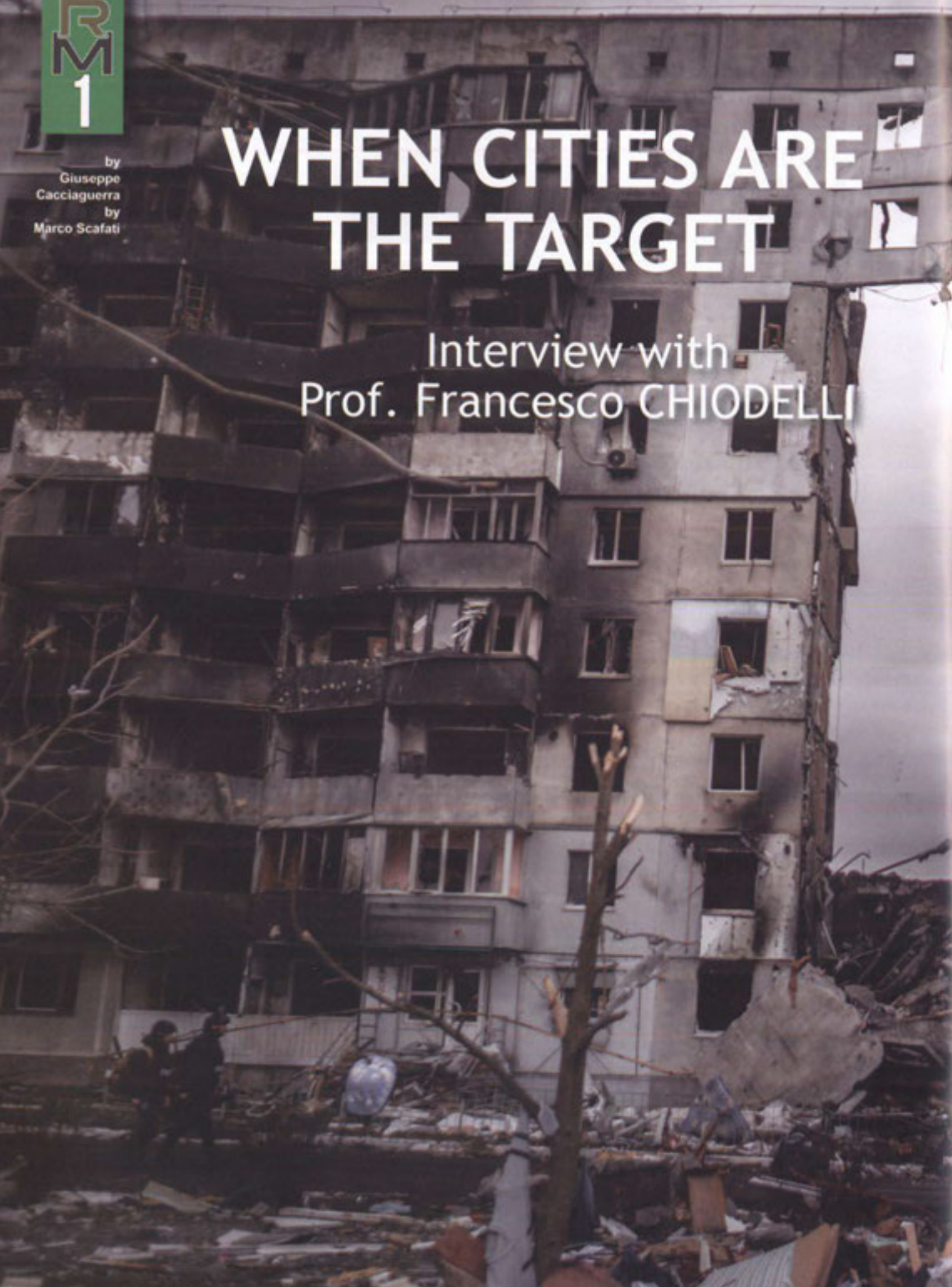
56



by  
Giuseppe  
Cacciaguerra  
by  
Marco Scafati

# WHEN CITIES ARE THE TARGET

Interview with  
Prof. Francesco CHIODELLI











However large or small, cities have always been central to human life and activities: work or the economy, politics or culture. Those who thought their centrality was disappearing during the pandemic in favour of more or less controlled exoduses towards the countryside were forced to change their mind. Precisely because of this role of centres of gravity and, in many ways, of representation, urban conglomerates have always been targeted in the event of conflicts. As well as cultural cleansing operations: this is the case of the so-called "urbicide", or the implementation of urban regeneration projects, which provide for the elimination of existing neighbourhoods to make room for something else. However, demolition affects the buildings and what they represent: symbolic places or perhaps military targets.

If we are dealing with capitals, their destruction or their capture by foreign armies automatically becomes synonymous with the defeat of the state.

**Professor Chiodelli, you teach economic and political geography at the University of Turin. What have cities represented and still represent for men?**

Cities have always been central to human history. However, they have become even more so in recent decades from different points of view. For example, from a demographic point of view: on an unknown day in an unknown year between 2000 and 2010, for the first time in human history, the share of the world's population living in urban areas exceeded the share of the population

living in the countryside. This path of hectic urban population growth to the detriment of the countryside will continue inexorably into the future. During Covid, someone had hypothesised that cities would go into crisis and spoke of "escape from urban areas" and a "return to the villages and countryside". Today we know with a reasonable degree of certainty that this will not happen and cities will continue attracting population. Nevertheless, cities play a central role not only from a demographic point of view but also from an economic point of view (they produce a significant portion of the world's wealth), political (they host the prominent public institutions of local, national and international rank), cultural (they are the engine of production and consumption of culture).



**History had witnessed attacks on cities, from Jerusalem to Sarajevo via Stalingrad, even when wars were fought in open terrain. Why?**

They suffered all of this precisely for their value. Even before that sort of urban revolution, cities (particularly big cities, including capitals) were the heart of empires, kingdoms, states, and territories. In the past, they were not the heart of a political entity from a demographic or productive point of view, and however, they were still it from a symbolic and political point of view. For this reason, annihilating or conquering enemy cities, especially capitals, was equivalent to defeating the enemy.

**For some years now, we have been hearing more and more often about urbicide. What exactly does that mean?**

Urbicide is a neologism. It seems to have been used in the United States for the first time in the 1960s to characterise some extremely "heavy" urban regeneration projects, which made scorched earth of the pre-existing neighbourhoods (and of the social relations established there). However, the term takes off within the academic and public debate starting from the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to indicate, using the words of Martin Coward (author of the book, *Urbicide: The Politics of Urban Destruction*, Routledge, New York, 2009) about Sarajevo, "the destruction of buildings not for what they represent individually (for example, a specific military objective or an element of cultural heritage, conceptual metaphor), but for what they represent as a whole, that is, the condition of possibility of a heterogeneous existence". In other words, the city of Sarajevo is tortured as a material support and materialisation of multicultural coexistence and pluralistic citizenship. Precisely what the Serbian troops were fighting against. Subsequently, the term was used in relation to other contexts, with a more extensive meaning, to indicate

the simultaneous destruction, through intentional action, of the city and urban life. This destruction is the most effective means of subjugating a people, depriving them of a cornerstone around which the opportunities for relationships, exchanges and political existence that urban life embodies are generated and organised.

**Have I understood correctly? Would the destruction of a city no longer be understood as a "side effect" but as a primary target?**

Right. In cities, it is no longer just strictly military targets that are hit. Theatres, schools, institutional offices, parks, hospitals, and monuments are also attacked because they are the constituent elements that make a city what it is. The very idea of the city, of the polis, is what we want to destroy. If possible, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has confirmed even more how much urban agglomerations and industrial and energy infrastructures are considered sensitive targets even in modern military strategies.

**Why, in your opinion?**

For all of the reasons mentioned above: On the one hand, bringing cities to their knees means paralysing

the entire country, given that cities are the main hub of economic, social, political and logistic activities. Consider, among other things, that the growing centralisation of many primary functions in a few cities makes the entire country much more vulnerable. On the other hand, from a symbolic point of view, especially some of the Ukrainian cities (think of Kyiv) represent the essence of what Russia wants to attack: namely, the idea that there is an autonomous Ukraine with its own identity not subordinated to the Russian one. Hitting an important city, perhaps a capital, has always had a symbolic and practical meaning in history: decapitating the enemy from a psychological point of view, causing him to surrender.

**Is it still so?**

Yes, there is no doubt. In practice, the defeat of a state can occur even before the fall of its capital. However, that does not change that the conquest of the enemy capital still represents any conflict's symbolic point of arrival. On May 2, 1945, the Soviet flag was raised over the Reichstag, marking the capitulation of Berlin. Only six days pass, and the Third Reich officially surrenders. If, unfortunately, Russia were to go as far as conquering Kyiv, Russia would mark the fate of the conflict definitively in its favour.



**Francesco Chiodelli**, is an associate professor of economic and political geography at the University of Turin, where he directs OMERO, a research centre in urban studies. He deals, among other things, with urban conflicts and geopolitics, particularly concerning the Israeli-Palestinian context. On these themes, he has published *"Shaping Jerusalem. Spatial planning, politics and the conflict"* (Routledge, 2017) and, in Italian, *"Gerusalemme contesa. Dimensioni urbane di un conflitto [Contended Jerusalem. Urban dimensions of a conflict]"* (Carocci, 2012).



# POSTHUMAN AND TRANS-HUMAN

The anthropology of the future?



*The article takes up in shortened form a larger contribution that appeared in issue 4130, 2022 of 'La Civiltà Cattolica', to which we refer for a more detailed discussion.*

More and more research and discoveries at a technological and pharmaceutical level stimulate philosophical reflection, outlining new scenarios. One of these, which has long been at the centre of media attention, is the trans- and posthuman movement. Precisely indicating the meaning of the two terms and what differentiates them is part of the problem. Depending on the authors and the field of expertise, the perspective presented varies considerably, a sign of that liquidity that increasingly characterises today's cultural landscape.

### **TRANS-HUMAN AND POSTHUMAN: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES**

The trans-humanist movement was born in the light of discoveries and applications in the digital and biotechnological fields, in particular from the confluence of four research lines: nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, and cognitive sciences: all summed up by the acronym NBIC. It emphasises the potential that they could represent for human beings at a medical level (helping to shape an increasingly efficient body, not subject to disease, ageing and death), cognitive and information technology (insertion of special microchips to enhance memory and intelligence or even the transfer from the biological to the non-biological organism) and robotic (1). As far as posthumanism is concerned, the term seems attributable to the literary critic Ihab Hassan who, in the essay "Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture?" of 1977, speaks of it in terms of a movement which would like to erase, with human nature, even 500 years of humanism. The posthuman movement would therefore like to go beyond medical and intellectual enhancement; its ideal point of arrival is to cancel the biological dimension, a place of disease and death, and the very idea of human nature, to reach "an ultra-human



condition that is, to abandon the fragility of the current condition to open up to a future in which a new man (and, for this reason, a beyond-man) will be capable of radically reprogramming himself" (2), even at a cerebral level. It is perhaps the most provocative and stimulating current from an anthropological point of view, a sort of announcement of a new era characterised by the definitive liberation from the limits of nature, radically redefining human status.

### **THE ERA OF THE CYBORG**

With the new technological hangouts, the man himself is now modified, thanks to the installation of accessories which enhance his performance or with the help of artificial intelligence, which can guarantee him a potentially unlimited performance. It is the era of the cyborg: it is the man who becomes the object of technology, which radically transforms him as never before. This vision has not been elaborated in a precise





way. Still, more than anything else, it is a set of variations on the theme of technological dimension. In other words, it is the conception according to which the reference criterion is the machine and not man, reversing the evaluation perspective. The term cyborg (contraction of 'cybernetic organism') comes from the suggestion aroused by incipient space enterprises and the changes they would entail for man. The term first appears in an article ("Cyborgs and Space") by two Rockland State University researchers – Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline – in the September 1960 issue of *Astronautics* magazine. In that article, they argue that to adequately address the impact between man and new worlds, the most feasible solution will be to modify the human being, thanks to specially inserted devices, rather than intervening in the external environment. This new way of representing man has been the object of considerable investment in research and design for some time. It is widely disseminated in literature, comics, films and video games, university courses, and academic and popular publications, but above all introduces an unprecedented lexicon in line with new trends.

### SOME OBSERVATIONS

Transhumanism and posthumanism leverage essential aspects of human life. Fighting disease and improving health have always characterised medicine and technology. The attempt

to program a perfectly efficient man capable of exponentially improving himself is the added value of this proposal, a promise of happiness made possible by technology which underlies its fascination. To achieve its goals, posthumanism deems it necessary to consider corporeity, identity, and limits as evils to fight because they are a reason for illness or infirmity. Beyond the easy enthusiasm, the project is difficult to implement.

Radically reprogramming the human being is easy to say. Still, it collides with structural difficulties not simply due to a not-yet-perfect technology (and can it ever be?), but to the characteristics of the human being, especially in terms of genome complexity and the enormous number of connections in the brain, which seems to have about 10<sup>15</sup> synapses, i.e. one followed by 15 zeros: 1 trillion trillion (i.e. 1,000 billion times 1,000 billion). However, the

**Giovanni Cucci**, a Jesuit, is a permanent professor of philosophy and psychology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and is a member of the College of Writers of *La Civiltà Cattolica*. Among his publications: *"Ricoeur oltre Freud"* [*Ricoeur Beyond Freud*] (Cittadella 2007); *"Il fascino del male"* [*The Charm of Evil*] (Adp 2022); *"La forza dalla debolezza"* [*Strength from Weakness*] (Adp 2022); *"Il sapore della vita"* [*The Flavour of Life*] (Cittadella 2009); *"P come perdono"* [*P for Forgiveness*] (Cittadella 2011); *"La crisi dell'adulto"* [*The crisis of the adult*] (Cittadella 2012); *"Altruismo e gratuità"* [*Altruism and gratuitousness*] (Cittadella 2014); *"Paradiso virtuale o infer.net?"* [*Virtual paradise or infer.net?*] (Ancora 2015); *"Dipendenza sessuale online"* [*Online sexual addiction*] (Ancora 2015); *"Internet e cultura"* [*Internet and culture*] (Ancora 2016); *"Esperienza religiosa e psicologia"* [*Religious experience and psychology*] (Ldc 2017); *"L'arte di vivere"* [*The art of living*] (Ancora 2019); *"Religione e secolarizzazione"* [*Religion and secularization*] (Cittadella 2019); *"Le virtù cardinali"* [*The cardinal virtues*] (Adp 2022); *"Fraternità impossibile?"* [*Impossible fraternity?*] (Cittadella 2022).





practical unattainability of the deadline for such a project does not exclude its popularity and the growing drive to take steps towards its implementation, which raises some more general questions.

The suspicion that the widespread diffusion of post and transhumanism, as for the theorists of the "augmented mind" (Prensky), is a big economic deal raises an initial perplexity. Behind this operation, as always, there are considerable financial interests, shown by the strong drives to publicise and sponsor these proposals, for example, by the technological and pharmaceutical industries. The question also remains as to who will be able to afford the expensive robotic prostheses or the selected and continuous pharmacological treatments, which will lead to the formation of new social hierarchies. Here we would rather analyse some aspects of posthumanism in an anthropological key. First of all, the extreme vagueness of the point of arrival of this proposal is striking when it deviates from the possibility of combating diseases and improving diagnoses and therapies (a completely legitimate thing which does not require, however, supporting this trend) to launch out to promise happiness on earth. The desire to eliminate one's identity, considered as a prison, does not rather reveal a growing unease in living with one's present condition and with the truth about oneself. Furthermore, it is not sure that the

power to reprogramme life, once entirely placed in the hands of someone, will be used for the good of the other.

The case of two deaf-mute women who chose to conceive a deaf son with whom to share this significant characteristic of their personality caused quite a stir in the USA. They were amazed by the wave of anger aroused when it became public: "Being deaf - declared one of them - is simply a way of life. We feel as complete as those with normal hearing and want to share with our children the best sides of our deaf community". It is a typical example of feeling prevailing over being; this attitude certainly helped the two women experience something they didn't choose. But perhaps the resulting child doesn't think so, especially if he associates his deafness with a deliberate choice and not with the randomness of the genetic lottery. The Trans-humanist manifesto aims at the total liberation of man but can easily take on the face of new colonialism. Who will decide on these processes? Who can accurately predict the consequences? How to protect yourself from the risk of a technological dictatorship, an elite who can afford everything, widening the inequality gap towards the less well-off? Ancient and recent societies present different classes on an economic, social, or religious basis, which can be abolished if desired. But if the gap becomes genetic, the hiatus between man 2.0 and the commoner will become unbridgeable.

## NOTES

(1) Below are the first three articles of the trans-humanist declaration: "(1) [...] We envision the possibility of broadening human potential by overcoming ageing, cognitive shortcomings, involuntary suffering, and our confinement to planet Earth. (2) We believe that humanity's potential is still mostly unrealised [...]. (3) We recognise that humanity faces serious risks, especially from the misuse of new technologies [...]" <https://www.pensierocritico.eu/files/Dichiarazione-transumanista.pdf>.

(2) L. Grion, "Dalla Sfiducia allo slancio. L'alternativa alla provocazione transumanista [From distrust to impetus. The alternative to trans-humanist provocation]", in ID. (ed.), *La sfida postumanista. Colloqui sul significato della tecnica* [The posthumanist challenge. Talks on the meaning of technique], Bologna, il Mulino, 2012, 64. Here are some points of the posthuman movement: "12/II. In the beginning, we had God, humans and nature. Humanists dispensed with God, leaving humans in perpetual conflict with nature. Posthumanists do without humans, leaving only nature. The distinction between God, nature and humanity does not represent any eternal truth about the human condition. It simply reflects the prejudices of societies which have maintained the distinction; 6/III The posthuman accepts that humans have a finite capacity to understand and control nature" (<http://www.kainos.it/numero6/emergenze/emergenze-pepperell-it.html>).

(3) M. Driscoll, "Why We Chose Deafness for Our Children", *Sunday Times*, April 14, 2002.





by  
Giuseppe  
Cacchiaguerra

# WAR REPORTER

A difficult profession



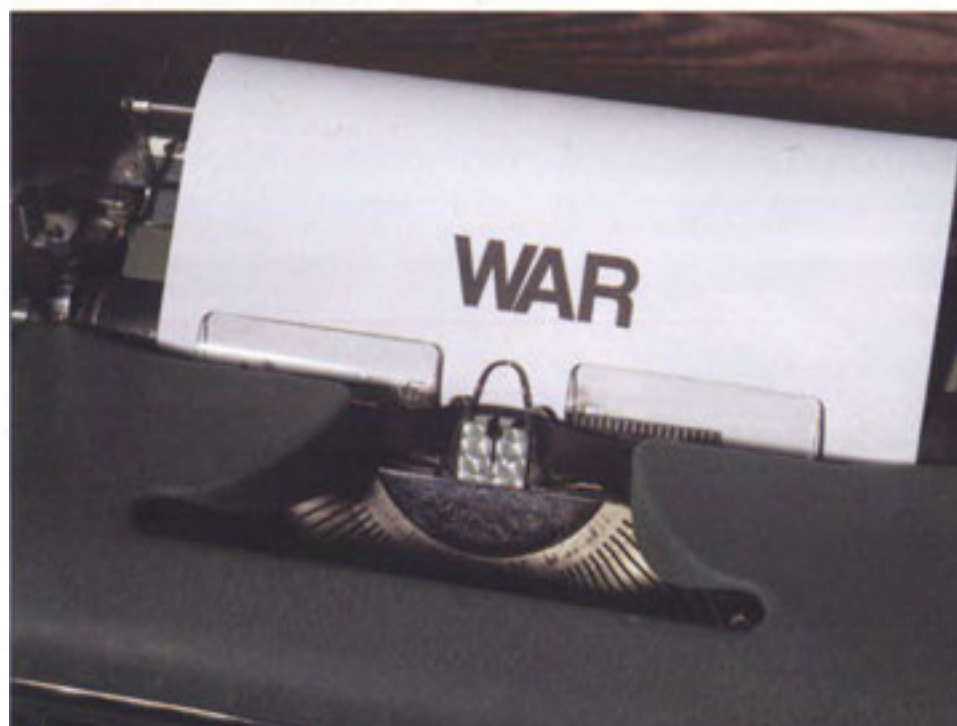


***"I did not go to Africa in search of adventure, to hunt elephants or to find diamonds there. I was a correspondent for the Polish Press Agency and I had to describe what I heard and what I saw there, what was happening there. And a lot was happening there at that time". (R. Kapuściński)***

Speed is the buzzword. To be the best and win, you must hurry: being the "first" is essential. It does not matter how you got there, maybe at the world's edge or in that village inhabited a few hours earlier and now a pile of smoking rubble. The important thing is to be there and communicate. Communicate, indeed, but what? The answer would seem easy: what you see, in a word, what you witness. However, this is "a point" or "the discriminating point". This instant separates the correspondent, the professional reporter, from the rest of the hirelings (from the amateurs, if you prefer). Or from those who, due to strange life circumstances, find themselves in that specific place, at that hour, with a cell phone in hand, eventually ready to take a selfie. On the other hand, the difference will be entirely in the body of the message rather than in the communicative compulsion. On the specific topic, Mimmo Cándito (1941-2018), a late war reporter and for a long time doyen of the sector – said: "The speeding up is making disappear not only the reasons for patience but also the willingness to understand. And this implements the euthanasia of information". The common wish is that patience is not an endangered species as described. Giving up understanding why "we're in a hurry" would be frankly humiliating. So what to do with a brain weighing about 1350 grammes?

However, we must consider that the risk exists, or perhaps we have already stumbled upon it without realising it. Could Cándito have got it right? Hopefully, public opinion still loves to quench the thirst for information from a quality source, characterised by the seriousness of research, where nothing is left to chance. Still, everything is checked and verified before being explained. A source which excludes its advantage, which is generous precisely because it is destined for others – sic vos non vobis – to quote Virgil. Telling is fundamental, but it is more important to explain. For this reason, Ryszard Ka-

puściński (1932-2007) can be considered one of the greatest reporters in history. He was a former news correspondent of the Polish Press Agency and several times nominated for the Nobel Prize for literature. He wrote: "Only one thing mattered to me: to tell how things really were because this is our ambition, the ambition of the journalistic brotherhood". He graduated in History but soon became passionate about journalism. "I didn't go to Africa for adventure, to hunt elephants or find diamonds. I was a news correspondent for the Polish Press Agency and had to describe what I heard, saw, and







what was happening there. And a lot was going on there at that time". (R. Kapuściński). He was sent all over the world to describe the most difficult situations. It should come as no surprise that he risked his life several times. It was undoubtedly much more than a job to him; it was a real and all-encompassing passion, perhaps a mission. Kapuściński was very curious. He masterfully described everything he saw and explained it using the criterion of clarity, a method he had learned from his historical studies. In other words, he did not simply narrate.

A forefather of the hard job of war reporter could be identified in William Howard Russell (1820-1907), a journalist of the "Times" sent to Crimea in 1854. On 25 October of that year, he had the opportunity to personally witness Balaklava's disastrous charge. Although absurd, the description of that heroic action cost him dearly. On 14 November, Russell published his article and went down in history as the first modern war reporter. However, that article did not do him any good in the first instance. He was challenged to a duel by several soldiers, touched in their pride by his report. He was then removed to the rear and finally returned to his homeland. What did he write that was so strange? "Nothing" could be the answer. He described what he saw: "At ten minutes past eleven, our Light Cavalry Brigade advanced... They swept proudly past, glittering in the morning sun in all the pride and splendour of war... at thirty-five minutes past eleven, not a British soldier, except the dead and the dying, was left in front of the Muscovite guns." However, that short report showed how illogical what had occurred. It became an indictment against the commanders who decided to attack in open terrain in front of 30 enemy guns. The watchful eye of a civilian reported the facts without sweetening them. He made no concessions and, inevitably, hit a wall because that was a world not accustomed to being put under control or having anyone to answer to outside their chain of command. Public opinion appeared on the scene for the first time: it wanted to be informed and sought news. It needed a witness, a



careful and acute observer, especially in distant and dangerous places. Inevitably, those same facts would be at the mercy of the only eyes interested in seeing the events unfold in only one way: how they would be narrated.

Among the most excellent reporters to have inherited Russell's baton must be mentioned the talented John Reed (1887-1920). He wrote the admirable report on the Russian Revolution of October 1917, "Ten Days That Shook the World". Even more vividly coloured and experienced, however, is "Insurgent Mexico", a true masterpiece dedicated to the Mexican Revolution and the epic story of Pancho Villa. The author immerses himself fully in life and the unregulated rush of a popular insurrection. He tries to understand its purposes and describes its practice. Violent methods, often simply brutal: "Fierro was known throughout the Army by the nickname "Butcher" (...). In his furious bloodlust, Fierro killed a hundred prisoners with his own revolver, stopping only long enough to reload it. He killed for the pleasure of killing". Domenico Quirico's words help us with the reasons why war attracts so much – even if it's sad to say –: "Carnage is a business of great and seductive beauty, needless to deny it (...) war reporters are voyeurs of the violence". Nevertheless, their witness is indispensable.

Pier Paolo Cervone dedicated an entire book to the first great Italian war reporters. Among them, we can mention: Gualdo Civinini (1873-1954), a fearless journalist in the trenches who was awarded 4 bronze medals and a war cross for military valour; Ugo Ojetti (1871-1946), who probably wrote the "victory bulletin" of 4 November 1918 signed by Gen. Armando Diaz; Arnaldo Fraccaroli (1882-1956), who liked to define himself as a "travelling salesman of other people's curiosities"; in force, Rino Alessi (1885-1970), who despite censorship wrote to his director lots of clandestine letters which were later transformed into a precious book; and Luigi Barzini (1874-1947), to whose memory is dedicated the "Luigi Barzini Prize for Special Correspondents". Barzini was, without hesitation, the most famous and the best known because



he was simply the best: a "true prince of the pen". Piero Melograni wrote about him an excellent summary: "He knew how to narrate the facts with immediacy and simplicity, relying on his ability as a good observer, on his memory and on direct contact with the people who had experienced them". In addition to being clever, Luigi Barzini was also lucky. In fact, from a very young age, he followed the events of the Russo-Japanese conflict (1904-1905), and he was the only European witness to send a detailed report about the battle of Mukden (23 February – 11 March 1905), a masterful war report of 14,000 words, which appeared in the "Corriere" on 24 March 1905 and seems to be studied in journalism schools. In the Rivista Militare editorial staff, that report is framed and shown. All these great reporters would deserve specific insights, just as the names of Curzio Malaparte – "Kaputt" – and Indro Montanelli – "Chronicles of War" – are indissolubly linked to the mastery of accurate journalism, to the seriousness of the reporter profession, which requires a solid knowledge. In other words, you need to study a lot and know the history and culture of the regions where you work to discover the meaning of the events and describe them to someone living on another continent. But that is not all. Or rather, all that

may not yet be enough. To be a good reporter, you must empathise: "Only a good man tries to understand others, their intentions, their faith, their interests, their problems, and their tragedies". (R. Kapuściński).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alessi R., *Dall'Isonzo al Piave. Lettere clandestine di un corrispondente di guerra*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Verona, 1966.

Barzini L., *La colossale battaglia di Mukden*, "Corriere della sera", 24 March 1905. Cándito M., *I reporter di guerra. Storia di un giornalismo difficile da Hemingway a Internet*, Baldini&Castoldi, Varese, 2002. Cervone P.P., *La grande guerra dai nostri inviati. Giornali e giornalisti nel 1915-1918*, Mursia, Milano, 2021.

Kapuściński R., *Autotratto di un reporter*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 2007.

Malaparte C., *Kaputt*, Adelphi, Milano, 2014.

Melograni P., voce "Luigi Barzini" in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Vol. VII, Treccani, Roma, 1970.

Montanelli, *Cronache di guerra*, Editoriale Nuova, Milano 1978.

Reed J., *Dieci giorni che sconvolsero il mondo*, Einaudi Biblioteca Giovani, Torino, 1946.

Reed J., *Il Messico insorge*, Einaudi, Torino, 1980.



# THE APP WAR

The tools of modern conflicts



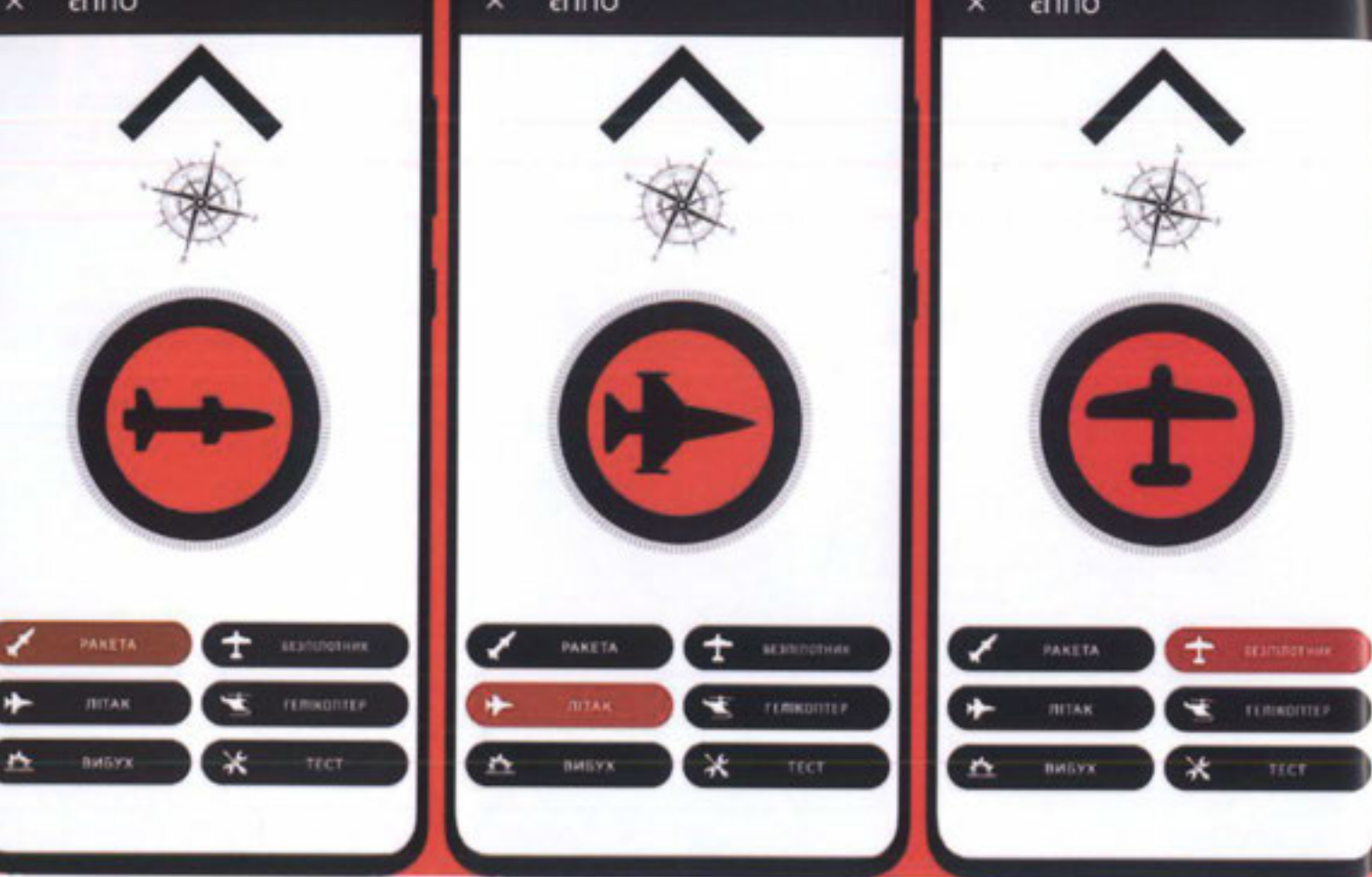


Air Alert, ePPO, Gis Art, Reface, Air Raid, and Rwc are just some of the most downloaded and used mobile phone applications by Ukrainians, both civilian and military, since the beginning of the Russian invasion. These applications warn in the event of an air or missile attack, track Iranian-made drones, help find the nearest air-raid shelter, and update the position of enemy Armed Forces and their movements. Finally, some applications collect evidence of war crimes.

Ukraine hosts a large and varied community of software houses and their developers. Since the beginning of the Russian invasion, they have “transformed” into creators of telephone applications in support of the Army, but above all population. Taking the podium of the most downloaded service on the App Store in Ukraine is Air Alert, which can send alerts to mobile phones in the event of an air attack in a given area. Civilians, scattered across the areas of conflict, have also begun to use encrypted messaging platforms and systems that allow them to consult maps without needing to be connected to the internet. On the Play Store and App Store, among the applications that have conquered the Ukrainians, there are Telegram, Zello Walkie Talkie, Bridgefy, and Signal. In particular, the latter is characterised by the effectiveness of end-to-end encryption, which provides high data privacy for chats. The application ‘Signal’ allows you to apply secrecy not only in one-to-one exchanges but also in group exchanges and phone calls. Telegram, on the other hand, requires manual intervention to encrypt communications. Among the radio services and map databases to consult without a connection, we find Radio Ukraine, Simple Radio, Maps.me and Flightradar, a precious source of air traffic updates.

ePPO – Since the day of its invasion, Ukraine has suffered from long-range missile attacks. However, the attacks have intensified in recent months as Russia has launched hundreds of cheap, Iranian-made Shahed-136 drones against cities and infrastructure. The Shahed-136







drones are a challenge to traditional radars because their initial flight trajectory is low, about 30 meters above the ground, and their small size means they have modest radar detection. As they get close to their targets, the altitude increases before they hit the ground with terrifying consequences. The latest application used to counter the attacks is called ePPO. This application allows Ukrainians to report drones and missiles by pressing a button on their mobile phone. Even civilians can report sightings of incoming Russian drones and missiles, increasing the shooting-down rate before they strike. The application relies on GPS, and the user just needs to point the device toward the incoming object and press a button to send the Ukrainian Army a position report. Generally, drones are set up to fly over remote areas or rivers and are often launched at night. However, the team that created the app believes that the drones' relatively low cruising speed, around 100 kilometres per hour, and their distinctive lawnmower-like noise make them easy to spot from the ground. For security reasons, the ePPO application only works in conjunction with the government application Diia, which allows Ukrainians to save their ID card, driving license and other official documents on their phone.

**Gis Art** – The Ukrainian Army uses an app to locate and destroy Russian targets quickly. It's called Gis Art for Artillery and was developed by programmer and former Ukrainian artillery officer Yaroslav Sherstyuk.

**Gis Art** – locates enemy targets and transmits them to the Ukrainian nearest weapons, coordinating guns, rocket launchers, mortars or drones. This way, while it used to take minutes to identify a target and destroy it, it now takes no more than 30 seconds. The app's operating system is reminiscent of that of Uber, which connects the passenger with the nearest car, providing real-time information on their position and proximity. Similarly, Gis Art can process data from drones,

smartphones, range finders and the like to identify and locate the enemy target. With this data, the system creates a real-time map that updates the position of the enemy Armed Forces and their movements, allowing the Ukrainians to control the battlefield very detailedly. Once the target is located, the app connects with the nearest Ukrainian howitzer, which receives the coordinates of the target with an accuracy ranging from 6 to 25 meters.

**Reface** – It is a face-swapping app developed by a Kiev-based start-up. It uses its popularity to inform Russian users about the ongoing invasion and direct international support. Indeed, the war in Ukraine has also extended to the media domain. While sheltering from the bombs dropped by Moscow, the Ukrainians have been trying for months to resist even the pro-Russian propaganda by spreading news, videos and "memes" across the border to show the consequences of the invasion. Thanks to machine learning, the app allows you to swap your face with the face of various celebrities in videos and gifs and share the result on social media. Reface has sent millions of push notifications to app users in Russia and worldwide, calling on Russians to join the protests and side with Ukraine. Indeed, one of the main objectives is to reach the Russian public by circumventing traditional communication channels, such as Twitter and Facebook, which have been limited in Russia. Reface continues to send users notifications and videos of the actual situation on the ground, overcoming censorship attempts.

**Air Raid** – This app has expanded the list of hazards reported to users, with a warning at the beginning and end of emergencies, with five types of alarm: aircraft, artillery bombardment, street clashes, chemical threat and radiation danger. Each type of danger corresponds to a different audio signal. In addition to warnings in a text message, the user receives instructions with recommendations on what to do depending on the

type of hazard. Air Raid has been developed to alert the Ukrainian population with the support of the Ministry of Digital Transformation. Now it is used by 12 million mobile phone owners, and the update is available for iOS and Android.

**Rwc** – This app collects evidence of Russian war crimes in Ukraine. Rwc is an acronym for "Russian War Crimes" and joins the government portal <https://warcrimes.gov.ua/>. The app offers the same functionality as the site, making submitting evidence faster. The application and the portal have clear instructions and guarantee to protect personal data and preserve evidence.

**Air Alarm and Air Alert** – The first app was developed to help Ukrainians find the nearest bomb shelter in the area by allowing the user to monitor one or more selected cities or regions. However, the second shows the map of Ukraine with the various regions: these turn red when the air raid alarm goes off and then go back to white once the alarm stops.

**Obimy** – The Internet is a bridge to the rest of the world: it is used to organise fundraising, aid, spread news, and feel less alone. Obimy is a messaging service that helps fight loneliness and keep in touch with loved ones without needing words, photos or videos. Only emoticons, a "messenger of feelings", and a team of young Ukrainian computer technicians had developed it before the invasion. And the Russians? In Ukraine, the Russian soldiers were "geolocated" thanks to dating apps. In the initial stages of the war, some Russian soldiers imprudently (or out of ignorance) used Tinder to meet Ukrainian women without knowing or thinking that this app displays its users within a radius of very few kilometres. This was revealed by the Western secret services, which have used social media since the first days of the invasion to follow military operations. Free dating apps have proved valuable for tracking Moscow's troops' movement. As soon as they noticed the flaw, the Russian military leaders ordered their soldiers to turn off their mobile phones.



# BACK TO THE FUTURE

## Armoured Forces in the Battlefield: between technological Innovation and Reasonable Pragmatism



Since 24 February, Europe has been facing a severe crisis generated by a conventional war. Even if apparently limited to the two belligerent countries, it causes multiple daily effects, including a renewed attention to collective defence and a solid push to modernise NATO countries' military forces. The analysis of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the lessons learned have forced Western leaders to a drastic change of perspective for

the preparation and deployment of national armies.

The conflict's first lesson reminded us that battles are fought with the weapons and means currently supplied to armoured units. Despite the capacity gaps accumulated over the last few decades due to a constant lack of resources and choices dictated by different commitments, armoured units are the "critical mass" necessary to exercise suitable deterrence against

potential competitors operating on the international scene. A second, equally clear lesson highlights the importance of armoured forces in contact manoeuvring. It has always been a decisive moment for the fate of a conflict. It develops through the right combination of "fire and movement" guaranteed by protected, fast, lethal platforms suitably supported by deep fire and a wide interconnection between sensors, decision-





*The G1 tank 'Aries' and the Infantry Fighting Vehicle (AIFV) 'Dardo' the Army's fleet will soon receive the necessary configuration upgrades for their use in modern operational scenarios.*

makers and weapon systems (networking warfare) to maintain the initiative over the adversary. On the contrary, poor planning, inadequate protection, and logistical support expose armoured units to continuous attacks conducted with anti-tank weapons and systems operating from the Third Dimension. As I had the chance to tell the leaders of the Allied Armed Forces (1), senior government representatives (2) and the Defense industry during the Warsaw

conference "Armoured Vehicles Eastern Europe (3) (AVEE) 2022", the Italian Army continues to guarantee the land combat capability of our national defence by directing future capability development towards technologically advanced and logistically sustainable solutions beyond 2035. The main effort lies in updating existing platforms' capabilities and launching programmes for acquiring new combat systems. In particular, the modernisation of the Army's

armoured component is oriented towards completing the supply of at least two heavy brigades capable of operating in the modern multi-domain operational environment with digitised platforms supported by highly enabling technologies (system of systems concept). The solid technological drive we are witnessing in the military field will have to be directed, in my opinion, towards a support function for the fighter who, especially in the



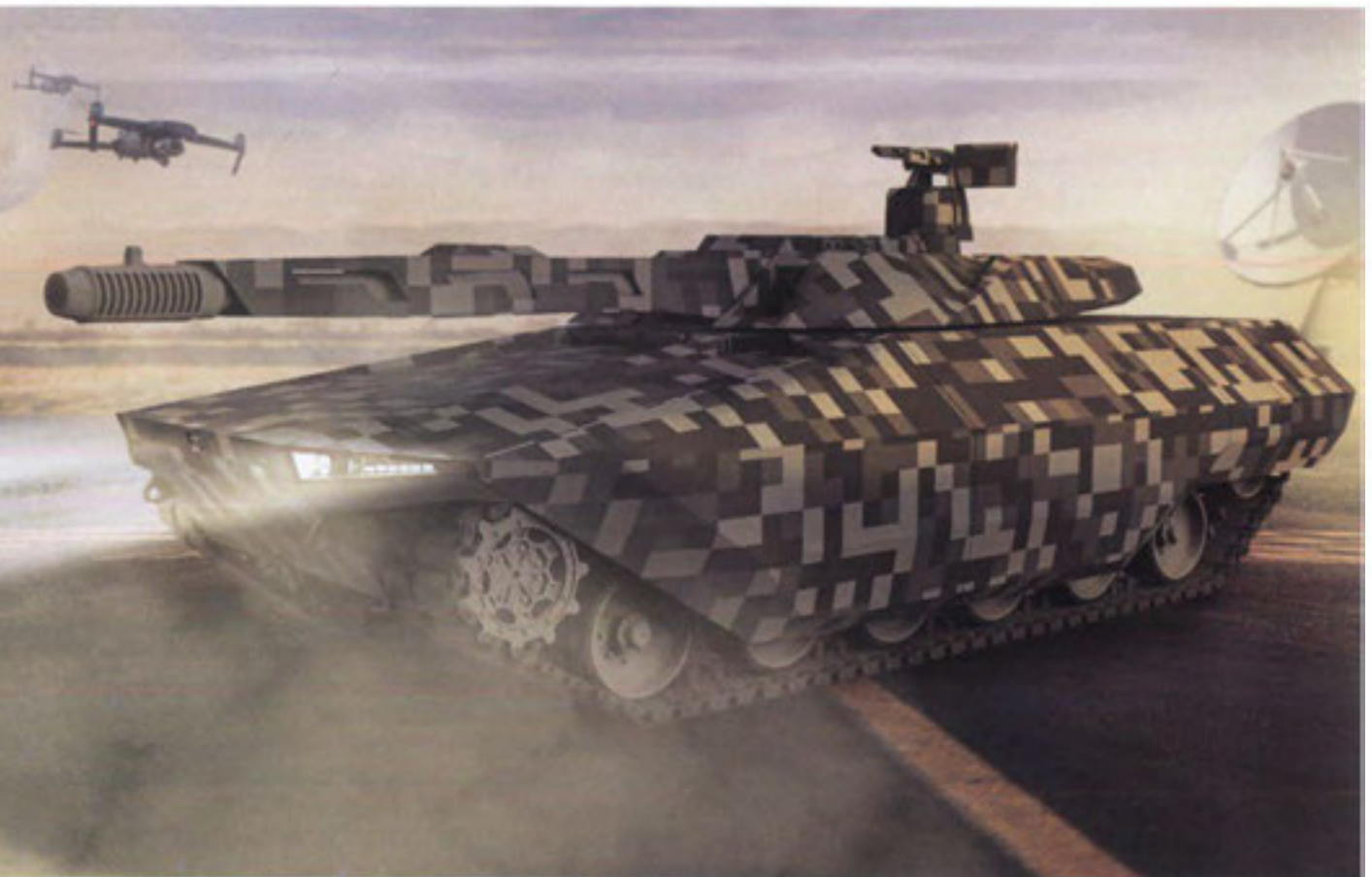
decisive phase of the battle, is called to use platforms which are certainly advanced and complex but still equipped with the right rusticity, protection and resilience. If, on the one hand, digitisation makes it possible to transmit and process critical information in times functional to a rapid engagement of targets at considerable distances, on the other, we cannot underestimate its intrinsic vulnerability to computer and electronic attacks (CEMA, Cyber Electromagnetic Activities). Therefore, based on the operational experiences gained by our units and in line with the capability developments required by NATO, the Italian Army has started to acquire cyber-native, integrated and interoperable platforms capable of guaranteeing the crew a high level of survivability and firepower necessary to eliminate the threat while minimising collateral damage. The New AH-249 Exploration and Escort Helicopter (NEES), which will replace the "Mangusta", and

future Armoured Infantry Combat Systems (AICS) vehicles, developed through high-profile operational requirements shared with national and international manufacturers, are the most demanding and crucial acquisition programme ever undertaken by the Army. These new platforms are characterised by marked modularity, high protection and mobility. Modern AICS platforms are designed to equip the heavy Army component "4.0" (4) alongside future Main Battle Tanks (MBT). Not only will they replace the "Dardo" combat vehicles, but they will allow the Army to deploy an entire family of armoured vehicles (command post, mortar carrier, mobility and counter-mobility, scout, anti-aircraft, casualty carrier and ammunition carrier) capable of meeting the needs of the heavy component in a combined arms perspective. The new combat vehicle will equip not only the heavy infantry and combat engineer units (configured as combat teams and advanced combat reconnaissance

teams) but also all the other Combat Support and Combat Service Support units which are the protagonists of the entire manoeuvre space.

A marked growth potential characterises the AICS and MBT projects, which should be considered related and sequential programmes. The AICS programme can catalyse experiences and skills for the national industry. It will make it possible to achieve high technological goals that national industry can capitalise on in international cooperation to create the new European MBT. Furthermore, AICS and MBT will be able to integrate UGV/UAV (manned or unmanned) subsystems while integrating, at the same time, these systems with enabling technologies so that they will become "systems of systems".

In summary, modernising the armoured component of the Army aims to develop a complete, interoperable and readily deployable capability in support of the fighter who, taking advantage of modern combat vehicles supported by



*The future '4.0' Army Heavy Brigades will be equipped with cyber-native, integrated and interoperable platforms in the joint and allied domains.*



drones and satellite capabilities, remains the resolver of today's and tomorrow's battles.

"The armoured forces are the decisive element in the contact manoeuvre."

"The Italian Army is oriented to technologically advanced and logistically sustainable solutions."

"The Army will equip Heavy Brigades with modern cyber-native, integrated and interoperable platforms."

"AICS and NEES are the most important systematic capability programmes ever undertaken by the Army."

"The armoured component will be complete, interoperable and readily deployable."

## NOTES

(1) As General Rajmund Andrzejczak (Chief of the Polish Defence Staff) and Maj. General Mihail Dimitrov Popov (Commander of the Bulgarian Land Forces).

(2) Including Ms Sandy Long, *Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Defense Exports & Cooperation*, U.S. Army.

(3) For more information, visit the web page <https://www.defenceiq.com/>



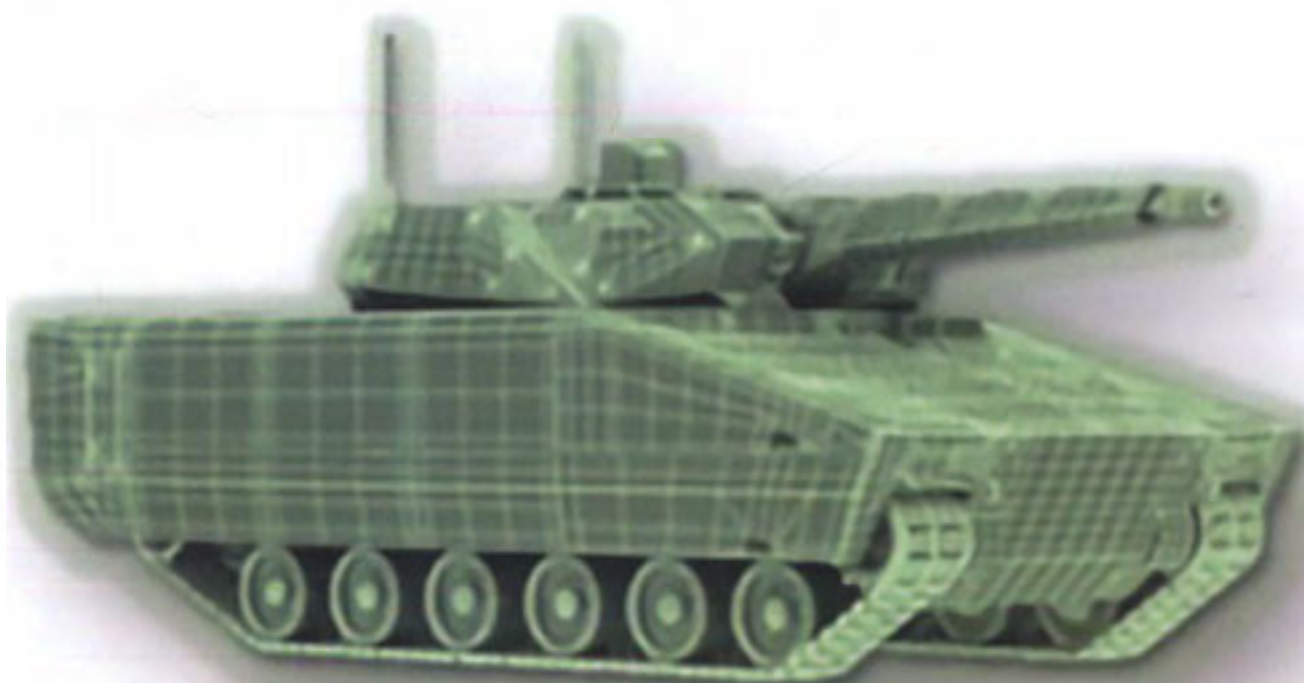
**Lieutenant General Gaetano Zauner**, was born in Palermo on 17 March 1962. In 1981, after obtaining his scientific high school diploma at the "Marie Curie" high school in Pinerolo (TO), he was admitted to the 163rd course of the Military Academy of Modena. He continued his studies at the School of Applied Military Studies in Turin, leaving as Lieutenant of the Infantry Corps. He attended the 120th Staff College Course, 4th Joint Staff College, and U.S. Army War College. From 7 July 2011 to 29 September 2013, he was the 56th Commander of the 132nd Armoured Brigade "Ariete". On 30 September 2013,

he assumed the position of Deputy Head of the General Financial Planning Division (Planning Area) of the Army General Staff. Starting on 21 May 2015, he took the primary function of Chief of the Land Transformation Department of the Army General Staff, simultaneously maintaining the position of Deputy Chief of the General Financial Planning Division until 3 August 2015. On 4 August 2015, he was appointed Head of the General Financial Planning Division. On 7 September 2016, he was appointed Chief of Staff of the Joint Operational Command. On 3 October 2019, he was appointed Deputy Commander at the NATO Rapid Deployable Corps - Turkey (NRDC-T) in Istanbul. On 30 August 2021, he assumed the position of Assistant Chief of the Army's General Staff.

events-armoured vehicle seasteer-neurope.

(4) The "Army 4.0" document is the concept paper presented by the Chief of the General Staff of the Army, which identifies the five development axes on which resources and commitment will have to be concentrated in the

medium term: contact manoeuvre, deep combat and manoeuvre in the third dimension, integrated defence and distributed logistics. (<https://www.esercito.difesa.it/comunicazione/Pagine/Esercito-4-0-prepararsi-alle-sfide-del-futuro-220914.aspx>).



*The AICS programme is aimed at renewing the entire combat capability of the Army's heavy forces through the acquisition of a family of next-generation platforms.*



# THE 8TH MARCH AND WOMEN

The true origins of the International Day







During the second international conference of socialist women, held in Copenhagen in 1910, Clara Zetkin proposed to establish a date in each country for an annual demonstration dedicated to the women's question, including the claim of the right to vote, which was, in those decades, a battle fought in many countries. The Day, to be held between the end of February and the beginning of March, should have had the support of men's political and trade union organisations, which, however, reacted with little enthusiasm.

In the following years, there were isolated demonstrations in Germany, Austria, Holland, Switzerland, the United States, and Russia. However, the first real 8th March was in Germany in 1914, at the opening of the week dedicated by the socialists to propaganda and recruitment. The poster prepared for the event read, "Forward with the women's right to vote".

Three years later, amid World War II, on 8th March 1917 (or 23rd February according to the Gregorian calendar still in use in Russia), female textile workers of Torshilovo and employees of the Vassilievsky Island tram depot marched in a demonstration in Petrograd's Nevsky Prospekt. They demanded bread for the soldiers' families, peace for their children and rights for themselves. Factory workers and groups of housewives exasperated by hours of queues for bread joined them. Together, they defied the police and soldiers; it was the beginning of the revolution and the end of the Romanov monarchy.

In Italy, the relationship between the many feminist movements and socialist women appeared to be very complex also because the party did not share the battle for the vote, which it wrongly considered a "bourgeois" issue; as a result, it did not consider organising events related to women's suffrage.

After the split in Livorno in January 1921 and the birth of the Communist Party, it was easy for

the women who joined the new party to organise an International Women's Day as a polemic with the PSI. The Day of 8th March 1921 was celebrated for the first time in Italy, and it was given a strong political and symbolic connotation to mark the break with the Socialist Party from which the Pcd'I was born. The practical consequence of this situation was the cancellation of the previous political women's movement in Italy to certify the novelty of communist female activism (Patrizia Gabrielli, Fenicotteri in volo. Donne comuniste nel ventennio fascista, [Flamingos in flight. Communist women in the Fascist era] 1999).

In the same year, the International Conference of Communist Women proclaimed 8th March "International Female Worker's Day" in memory of the demonstration of the Petersburg female workers, limiting it only to the working class and the communist movement.

The advent of fascism marked the suspension of a policy attentive to women after only two celebrations of 8th March, in 1921 and 1922.

It was only in 1945 that 8th March was again celebrated in Italy as International Women's Day, thanks to the activists of UDI (Unione Donne Italiane - Italian Women's Union), who, in that historical moment gathered Catholic, secular, socialist, communist, republican women. It was celebrated in factories, offices, and schools, with meetings, rallies and popular festivals.

In London, on that same date, women from twenty nations met and approved a "Women's Charter" to be sent to the newly formed United Nations Organization.

In 1945, Italian women achieved one of the objectives they had pursued for decades: the right to vote in political and administrative elections (DL No. 23 of 1st February 1945). It was a decisive step towards political citizenship, although the feeling remained of a choice to suit mass parties more than women, neglecting the long debate on women's suffrage.





*Demonstration for 8 March, photo by TPI.  
Facing page: Clara Zetkin.*

8th March of 1946 was honoured by the attention of all the daily press also because it was on the eve of the first administrative elections after the end of the dictatorship and the war, and it was the first time that women would cast their vote. It was then that it was decided to tie to the celebration the mimosa, an inexpensive and easy-to-find seasonal flower.

The following year, the 8th March was celebrated in Parliament, where the 21 women elected to the Constituent Assembly sat. Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi recommended that all the female employees of the ministries have the day off.

By then, the 8th March was considered a day of struggle, celebration, and self-gratification. The date also served to defend the right of women to work and the recognition of the role of head of the family for women who were the only source of income for the family.

In post-war Italy, the narrative of

the origins of the 8th March was completely transformed to the point of forgetting the historical birth. Previously, the 8th March had been hinged on the policies of the Socialist International and, later on, linked to the beginning of the Russian Revolution; such a tradition had become unsustainable in the Cold War climate of the 1950s.

Just as the date was growing in importance, its historical birth was erased and replaced by myths. The alleged commemoration of female workers who died in an unspecified fire, perhaps in Chicago, New York, or Boston, has become established in Italy. It was claimed that female workers on strike on 8th March 1908 died in a spinning mill or a shoe factory. Another legend links the 8th March to a spontaneous demonstration of female textile workers in New York in 1857, a demonstration brutally repressed by the police. This reconstruction was particularly

successful in France, where there was a strong urge to separate International Women's Day from its historical legacy, attributing much more ancient and spontaneous origins to the event obliterating any party affiliation.

Clearly, "the invention of a tradition" succeeded in shifting attention from the Russian Revolution to American capitalism, cruel but distant in time and from the sensitivity of Europeans. These presumed mythical origins inscribed the anniversary in a non-Soviet working-class tradition.

Over the decades, the approach to International Women's Day changed. The watchwords and the spirit with which this day was lived also changed. In the 1950s, the slogan of 8th March was peace, deeply felt amid the Cold War and the opposing blocs: an easily shared theme even if proposed by the left, which the centrist government tried to counter by preventing the distribution of bunches of mimosas and by dispersing the women who met



on 8th March to collect signatures for peace. In the following years, national campaigns were launched on that day, such as the one for nursery schools, better working conditions, and more balanced pay for men and women for equal work. The 70s were the years of feminism experienced in a thousand different forms. In 1972, for the first time, feminists celebrated the 8th March with a large demonstration in Rome, in Campo de' Fiori, which ended with a clash with the police and enormous media exposure.

Every year the slogans related to the political moment changed. In 1974, the referendum to abolish the divorce law was in the foreground. In 1976, the debate on the decriminalisation of voluntary termination of pregnancy was in full swing.

In 1975, during the International Year of Women, the United Nations celebrated 8th March for the first time. Two years later, in 1977, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 32/142, which invited member states to organise a "United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace" "to recall the fact that the security of peace and the full enjoyment of human rights



**Anna Maria Isastia**, has taught History of the Risorgimento and Contemporary History at the Sapienza University of Rome. She has been the national president of Soroptimist International in Italy and is currently president of the Soroptimist Club Foundation in Rome. She is co-director of the series "La memoria e le fonti. Identità e socialità" [Memory and Sources. Identity and Sociality], national secretary of the Italian Society of Military History (Sism), national councillor of the Anrp (National Association of Veterans from Imprisonment, concentration camps and the War of Liberation). She is a writer and a lecturer and has published over 250 scientific works,

including 16 monographs and 18 curatorships.

*"Il volontariato militare nel Risorgimento. La partecipazione alla guerra del 1859", USSME, 1990; "Soldati e cittadini. Cento anni di Forze armate in Italia", SMD, 2000; "L'Unità delle donne: il loro contributo nel Risorgimento 2011"; "Donne in magistratura. L'Associazione Donne Magistrato Italiane", 2013; "Una rete di donne nel mondo. Soroptimist International, un secolo di storia (1921- 2021)", 2021. ["Military volunteers in the Risorgimento. Participation in the war of 1859", US-SME, 1990; "Soldiers and Citizens. One hundred years of Armed Forces in Italy", SMD, 2000; "The Unification of Women: their contribution to the Risorgimento 2011"; "Women in the judiciary. The Association of Italian Women Magistrates", 2013; "A network of women in the world. Soroptimist International, a century of history (1921-2021)", 2021]*

the active participation, equality and development of women". The date chosen by many nations, including Italy, was 8th March.

feminism linked to the DC and the Cif (Italian Women's Centre) also began to celebrate the 8th March together with many other Catholic associations.

Finally, in the 1980s, socialist women began to claim the socialist origin of the Day by denouncing the communist propaganda and historiography that had made it a day of struggle and mourning, a sort of 1st May for women, an occasion for opposing demonstrations, recalling "the ingenious capacity of third-internationalist imposture which in the 1950s had spread a completely invented genesis of 8th March linked to an episode that probably never occurred". The fact is that 8th March "was born neither as a day of struggle and mourning nor as a celebration" (Elena Marinucci, *L'otto marzo delle socialiste*, "Avanti!" 8th March 1987). Yet, after such a long time, the vulgate remains the "invented" one, even if in 1987, Tilde Capomazza and Marisa Ombra published a book on the history of 8th March and a new work came out in 2010 signed by Alessandra Gissi.





by  
Pierfrancesco  
Sampaolo

# VICTORY VERTICAL

A piano at the front



THE INSTRUMENT OF THE IMMORTALS



**THIS STEINWAY RODE  
IN A FLYING FORTRESS!**

**T**HE newspapers report that a Steinway Victory Vertical was dispatched to United States troops in the bomb-bay of a Flying Fortress!

This specially built piano is furnished by our Government to soldiers and sailors in far places of the world — England, Australia, New Guinea, and elsewhere.

6. G. are also building glider wings and

When the United States of America entered the war in December 1941, things became difficult for Steinway & Sons, the world's most prestigious piano company. Who would have thought it would be a 'slightly different' piano that would lift its fortunes?

The outbreak of World War II required all the country's industries to support the war effort, including repurposing the production line: it is understandable that a factory of famous pianos encountered some difficulties. Having the necessary raw materials, such as ivory, copper, precious woods, iron, brass, etc., was also a big problem because they were either needed by the government for war industries or challenging to obtain due to the restrictions caused by the conflict.

After significantly reducing their staff, Theo and W.R. Steinway at first began producing parts for military gliders. Later, they signed a contract with the National Casket Company to manufacture coffins—a very 'sad' and unprofitable assignment.

But shortly after that, Theo Steinway

received a proposal he could not refuse. The U.S. government's War Production Board asked Steinway & Sons to design a piano that could be air-dropped to troops at the front. Theo had four sons in the war and knew how important it was to boost soldiers' morale in those terrible days, so he took the assignment very much to heart.

Paul H. Bilhuber, one of Steinway's managers, led the project's conception by creating the G. I. Steinway or, more commonly, the 'Victory Vertical'. The first prototypes were available as early as June 1942. It was necessary to deviate from Steinway's classic, high-quality productions. There was a need for a rustic, very durable, transportable by hand, and, most importantly, playable piano. It could not be a grand piano because of its size and legs, which indeed would not have withstood impact with the ground once dropped from a B-17. It was, therefore, decided on a vertical model: the keys were made of celluloid paste instead of ivory, and

a film of iron instead of copper (a material that the government had requisitioned) coated the strings of the low notes. In addition, there were carrying handles on the four sides so that four men could carry it. In addition, there were carrying handles on the four sides so that four men could have it. The piano weighed about two hundred kilos. The panelling was also decidedly 'non-traditional': the 'Victory Vertical' was 'tropicalised' using glues and impregnants against termites and insects; it was also resistant to water and moisture.

In addition, the piano was equipped with an internal compartment for a maintenance and tuning kit and a range of musical scores, from light music to boogie-woogie, sacred hymns and classical music. The piano came in three colours: olive drab for the Army, blue for the Air Force and grey for the Navy.

In 1943, the government first ordered 405 pianos and, soon after, another 800; in 1944, orders almost doubled. The goal was to provide four of them











for every unit deployed in the war, anywhere in the Pacific, Europe, rear area, at home, schools, social inclusion institutions, and religious facilities.

Many witnesses tell us of this instrument's great success: from the front lines to the ships to the military hospitals, many were the stories and letters of evenings spent in company singing and playing, forgetting, for a moment, the privations and horrors of war. For example, Soldier K. Kranes, a few days before he was killed by a German tank, wrote to his mother in May 1943 about a jeep that arrived at base camp one evening with a trailer and something strange on it; there was a 'Victory Vertical', green like the jeep itself. The happiness of playing it, singing with his comrades after the messing food, was an indescribable thrill. Still another soldier reported how, even after the war, he whistled the songs he had sung in those days with his fellow soldiers after receiving the piano.

In terms of quality, in light of its rusticity and being "cheap", the G. I. Steinway had many detractors, but just as many renowned musicians who instead appreciated its 'romantic' idea, as well as its characteristic sound. More than 5,000 were produced in various colours, and Steinway continued to sell them after the war until 1953.

In 1961, the Captain of the nuclear submarine 'USS Thomas A. Edison' wanted one in the crew mess room. The piano would remain there until the vessel was decommissioned in 1983 and then moved (where it remains today) to the Navy Historical Centre in Washington, D.C.

A yellow advertising leaflet, made after the war, depicting a B-17 bomber and a 'Victory Vertical' read, 'The instrument of immortals. This Steinway travelled in a flying fortress!' The image almost tells that the B-17, instead of bombs, was throwing pianos. This may be an evocative way to leave behind the horrors and emphasise music's contribution to this story. Let it not be said that the Victory Vertical did not do its part.



# EARTH AND WATER

by  
Giorgio  
Scotoni

## Territoriality as a factor of power in the Russian world

In 1904, Halford Mackinder recounted the genesis of his revolutionary Heartland Theory:

*'The particular events out of which sprang the idea of the idea of the Heartland were the British War in South Africa and the Russian War in Manchuria. [...] The contrast presented by the British war against the Boers, fought 6,000 miles away across the ocean, and the war fought by Russia at a comparable distance across the land expanse of Asia, naturally suggested a parallel contrast between Vasco da Gama rounding the Cape of Good Hope on his voyage to the Indies, near the end of the fifteenth century, and the ride of Yermak, the Cossack, at the head of his horsemen, over the Ural range into Siberia early in the sixteenth century'. (1)*

Similarly, the Russo-Japanese War became a revelation for Russian geopolitics. Among scholars, the lesson learned in 1905 sealed the prevalence of theoretical geography over Gen. Miljutin's geostrategy, which had inspired tsarist expansionism for half a century. The new school is interdisciplinary and investigates the environment by integrating geography, economic statistics and demography. In contrast to geostrategy, which conceptualises space as a supplier of resources and potential theatre of war, theoretical geography assumes it as an element shaped by the anthroposphere, in which the decisive factor is not so much what the surrounding environment offers man but rather the man himself(2). Its greatest theorist was Benjamin Petrovich Semenov Tjan-Shanskiy (1870-1942), who is today referred to as the father of modern Russian geopolitics. He went beyond tsarist Eurocentrism - the so-called Petrine paradigm, where autocracy embodied the importance of Europe over Asia - to enucleate the first self-representation of Russia on a global scale.

In 1912, the scholar presented the report 'On the Forms of the Most Powerful Territorial Possessions Relating to Russia' to the Russian Geographical Society (3).

The work investigated the formation processes of great empires through multiple factors, identifying three cradles of civilisation: the Mediterranean-Black

Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and Sea of Japan-Yellow Sea areas.

The conceptual core of the study was based on the identification of three competing models of domination: ring systems, structured around an inland sea (Roman empire, Amerindian empires, Japanese empire); fragmented archipelago systems (British, Portuguese empires); continental sea-to-sea systems (USA, Russia).

According to Semenov Tjan-Shanskiy, territoriality is the strategic factor that ensured the continuity of Slavic settlement in Eurasia and allowed Russia to project power from the Black Sea to the Pacific. His vision was antithetical to the thalassocracy theory and models based on the oceanic dimension. It was indeed the overland advancing from one sea to another that ensured successful Russian colonial expansion.

Reversing Eurocentric codes, Semenov Tjan-Shanskiy located the heart of the empire in the extension from the Volga to the Bajkal, i.e. Russian Eurasia, which coincides with Lamasnky's middle world of Eastern Slavs, Ugro Finns, and Turkish speakers. The historical process blended the three peoples and forged a unified cultural and political identity. By contrast, the 1905 crisis showed how artificial the border between European and Asian Russia was and the urgency of rebalancing the two halves, shifting the development

centre of gravity eastwards. If valorised, the disadvantaged peripheries could enable the Russian sea-to-sea system to take a quantum leap forward and transform itself into a world power.

Semenov Tjan-Shanskiy's conception of space anticipates the transformation of 1917. Until the Revolution, tsarist geopolitics remained Eurocentric and perpetuated the primacy of the Russian nationality over the others in the name of the empire's Christian-Aryan identity. The Great War and Civil War transformed Russian space. The former empire lost its most prosperous and populated regions in Europe: Poland, Finland, the Baltic States, Belarus, and western Ukraine. The relocation of the capital to Moscow is emblematic of the downsizing. In 1922, when the USSR was founded, quo ante sovereignty was restored only in the East.

Facing reality accelerated the paradigm shift. The new power balanced the retreat from the west by capitalising on the Eastern dominions. On the one hand, it enhanced the territories in Central Asia - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenia, and Uzbekistan - on the other hand, it expanded militarily its sphere of influence in East Asia - from Tyva to Mongolia to China. The transition to the USSR did not only change geography. The advent of Bolshevism marked a break in identity. Post-revolutionary Russia eliminated any reference to the Russian world



(*ruskij mir*, equivalent to the *orbis romanus*) and created a Union based on the ecumene of the socialist camp. Following Sovietisation, the nation-builders abandoned the European idea of statehood underlying the empire, just as they abandoned the European cultural identity expressed by the adjective 'Russian'. The Constitution of 1924 elevated the Eastern peripheries to the rank of republics and established an unprecedented Eurasian nation-state. The turn to the East thus coincided with a new institutional architecture—a regeneration of political identity in which the country's self-representation would be conveyed by the so-called Soviet world shaped by the Stalinist restoration.

The empire's collapse did not affect the continental importance of the USSR according to Semenov Tjan-Shanskiy: 'Even after the loss in 1918 of most of the Western dominions, the country remained the largest state territory in human history' (4). He gave a similar interpretation as in 'Socialism in One Country', which identifies territoriality as the key to pursuing the national interest. It was precisely under Stalin's great turn that the scholar's vision found fulfilment. In 1928, in his main work entitled 'The Region and the Country', the author declined the 'sea-to-sea' system and his idea of 'struggle for space' from a Soviet perspective.

Semenov Tjan-Shanskiy emphasised that the Atlantic area, where Russia geographically belongs, drives development, identifying 'the backbone of mankind' in the most powerful states in the northern hemisphere, primarily the USA and the USSR. While moving the capital to Moscow healed the centre-periphery imbalance, the USSR inherited the handicap of the sea-to-sea model, where losing either outlet could destroy the entire system. He thus heralded a strengthening in Asia by creating production hubs, rail networks and internal waterways to connect the Soviet economy to world routes. Semenov Tjan-Shanskiy's ideas, brought up to date, directed the spatialisation of the 1930s when industrial centres were built from scratch in Siberia and the Five Seas Network, the river system connecting



*Benjamin Petrovich Semenov Tjan-Shanskiy*





Sergei Shoigu and Vladimir Putin.

the seas of the USSR, was established. Regardless of the USSR ban on geopolitics - branded as pseudoscience since 1934 - the affinity between Stalin's grand strategy and the scholar's ideas is undeniable. Stalin based his foreign and defence policy on territorial domination. While force is favoured in international relations, territorial growth became the core of Soviet security doctrine. According to Stalin, gaining space offers a strategic advantage. Thus, in 1939, the response to Hitler's Reich was the invasion of Finland and the annexation of Moldavia and the Baltic states. The Russian space is changeable. In 1991, the dissolution of the USSR brought the Federation's borders back to the pre-Petrine era. This time, downsizing is twofold. Besides its dominions in Europe, Moscow lost all the Caucasus and Central Asian Republics and, with them, control over crucial resources. The 'return to the past' is not followed by a redefinition of the spatial paradigm. Proclaiming itself to be the successor state of the USSR, the new Russia portrays itself by attempting a compromise with the past: a return to

the Russkij mir by hybridising it with the Soviet heritage - an ambiguity expressed in the very state symbolism where the red star coexists alongside the double-headed eagle.

The operation is fuelled, on the one hand, by the politics of nostalgia (5), on the other hand, the revival of geostrategy inspires the establishment far more than Dugin's neo-Eurasianism. It is no coincidence that the rediscovery of the tsarist tradition has the Russian Geographical Society among its major sponsors. The Russian Geographical Society was revived 20 years ago as a strategic think tank. Since 2009, it has been chaired by Shoigu, the current Minister of Defence, while the Foundation Board has been headed by Vladimir Putin since 2010. Having failed the identity compromise, Moscow again hinges security on territoriality. On 7 December, boasting the conquest of four Donbas regions as the most tangible result of denazification, Putin added: 'Now the Sea of Azov is an inland sea of the Russian Federation: this is the crucial thing' (6).

## NOTES

- (1) H.J. Mackinder, *The Round World and the Winning of the Peace*, *Foreign Affairs*, 21 (1943), pp. 595-605.
- (2) A.I. Voejkov, *Raspredelenie naselenija Zemli v zavimosti ot prirodnykh uslovij i dejatel'nosti cheloveka*, 1906. p. 650.
- (3) V.P. Semenov Tjan-Shanskiy, *O mogushhestvennom territorialn'om vladenii primeritel'no k Rossii. Ocherk politicheskoy geografii*, IIRG Pietrogrado, T. 51, n. 8, 1915.
- (4) B.P. Semenov Tjan-Shanskiy, *Geograficheskoe izuchenie Sovetskogo Soyuza. Desjat' let sovetskoy nauki: sbornik statej*, Gosizdat, Mosca-Leningrado, 1927, p. 266.
- (5) Cfr. S. Walker, *The Long Hangover: Putin's New Russia and the Ghosts of the Past*, Oxford Press, 2018; S. Novack, *The politics of nostalgia: Perils and untapped potentials*, *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, 22 (1), (2017) pp.2-5.
- (6) Statement to the Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights, 7 December 2022.





**Giorgio Scotoni**, historian, a graduate of Bologna and PhD student at Voronezh University. Since 2007, lecturer of Russian history and culturology in Voronezh (Voronezh State Agricultural University, Voronezh State Pedagogical University) and Moscow (RGGRU University, MEPhI University). Author of a hundred or so articles, reports and publications on the First and Second World Wars. Co-author of documentaries in Italian and Russian on the war on the German-Soviet front ("La disfatta sul Don: la verità sull'Armata italiana in Russia", co-author Giorgio Rochat. DVD, Focus Storia no. 26, Mondadori 2008; "Russia - Italy. Il fronte della memoria" (Russia - Italy the memory front) with Michele Calandri, Producer: Maria Erica Pacileo, 2009; "Oni shli za Gitlerom - Istoria odnoj koalizii" I, II (They have gone for Hitler. History of a coalition) Tv "KULTURA" 8-9.05. 2018; "Voinà - Vlast Fakta" (War - The power of facts) Tv "KULTURA", 2018. "Bitva

koalizii. Vtoraja mirovaja voinà" (The War of Coalitions. The Second World War) TV "Zvezda", 18.05.2020. He dedicated three studies in Italian to the Russian Campaign ("L'Armata Rossa e la disfatta italiana: 1942-1943. The annihilation of the ARMIR on the Middle and Upper Don in the unpublished documents of the Soviet commands", Trento, ed. Panorama, 2007; "Background of the Italian defeat in Russia in the unpublished documents of the 8th Italian Army", co-author Serghej I. Filonenko, 2 v., Trento, ed. Panorama, 2008; "The trusted enemy. The war of extermination in the USSR and the Alpine occupation on the Alto Don" Trento, ed. Panorama, 2013) and one in Russian ("Urok dlja Mussolini: istorija boev sovetskikh vojsk protiv 8-i ital'janskoj 1942-1943 gg". A lesson for Mussolini. History of the Red Army's operations against the 8th Italian Army in the years of the Great Homeland War 1942-1943) Voronezh VGPU, 2016. For his contribution to Italian-Russian research cooperation he received a Letter of Commendation from the President of the Senate the Hon. Franco Marini (2007) and the Commendation of the Governor of the Voronezh Oblast A.V. Gardeev (2009). In 2014 with "The trusted enemy" he won first prize at the XII "Alpini Semper" competition, Ponzzone, 2014. In 2022 he contributed to the collective work "Geopolitics of thought and action" (Eds. E. Boria, M Marconi, Argos) with the study "The alternative for Russian politics. V.P. Semenov Tjan-Shanskiy and the Eurasian paradigm". For "Forge of Mars" he has just published the essay "From Port Arthur to Port Arthur. The unfinished war and the Soviet redemption in the Far East".



Halford Mackinder.





by  
Andrea Russo

# UNDERSTANDING A CONFLICT

## Afghanistan, Clausewitz and the People's War

The unexpected outbreak of the Ukrainian conflict has absorbed the attention and energies of civil society and our country's ruling class for months. However, we must remember what took place much further away, about a year and a half ago. On 15 August 2021, the curtain came down on the Afghan scenario. After two decades of conflict, the world was witnessing images in every way similar to those of a few decades earlier when the American adventure in Indochina ended.

One year later, it is appropriate to consider what has led to such an outcome despite significant efforts regarding human and material resources in this troubled world region.

The elements that made this mission so complicated are many. However, the thoughts of the most authoritative voice in military literature, that of the Prussian general and diehard opponent of Napoleon, Carl von Clausewitz, can aid a reasoned analysis. In his opus magnum, 'On War',

published posthumously in three volumes between 1832 and 1834, the philosopher-general examined an almost unknown, and precisely for this reason feared phenomenon at the dawn of the Restoration: the People's War, which today we would more simply call insurrection or rebellion. It was the first time that the features of this type of warfare were systematically addressed and described, namely how to fight it and what preconditions were needed for it to break out. Although the Prussian general was aware of the subversive risk associated with the People's War, his goal was to investigate the nature of warfare in all its forms, especially since almost twenty years of Napoleonic wars had restored a military role to the popular masses.











**Andrea Russo**, Graduated in Political Science at LUISS University with full marks *cum laude* with a thesis in International Law on the Kosovo conflict. Master's Degree in International Relations at the University of Bologna with a thesis in Strategic Studies on Defence Weapons Systems. During his degree course, he was selected to participate in the NATO Model Event "Crisis Management", held by the NATO Allied Command of Transformation. He holds a Diploma in Geopolitics and Global Security from the Institute for International Policy Studies (ISPI). He has recently furthered his studies on counter-terrorism and counter-guerrilla warfare in Israel.

Clausewitz had witnessed such a conflict first-hand: the fierce resistance put up by the Iberian population to French rule between 1808 and 1814.

The word guerrilla, literally "small war," first appeared during this campaign. In Chapter twenty-six of Book VI, Clausewitz described the kinetic essence of the phenomenon almost a century and a half ahead of the other great theorists. For this great scholar, People's War is one in which 'the civilian population takes up arms' and works like a 'slowly spreading flame'. In the same Chapter, Clausewitz lists five indispensable conditions for the People's War to be effective. The conditions are 'that the war must be carried out within the country; it cannot be decided using a single disaster; the theatre of war must include a considerable extent of territory; the character of the people must favour the implementation of the measure; the country must be very rugged and hardly accessible, either because of mountains, or woods, or swamps, or the cultivation of the soil'. Moreover, Clausewitz noted how a poor population accustomed to hardship and deprivation and low population density are optimal conditions for resistance to be found everywhere and, at the same time, nowhere. In this war of attrition, the targets of popular resistance should not be the large numbers of opposing armies but their logistics. Movements, communications and supplies,

already a difficult task, are the appropriate targets to paralyse a large army and prevent it from operating effectively. Clausewitz greatly emphasised the naturally 'asymmetrical' character of the relationship between strategy and tactics in the People's War. Strategically, resistance against an invading army can only have a defensive connotation; tactically, the people in arms must never assume defence on the battlefield since, on the ground, the enemy would destroy them. Engage where and when you prefer; never be engaged. In People's War, according to Clausewitz, the Centre of Gravity of the insurgency resides in public opinion, in the key figures who animate the popular uprising, and in those leaders who, somewhere between the political leader and the military commander, consolidate the insurgents' will and direct it toward a specific end. The recently concluded Afghan conflict brings to attention interesting similarities between the analysis of events and the requirements identified by Clausewitz for a successful insurgency. The Afghan territory presents a morphology similar to the insurgent theatre described in "On War". It is a vast area (more than twice the size of our country), characterised by impenetrable mountains over five thousand meters high, sandy deserts and rocky depressions. It is a particularly arduous challenge for those who intend to advance there,

even if prepared. The conflict dynamics have often followed the pattern theorised years ago by Clausewitz. The Taliban managed to avoid falling into the trap of the great annihilation battle long sought after by the coalition Armies. The insurgents, dead and alive, often remained ghosts, fragmenting the rhythm of the fighting into an endless number of constant skirmishes, knowing that each Western casualty would weigh like a boulder on the morale of nations and governments. For nearly two decades, the Islamic Student Movement has withstood massive firepower while suffering losses that would prove untenable for any professional army; despite this, they have not given up.

From these brief outlines, it is possible to grasp how much the strategic set-up of the Afghan conflict traces the conditions theorised by Clausewitz about the People's War. Similarly, the ability of fundamentalist leaders to conceal themselves and continue the struggle demonstrates how, in an insurgency, the figure of the leader of the masses plays a decisive role in the outcome of the conflict. Suffice it to think of the role and prolonged latency of commanders such as Osama Bin Laden, Mullah Omar and Jalaluddin Haqqani (the latter two died of natural causes while at large).

A better understanding of Carl von Clausewitz's strategic theory could have contributed to different events.







by  
Alessandra  
Startari

*'Every everyday woman is a woman you don't expect'*

*If it were a slogan, we would say that there are everyday women and women you don't expect. In both cases we will meet women who have shown character, team spirit and courage, and we may meet them at the supermarket, in a hospital ward, or on the battlefield. They come from all times, and from all places in the world. And they have in common a story to tell, because every everyday woman is a woman you don't expect.*



## EVERYDAY WOMEN

When the journey begins, you are an everyday woman and continue to be so in private despite prejudice and criticism. You constantly search for yourself, take on many faces and travel through many lives without stopping. You need to know that direction is under your control. Direction is everything: the track, the horizon, and your belief. It's your boost. Your name is Madonna Louise Veronica Ciccone, and you are one of the most powerful women in the world.

Madonna Louise Veronica Ciccone was born in Bay City, Michigan, in 1958. She was the third of six siblings and lived in Pontiac until nineteen. Her father's Abruzzese origins have always made her proud. In her Italian self-description, she says of herself: 'I talk with my hands, I cry a lot, I am passionate, I have a bad temper, and I love nice shoes'. And it is no secret to anyone that his motto is Italians do it better. Her childhood was marked by the untimely death of her mother when she was only five years old. She was suddenly faced with a life of grief and responsibility. Her father experienced the loss by becoming absent and rigid, and her younger siblings had to be cared for. Madonna - this is her first name and not a mere pseudonym - grew up quickly and emancipated herself early on. Initially, she filled the void left by her mother by living everyday life as a diligent woman: she used to be a model housewife who attended Catholic schools and alternately wore her school uniform and a kitchen apron. There was, however, something that rigour and those rules did not undermine: her passion for dancing. Although she was enrolled in a public dance school, it was not enough; her plans went far beyond that track. To quote Levithan, 'Every ordinary-looking girl holds within her a decisive truth'.

'I went to New York. I didn't know anyone. I wanted to dance, sing, and make people happy; I wanted to be famous and have everyone love me. I wanted to be a star'.

It is common knowledge that Madonna arrived in New York with thirty-five dollars in her pocket, but it was the 1970s, and it was enough to sleep on her friend's couch doing fast-food shifts to support herself in the dance school, which would open her the first doors to success. That she was a true talent is unquestionable. Her determination exceeded her abilities also, and despite rape and a succession of compromises and obstacles that immediately dotted her path, she did not give up. And one stage after another, she obtained every possible award or recognition until she became an icon criticised, admired, harassed and envied, passing from one identity to another with the style of a chameleon. It is no coincidence that Baudrillard, as a good detractor, describes her in his book 'The Perfect Crime' as follows: 'Madonna paradoxically embodies the frenetic frigidity of our age. She can play all roles. But she can do it because she knows how to exploit her lack of identity.'

Does she have many identities or none at all? We will find out shortly.

In 2009, following the earthquake that devastated L'Aquila - always true to her roots - she made a conspicuous and providential donation through the Ray of Light Foundation without ever boasting of it publicly. In 2013, Madonna published Secret Project Revolution online, a manifesto denouncing the oppression and abuse of governments that restrict individual freedom. At the same time, she joined the 'Free the Arctic 30' initiative, and in 2006, Madonna was in Malawi for the AIDS prevention campaign and to support the construction of an orphanage that will save thousands of children from the streets and hunger. Adopting four of those children, she became the mother of six, counting her two natural children from two different marriages.

According to Scaruffi, the Madonna myth is merely 'an update of the figure of the romantic, fatalist heroine'.



## WOMEN YOU DON'T EXPECT

You are the most awarded artist in the world, but what has made you unique is your ability, even forty years ago, to prophesy your future: that track and that horizon. In your twenties, you declared who you would be, and you became a dancer, singer-songwriter, fashion designer, director, actress and film and record producer. A woman you don't expect, Veronica Ciccone's alter ego: Madonna.

Madonna is not only a talent but also a talent scout. Many artists owe their success to her. She has set countless records over the years: being the female artist who has sold the most records worldwide is just one of her global Guinness achievements. She has always blamed her hunger for life and revenge on losing her mother. The artist once stated that her mother did not educate her because there was no time; thus, her alter ego, the rebellious and exposed side, grew up without education, walking towards transgression. Her constant search for ego by playing off ever-changing personalities and transforming her image in every context, like a chameleon camouflaging itself for protection, has led critics to consider her an icon of immorality, but this is the most superficial way of assessing her. Partly, she suffers from latent psychopathy; partly, her constant camouflage is typical of the pure artist. Mask and disguise, mixing and versatility of genres, colour and chaos have always been essential tools for artistic work. Otherwise, it would not be art but mere exercise. We can consider Madonna a kaleidoscope of art forms that will never comply with the bon-ton handbook. Her way of appearing is often opposite to her actual being. As an artist, Madonna builds a world she does not have.

In the video story 'Papa Don't Preach', she brings to the stage a provincial tale in which a very young girl falls in love with a penniless mechanic and gets pregnant, and the widowed father who raised her is all she has. Hence the difficulty of confessing the pregnancy without hurting him or being kicked out. After a long silence, the two embrace. The following message is that the young girl will keep the baby, and they will make it somehow. In this story, Veronica Louise's alter ego emerges again. In real life, she has had many relationships, and when she was very young, she became pregnant several times but always miscarried. In the video story 'Papa Don't Preach', the girl holds the baby; this is perhaps her way to atone for the past. In her stories and song lyrics lies a desire to be what the real her is not always and the courage to live parallel lives.

Consequently, it makes no sense to judge her for some blasphemous manifestations because if her artist alter ego was profane in some circumstances, we could logically say that in her real life, she is not blasphemous but respectful of religious rituals, which is confirmed by his closeness to every creed, from Catholicism to Buddhism to Islam. She did not strictly embrace none but studied and followed them with true self-sacrifice. Therefore, I would affirm that Madonna has many identities and is the most significant evidence of free will ever. No one has ever implemented and realised every dreamt project as she has. Not the least is her commitment to Ukraine's side in the fight against Putin's war. 'Russia's greed-driven, aimless invasion must be stopped,' she declared in front of millions of people. With a remixed video of her song 'Sorry', she shows cluster bombs falling on civilians with bleeding faces, sending a strong message of protest and taking on a concrete commitment to ending the conflict.

Among other things, she was elected Woman of the Year in 2016, and while thanking the audience, she loudly declared: 'To the doubters and naysayers who put me through hell telling me that I could not, that I would fail, and that I should not. Your opposition made me stronger, made me try harder and made me the fighter I am today. It made me the woman I am today.' We cannot know whether her strength is due to those who opposed her, but for better or worse, there is no doubt that this woman is destined for immortality.

## ALESSANDRA STARTARI

A Roman writer and journalist since 2004, she has been dealing with current affairs and society for more than twenty years, trying to investigate, through targeted national television and radio programmes, documentaries and charity events of which she has been author, presenter and editor, the way of life and human reactions in different social strata, and the changes they undergo from generation to generation. Author of several successful articles and documentaries, under the pseudonym Alessandra Star she published "Come due spine" (2022) for De Agostini, a novel winner of the Watty Award, an international prize for the best author's fiction. "Amoreverso" (2021) for Amazon, legal romance. "Red Steam" (2020) for Amazon, Contemporary Paranormal.





by  
Alice  
Sciucchino

# COMMUNICATION WITH THE NEWBORN CHILD

The word 'time' does not exist in an Amazon tribe's language. They live free of clocks and calendars, disengaged from the idea of movement and spatial location. A banal phrase like 'spring is coming' makes no sense to them. They seem to possess no abstract notion of time.

Imagine any infant as belonging to this tribe. All babies, in fact, live and perceive the world around them only through their senses, in a full constant here and now. If they are hungry, they 'are the hunger,' if they are cold, they 'are the cold.' This can be really scary! For us adults, it is tough to relate to that world made up only of sensations and an immense present, accustomed as we are to rational verbal exchanges.

So how can we communicate with them? A great support, in this sense, comes from the use of routines.

Very structured jobs with well-defined schedules, such as military service, can greatly help because they reassure the infant and help him/her get into the rhythm of family life.

As we have already said, the child cannot calculate time in minutes and hours. Instead, it calculates it on the basis of daily actions, hence the repetition of certain rituals that precede the central moments of the day, such as meals or sleep. And it is precisely through these that our communication passes. However, it would be a mistake to fall into haste. Before finding the most suitable routines for you, it is essential to give yourself time for a practice that is very often underestimated but of enormous value: observation. Take as much time as you need (usually at least the entire first month) to follow your child's timing and surrender to him/her and his/her innate wisdom.

As Frédéric Leboyer teaches us, "The child comes from mystery. And he knows." If you allow the right amount of time to pass, you will notice that some things, such as sleeping or eating, spontaneously acquire their schedules, and the days begin to have a more predictable cadence. By relying on these natural times, you can start to communicate with your child and be a guide for him. But let us go into more detail and try to understand how to structure a routine that suits everyone's needs. The essential characteristics of the routine must be simplicity, daily repetition, and a stable schedule. It is crucial, therefore, to choose a sequence of gestures or sounds you think you can reproduce every day at the same moment for a good period of time. If you are a family who likes to go out at night and you plan to do so with your child, perhaps the bath before bedtime is not the right element for you. Just like rocking your baby while walking around the house, it might not be the best for your back in the long run! A particular song, sound or cuddle might be just fine instead! Whatever you choose, respecting the baby's needs, but also your own, will be fine, as long as it is always done at the same time and followed by the specific activity afterwards. Being able to foresee what is going to happen and thus being able to direct the day through rituals is a source of great reassurance for our little ones. Suppose the baby shows that he is hungry, and you have accustomed him/her to being laid down on a soft blanket just before the feeding. In that case, he/she will give mum or dad time to prepare. He/she will understand that his/her need will soon be satisfied and can also wait a few minutes longer. Through this type of communication, you can guide the little one towards times closer to your needs with gentleness and a great deal of patience. But not all families feel comfortable with this structured mode! Some feel comfortable with living more by the day! Forcing something not in one's mood can only generate tension, and babies, living purely on emotions, feel everything. So, it is best to always follow the path that leads as far as possible towards serenity and relaxation. Routines can be considered, along with many other strategies, as a tool to be pulled out 'when needed'. In fact, if it is true that time for a newborn baby only has meaning as the present moment, it is equally true that balances and, therefore, needs can change very quickly. Routines can consequently be inserted with due care at any time when the need is felt to facilitate a complex falling asleep, for example, or a particularly eventful family period.

In any case, loving observation and listening, accompanied by a small inner suitcase of skills and practical tools, can ease the path to a peaceful growth of your child and, don't forget, of your own.





**Alice Sciucchino** was born in Orvieto in 1985. After working as a nanny for ten years, her love for this profession and for children led her to study, at the Montessori Birth Centre, the Montessori method for the 0-3 age group, which she then put to use as a practical support tool for parenting. With the desire to stand by mothers and fathers more effectively in their first moments, in 2017 she trained as a Doula (a professional figure, capable of enhancing parenting skills, who emotionally and practically assists the family during pregnancy and after childbirth). She is a graduate student at education.

Contacts:

[alice.sciucchino@gmail.com](mailto:alice.sciucchino@gmail.com)







by  
Giuseppe  
Cacclaguerra

# GOOD OR BAD

Are humans aggressive by nature?

drawing of Igor Belansky.





South of the Congo River live our distant relatives, the bonobos. This species of primates is so similar to chimpanzees that they were considered the same species for many years, but bonobos differ, in particular, in their opposite temperament. They are sociable and peaceful. Is this a result of a long evolutionary path? Maybe so. What is certain is that females are at the top within their communities: females are leaders. It is, in fact, a matriarchal society. Bonobos are not aggressive and do not make war on each other. War, however, characterises another ape: the 'naked' one (i.e. the human being, in Desmond Morris's famous definition). Referring to war in a successful, recent essay, historian Margaret MacMillan mentions aberration. Specifically, 'War is not an aberration, best forgotten as quickly as possible' (1). War, therefore, is not a 'disconcerting and disorderly deviation' from the human path but one of its constants. This article will try, very briefly, to highlight the aspect of violence of this persistent presence because war is, first and foremost, organised violence. As war requires organisation and planning, it was believed, until not long ago, to be a human prerogative. This type of violence, however – targeting other beings of the same species – also belongs to the animal world. In the 1950s, the father of polemology, Gaston Bouthoul, believed that: "The only animals that know war as humans do are termites and above all ants" (2). More recent studies have shown that even the mammals closest to us, the chimpanzees – but not the bonobos – use violence at a high level within their community and outside it. Regarding human ancestral bellicosity, the oldest archaeological evidence dates back around 10,000 years ago. In Kenya, near Nataruk, a mass grave was discovered. The results were published in the prestigious journal "Nature" (3) in 2016. The reconstruction of that episode is clear. There is no doubt that it was a massacre. About thirty bodies of adults and children were found.

Many are excellently preserved; the signs of violent death are evident. Furthermore, the hands of some of them were tied. In his recent original text, "The Goodness Paradox", Richard Wrangham attempts an explanation through the theory of self-domestication. That is, men have selected their own nature, so they have chosen to be docile within their own community (where the level of "reactive" violence must be lower; reactive violence is for self-defence, the "instinctive" type) while proactive violence (planned or "cold") remained unchanged. In short, from the events of Nataruk to today, there have been few changes: less and less violence within one's own community but a high level of intolerance towards other groups. Let us now investigate the nature of the violence that drives us to wage war on one another. Is it instinctual, therefore biological, or cultural, therefore learned? The famed sociologist Barrington Moore Jr. believes war is the main cause of human suffering. However, he does not believe that violence or aggression is an instinct. He prefers to define it as an attitude. In fact, if it were an instinct, all populations on earth should possess it. But this is not the case (4).

Let us now try to verify whether humans are good at birth. Experiments by the Infant Cognition Center of Yale University come to our aid (5). Studies were conducted on a few months-old babies through puppet theatre. The child watched a simple scene in which a puppet was sometimes helped and sometimes hindered in an undertaking, such as climbing a mountain. When it came to choosing, the babies always chose the puppet that helped, even to the detriment of their own gain. The 'bad' puppet, in fact, brought two gifts instead of one like the 'good' one did. In short, we are born good. Nobel Prize winner Konrad Lorenz also concluded: 'Man is not at all bad from birth, but he is simply not good enough for the needs of modern social life' (6). Ethologist Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, on the other hand, attributed fundamental importance





*"El ballestero", work attributed to Hieronymus Bosch, second half 16th century, Museo del Prado, Madrid. The face depicted is an iconic representation of hatred.*

to the 'cultural' nature of man: culture as a sort of 'orthopaedic brace' to straighten human instincts (7). However, in the context of modern social life - an environment that only exists as a consequence of cultural development - a fundamental place is given to the ethics of obedience. Try to remember the monotonous answers - 'I just followed orders' - given by the various Nazi slaughterers to the question 'Why?'. The experiments that set the tone

on the subject were those of Stanley Milgram in 1961 and, ten years later, those of Philip Zimbardo. With Milgram tests, man's tendency to obedience was verified even when causing pain to others. In the experiment, shocks of increasing intensity were administered to a victim for each mistake they made. The shocks were obviously fake, but those who gave them believed they were real because they had tested them on themselves. The victim was

in a room, not visible - a detail that is not secondary: sight is the sense that affects us most - and his moans could be heard. Incredibly, only 5 out of 40 people stopped before giving a 300-volt shock (8). With Zimbardo's experiment, a prison was simulated, and the roles of guards and prisoners were assigned to the volunteers who had decided to participate. The experiment got out of hand. It was interrupted after a few days because the guards had



become oppressive and sadistic. In this case, the objective was to prove that violence was influenced by context and role in a specific environment. The results were, in both cases, shocking. Despite the criticisms levelled at the experiments regarding their scientific reliability, they are unavoidable reference points for those approaching these issues, also in the attempt to explain the reasons for the Holocaust: bottomless violence, a true abyss into which the human soul fell. There are endless studies on the topic. Among many, Christopher R. Browning and Zygmunt Bauman stand out. In 'Ordinary Men', Browning studied the members of Battalion 101 of the German Police Reserve. With a workforce of fewer than 500 people, this unit was able to kill nearly 40,000 Jews in about a year. The numbers are impressive, but what is even more shocking is that the members of this unit were not fanatical Nazi anti-Semites.

They were ordinary men: traders, workers, and employees of fairly senior age and even with dependent families. The thesis put forward by the author is that of competence to carry out a task, of emulation and conformity towards the group, which has the positive quality of having that 'strength', which is used to massacre the defenceless (9). Sociologist Bauman goes deeper. First of all, the Nazis' 'considerable skill' was to eliminate instinctive compassion. Then, through order and authority, they managed to remove responsibility from the individual by creating a substitute conscience. Finally, thanks to bureaucracy and modern 'problem solving', they made extermination processes as efficient as possible by industrialising them. The Holocaust, according to Bauman, was both a 'product' and a 'failure' of modernity. Hopefully, this very strong thesis will make us reflect on the weight of technology, especially today. Last but not least, it would be expedient for all our consciences to think that what happened was the work of men with mental defects, that is, pathological sadists. The answer is known:

unfortunately not. The vast majority were people we would not hesitate to define as normal. Precisely for this reason, violence, which has always been man's brutal companion but not our biological gene, must be studied and explored. Recent massacres in Ukraine are the most direct evidence that anyone, in certain conditions, is at risk of morphing into a policeman of Battalion 101. History and justice will follow their course, but responsibility is individual. In the end, there will be a possibly identified man behind that finger that pulled that trigger, not an order or an ideal. Always and only a man, at least for the moment. In any case, we must be cautious in this journey because, as Nietzsche recalled, 'when you look for a long time into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you'. To conclude, we go back to Congo, this time north of the Congo River. There, the chimpanzees continued to behave as usual - especially the males. They are aggressive: they constantly mistreat and beat even the females of their community. South of the river, fortunately for the bonobos, it is a completely different story. Over there, the leadership is female.

## NOTES

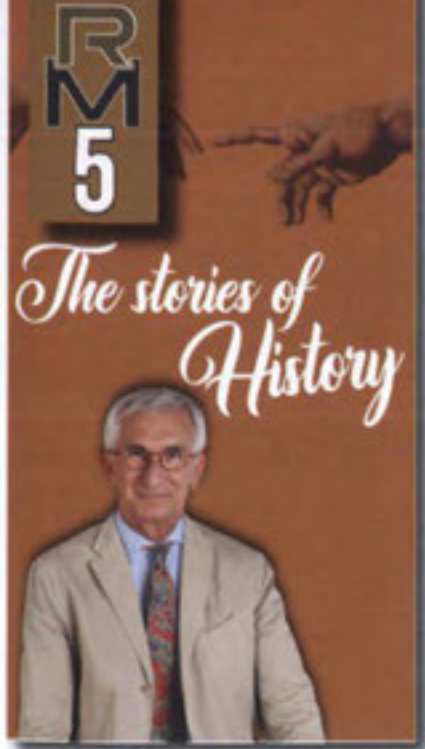
- (1) M. MacMillan, *War. Come la guerra ha plasmato gli uomini*, Rizzoli, Trento, 2021, p. 10. This book was reviewed on our pages in issue no. 04/2021.
- (2) G. Bouthoul, *Le guerre*, Longanesi, Milan, 1982, p. 237.
- (3) M. Mirazón Lahr, F. Rivera, et al., *Inter-group violence among early Holocene hunter-gatherers of West Turkana, Kenya*, "Nature", 21 January 2016.
- (4) There are societies "in which there are no wars, oppression or physical suffering", B. Moore Jr., *Le cause sociali delle sofferenze umane*, Edizioni di Comunità, Milan, 1974, page 58.
- (5) <https://campuspress.yale.edu/infantlab/media/>
- (6) K. Lorenz, *Il cosiddetto male*, Garzanti, Milan, 1974, p. 290.
- (7) "Man needs a culture that regulates his instinctual life", I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, *Etologia della guerra*,

- Bollati Boringhieri, Turin, 1990, p. 11.
- (8) Milgram, in summary, believes that absolutely normal people, without hostility, can turn into agents of destruction and continue even when the effects of their actions are evident. Few individuals have enough strength to resist authority, cf. S. Milgram, *Obbedienza all'Autorità*, Einaudi, Turin, 2003.
  - (9) "In every modern society, the complexity of life, with the resulting bureaucratisation and specialisation, weaken the sense of personal responsibility of those who carry out official directives", in C.R. Browning, *Uomini comuni. Polizia tedesca e soluzione finale in Polonia*, Einaudi, Torino, 2004, p. 198.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bauman Z., *Modernità e olocausto*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2021.
- Bouthoul G., *Le guerre*, Longanesi, Milano, 1982.
- Browning C.R., *Uomini comuni. Polizia tedesca e soluzione finale in Polonia*, Einaudi, Torino, 2004.
- Eibl-Eibesfeldt I., *Etologia della guerra*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, 1990.
- Feud S., *Perché la guerra?*, Boringhieri, Torino, 1975.
- Hilberg R., *La distruzione degli ebrei d'Europa*, Mondadori, Milano, 2011.
- Lorenz K., *Il cosiddetto male*, Garzanti, Milano, 1974.
- MacMillan M., *War. Come la guerra ha plasmato gli uomini*, Rizzoli, Trento, 2021.
- Milgram S., *Obbedienza all'Autorità*, Einaudi, Torino, 2003.
- Mirazón Lahr M., Rivera F., et al., *Inter-group violence among early Holocene hunter-gatherers of West Turkana, Kenya*, "Nature", 21 January 2016.
- Mitscherlich A., *L'idea di pace e l'aggressività umana*, Sansoni, Firenze, 1969.
- Moore Jr B., *Le cause sociali delle sofferenze umane*, Edizioni di Comunità, Milano, 1974.
- Morris D., *La scimmia nuda: studio zoologico sull'animale uomo*, Bompiani, Milano, 2011.
- Wrangham R., *Il paradosso della bontà*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, 2019.
- <https://campuspress.yale.edu/infantlab/media/>





by  
Umberto  
Broccoli

# THE WAR CRY WHICH FRIGHTENED THE ROMANS

---

Summer of 390 BC, a few days before 18 July. It was hot in Rome. People sought refreshment in the Tiber, but the temperature did not occupy their discussions. The day's topic was the threat of the Gauls, who were marching towards Rome from Senigallia. History has accustomed us to these marches of armies in search of power and living space, and in this case, the march on Rome is signed by Brennus, the charismatic leader of the Gauls, enemies of Rome at the time.

The army had arrived eleven miles from the city walls at the confluence of the Tiber River and Allia brook along the Via Salaria. Rome was still in its experimental phase: the Republic of patricians and plebeians, of Senate and Senators, of two consuls, two in number, to try to get along by controlling each other. Rome also focused on living space and - during the Monarchy - had laid the foundations for expansion. Under Anco Marcio, it conquered terri-

tories north and south of the seven hills, destroying cities and deporting their inhabitants as plebeians. 6th century B.C.: Tarquinius Priscus (616-578 B.C.) and Servius Tullius (578-534 B.C.) planned to surround Rome with its first walls, undoubtedly more efficient when outside those walls there was a free living space, a scorched earth dominated by the Romans as a buffer zone into which you would be an enemy if you were not invited.

Brennus was a rising power. His Gallic tribe fought, plundered, and conquered Etruria. They were considered barbarians, though—an ideological cliché Greece and Rome labelled with those who were not Greek or Roman. The Gauls were uncouth, ignorant, marauders, enemies of culture and 'mos maiorum', the customs of the fathers.

When news spread of the presence of these savages a few miles from Rome, the government approached the problem with reckless presu-

mption. Centuries later, Titus Livius described the attitude. The military commanders deployed the army near the river Allia 'without choosing a space for the camp in advance, without digging a trench that could serve as a shelter in case of retreat'. Not only that, the unconscious Roman presumption also put religion aside. In the words of Livius: 'forgetful, not to say of men, even of the gods, they had not bothered in the least to draw due auspices and offer propitiatory sacrifices'.

In short, the Romans had not even bothered to ask for divine help since holy war blessed by god has always been the authorisation to proceed with man's nefarious deeds. We are faced with a delirium of omnipotence probably due to Rome's victory over Veio, a neighbouring and rival Etruscan city a victory also achieved thanks to religion. Furius Camillus was a dictator at the time, ready to gamble every trump card to prevail, including religion. The temple of

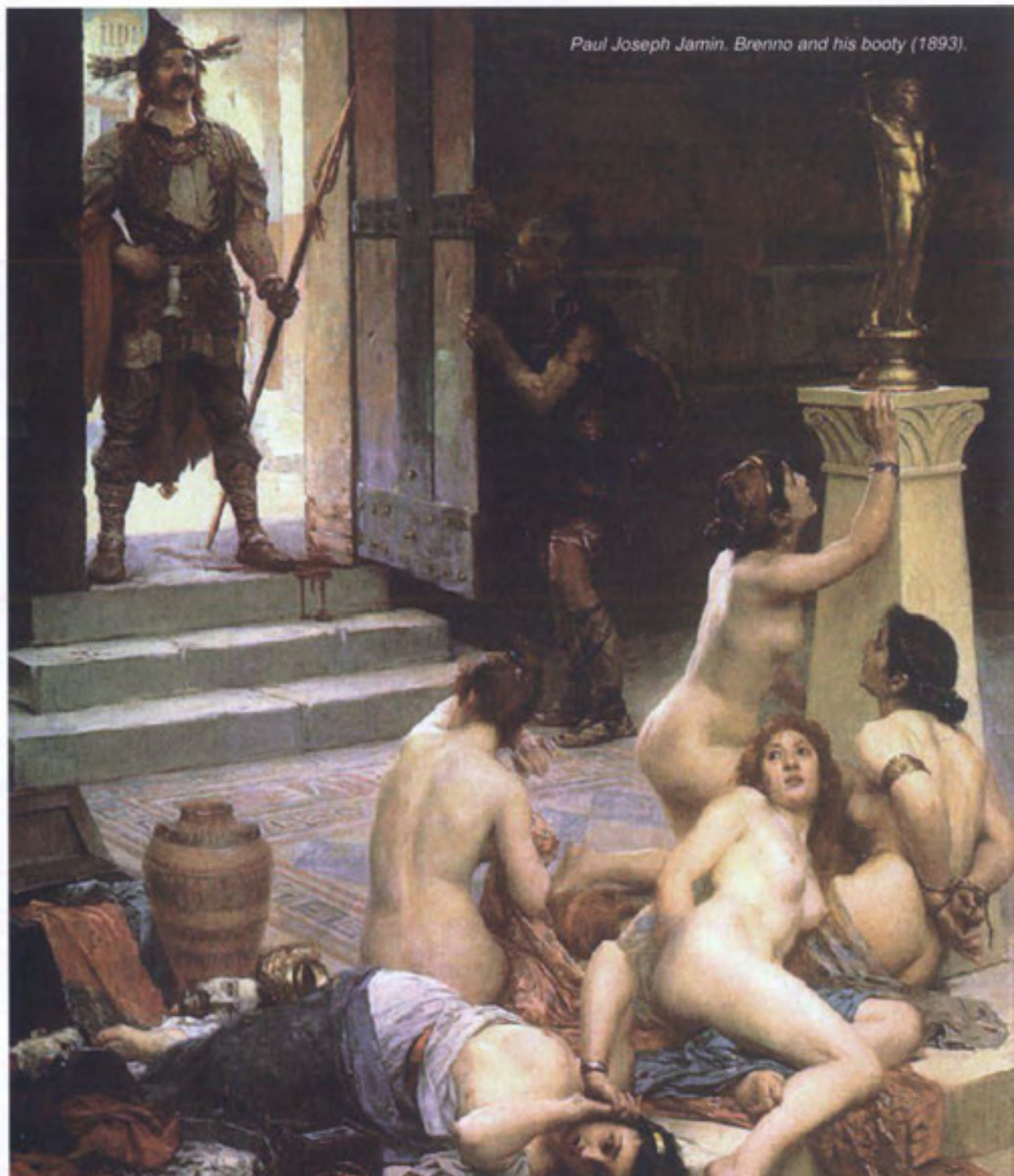


Juno Regina was in Veio, and Camillus promised the goddess that he would dedicate to her a more splendid temple than the one in Veio, invoking Apollo himself. Here is Camillus' prayer, according to Livius: 'Under your guidance, Apollo Pythianus, and stimulated by your will, I am about to destroy Veio, and I vow to consecrate to you the tenth part of the spoils. And together I beseech thee, Juno Queen, who now sits in

Veio, to follow us victors to our city, which will soon become yours too, for there a temple worthy of thy greatness will welcome thee'.

It was 396 BC, and the gods abandoned Veio. The city fell, and Rome made a desert around itself with a buffer zone of tens of kilometres to the north and south. All this, on closer inspection, can still be seen today. Rome is geographically isolated: there are no significant centres

within miles and kilometres, as there are for all other Italian cities. And this isolation stems directly from Rome's early wars of conquest. But in that summer of 390, things were different. Brennus's army was different from the one imagined by the Romans. The Gauls were not such a disorganised bunch of marauders with horned helmets on their heads. The Gauls were undoubtedly better deployed than the Romans, who







Evariste-Vital Luminais: The Gallic invasion



were too haughty and convinced of their presumed strength. And the distance between presumed strength and presumption is very short; the Romans were ready to founder in defeat. This is what happened, said by Livius: 'As soon as the cries of the Gauls reached the ears of those nearest at the flank and those furthest behind, the Romans, before even seeing that enemy they had never met before and without not so much as attempting to fight, but even without echoing the battle cry, fled intact and unharmed. There were no casualties in the battle. The men in the rear were the only ones to get the worst of it because, in the confusion of the flight, they got in each other's way by fighting each other. On the bank of the Tiber, where those on the left wing had fled after getting rid of their weapons, there was a great massacre: many, unable to swim or tired, weighed down by their armour and the rest of their equipment, drowned in the current. However, the bulk of the army managed to make it safely to Veio. And from there, not only did they not send reinforcements to Rome, but not even a messenger with news of the defeat. The men deployed on the right wing, which had kept away from the river at a point closer to the mountain's slopes, headed en masse for Rome and there, without even bothering to close the gates, took refuge in the citadel'.

The Gauls shouted. And that shout was enough to make the Romans run away cowardly and shamefully. They were all on the run, creating havoc in the rear, which was also on the run but hindered by the flight of the front lines. So the dead, the wounded and the missing were all caused by the fear of the Romans: some were crushed under the legs of the fugitives, some drowned in the river because they were weighed down by weapons that had never been used, some died of fear at the mere sound of the Gauls' war cry—a total defeat with all that ensued, well known and recounted in the history books. Falling back, the Romans left the city gates open, and the Gauls entered, sacked, outraged the Se-

nators, and burnt everything they could find to impede their march. Elsewhere, it was chaos, it was flight, it was terror. The Capitoline geese squawked at the arrival of the shouting Gauls. And, squawking, they warned of the enemies' arrival.

Marcus Papirius, Senator, was together with seventy-nine other resistant, white-robed, bearded men, motionless as statues. The shouting Gauls fell silent as they entered the hall and saw these statuesque figures: - Are they men or statues of gods? - The screaming barbarians asked themselves naively. After this, one of them approached Papirius and pulled his beard to see if he was a man or a statue. But Papirius was a man, indeed a Senator and - as such - worthy of respect and not at the mercy of any Gaul. So the no longer immobile Senator reacted with a thrashing given with his ivory sceptre on the head of the barbarian, who returned the courtesy by killing him.

Furius Camillus, dictator once again, intervened in the negotiation to restore peace—a difficult negotiation, like all negotiations between those who are winning and those who are not. The Gauls would leave if Rome paid a ransom in gold. And the Gauls, in addition to their belligerent shouting, also knew how to cheat on the price, so they rigged the scales with which to weigh the thousand pounds of gold needed to buy peace. To the Roman protests, Brennus reacted by shouting -this is a constant- 'Vae victis!' (Woe to the vanquished!). In his turn, Furius Camillus did not stand for this, shouting, 'Non auro, sed ferro, recuperanda est patria!' (It is with iron, not gold, that we shall redeem the Fatherland) and would eventually win. In addition to being legendary history, this is also reflected in the history of modern art.

Paul Joseph Jamin, a French painter, was an exponent of Academic Classicism, a movement of the second half of the 19th century, whose style was disliked and referred to as Academic Art, or art pompier, because it was executed with excellent technique, but was considered empty,

false and in bad taste. Jamin depicted Brennus and his booty in 1893. The scene is worthy of a sword-and-sandal film: this is the familiar name given to Greco-Roman costume films shot in the 1950s and 1960s. Brennus is in the background, complete with a horned helmet. Art pompier emphasised the ridiculousness in the very headgear of the warriors depicted, helmets similar to those of firefighters of the time. In the foreground, the treasures snatched from the Romans amidst unfailingly naked slaves. Évariste-Vital Luminais is another Art pompier artist. He tried his hand at The Gallic Invasion, whose colours tell of anguish and hope. In the foreground, the horses advance in a gloomy environment of despair thinned out on the horizon in the profile of the buildings of Rome, seen in a brighter light: the light of hope of overcoming the moment and resuming the road to freedom. More than a century after the paintings of these artists, I do not share the criticism raised then and not only against these manifestations. Myth is re-read and interpreted; it is a desire to give real body to stories lost in the mists of time. It attempts to give form to millenary words by definition without form. Suppose we criticise these images (even if, at times, overly romantic in their classicism). In that case, we must exorcise every subsequent reconstruction, from novel to theatre, cinema, radio and television. Fantasy is the highest point of thought.

**Umberto Broccoli**, archaeologist, writer, radio and television presenter, former Superintendent of Cultural Heritage of Roma Capitale, university lecturer. Books, articles in magazines, daily and weekly newspapers. Always linked to the Armed Forces. Lives between academy and stage, without forgetting sport: volleyball player in the last century. He prefers to call himself an amateur.





# INFANTRY: AT RUNNING PACE

by  
**Andrea Margelletti**

President CeSI  
Centre for International  
Studies

Crawling in the ghostly silence of a clearing devastated by artillery fire, capturing metre after metre of claustrophobic trench networks or manoeuvring through the treacherous ruins of destroyed cities, the omnipresent protagonist of operations in the Ukrainian Theatre is the infantry soldier. The ongoing conflict shows that amid the fog of battle, dismounted operators remain the decisive actors who defend, advance, conquer and win on the ground, even in a symmetrical, high-intensity conventional war. The infantry soldier skilfully and painstakingly clears enemy positions with light weapons and grenades in a slow and unnering battle of attrition. He is, however, a peculiar hybrid between the Infantry's past and future, to be looked to when training future fighters. The conflict in Ukraine has revealed a new model of the infantry soldier, combining an even more solid knowledge of traditional land manoeuvre Tactics, Techniques and Procedures with growing flexibility and adaptability in terms of tasks, equipment and weapons. On the one hand, the almost hand-to-hand engagements in the trenches evoke the First World War's clashes. On the other hand, the dispersion of units on the ground, the conduct of actions in small teams, the constant information coordination and the synergistic use of small, mini and micro drones, light mortars

and anti-tank guided missiles, out-line operators fully integrated into a combined-arms approach, capable of achieving decisive effects on the battlefield even with reduced numbers. The result is a highly qualitative military requiring extensive education and training. However, he must not be hyper-specialised but rather capable of acting autonomously in different roles, using a wide range of weapon systems. The problems posed by the tendency to excessive selectivity in the assignment of tasks down to the team level is precisely one of the lessons learnt from the Ukrainian scenario. The high casualty rate implies capacitive redundancies, even at the level of the individual infantry soldier, and the possibility of reconfiguring units with reduced manning without affecting their potential.

The progressively lowered command echelon to which the mission command principle applies and the increasingly complex and multidimensional operational environment further exacerbate this need.

Operations or exercises are then the primary experience to hone the skills of personnel from any branch or corps. Still, for this to materialise on the battlefield, the survival of soldiers is a priority. From this perspective, now widely acquired in the West, the protection ensured by infantry vehicles must be maintained until the final assault, enhancing the

vehicles' capability to save the operators inside even when hit or partially destroyed. Light and functional equipment have the same objective as they allow soldiers to transport greater quantities of offensive potential, limiting the size and preserving ergonomics. An example of this trend is the growing availability of grenade pouches with Velcro straps among Ukrainian infantry personnel engaged in the current counter-offensive. This kind of grenade pouches can provide safe storage and rapid extraction of the ordnance under combat conditions.

The relevance of the new infantry model emerging from contemporary conflicts is finally demonstrated by the structure and contents that the US Marine Corps, together with the broader update dictated by Force Design 2030, has included in its Infantry Marine Course.

The new course, extended by five weeks, combines the emphasis on the principle 'every Marine is a rifleman' with a significantly expanded spectrum of equipment and weapon systems to which recruits are introduced, promoting disciplined initiative and an understanding of the mission intent. A similar approach appears essential to adapt the Infantry to challenging contemporary scenarios and to the changed socio-cultural level of the personnel who fill its ranks so that it remains the 'Queen of Battles'.





# THE BEST PHOTO IS FROM ITALY

by  
Igor Piani

## European Military Press Congress

The first prize for best photography published in European military newspapers and magazines was awarded to "Military Magazine" at the 43<sup>rd</sup> European Military Press Association (EMPA) Congress (Zurich) in August.

Italy participated in the photography section with a photo by Corporal Marco Valentino («Pinerolo» Mechanised Brigade). He took the picture during the "Salamandra 2022" exercise, which engaged in training the Operational Forces Command-South Engineer Units. This photo was published in issue 3 of 2022 as part of the «Foto d'autore» photo competition. Col. Giuseppe Cacciaguerra received the award from EMPA President Jojo Mulder. This year's congress brought together 30 editors-in-chief and editors, media professionals and photographers from over 10 European countries. Held from 15 to 18 August, it was organised in specialised seminars, industry visits



(General Dynamics European Land Systems) and exercises (Swiss Army Exhibition Connected).

In 1977, some heads of the leading European military press met in Rome to get to know each other and discuss the main topics of common interest. From the success of that meeting, EMPA was born.

Today, it is open to all managers and

journalists of European security and defence periodicals. The association aims, among other things, to promote knowledge of member countries' armed forces and security policies by facilitating the exchange of information (in particular, articles published in each periodical) and to organise joint events to spread a European defence culture.





by  
Paola Pucci

# THE WOMEN'S WAR

Jewish partisan women in the  
Warsaw ghetto uprising

*Nazi raids in the Warsaw ghetto during the 1943 uprising.*



Every war in its drama has its own history. And in the history of every war, women have always played a role, seldom a marginal one. The 'women's war' could fill pages of history, revealing unpublished or little-known episodes like the war of the Jewish partisan women who led the first anti-Nazi uprising in the Warsaw ghetto in January '43. Eighty years later, restoring to memory the faces and names of these women is crucial. They distinguished themselves through courage, passion, and an extreme spirit of self-sacrifice. The enemies themselves were forced to recognise their valour. "When we raided the ghetto, we found ourselves in front of uncommon women, perhaps demons or goddesses, almost mythological creatures: real warriors who could shoot holding weapons with both hands, very fast but at the same time precise and determined. They moved nimbly and swiftly, like true Amazons" – so the German commander Jürgen Stroop, who directed the repression operation.

SS Commandant Himmler visited Warsaw on 9 January 1943 and, annoyed that there were still so many Jews working in German-owned factories in the Polish capital, ordered a drastic purge of the ghetto to the Treblinka concentration camp. For the Nazis, this operation should have been almost a piece of cake. Instead, they faced a very effective and tenacious resistance from girls and young men with no military experience. In the end, the Germans ended up counting dead and wounded—all credit to the Jewish partisan women who led the insurrection.

Reviewing the history of those years to truly understand the scope of the anti-Nazi uprising in the Warsaw ghetto and the role played by the partisan women is crucial. Established on 16 October 1940, the Warsaw Ghetto was the most densely populated; in a space of 3.4 square kilometres, 450,000 people, i.e. 30% of the city's total population, were forced to live there. In addition to overcrowding and the inability to support themselves with a job, life was made extremely difficult by frequent power and water cuts, terrible hygienic conditions, a ban on

communication with the outside world and food shortages.

Over time, the overcrowding situation became increasingly untenable. But in 1942, something began to change. The traumatic experience of the deportations in the summer of 1942 and the unsuccessful policy of resignation implemented by the Jewish Council prompted some young people from movements and parties already active before the war, such as the Zionist movement Hashomer Hatsair and the socialist movement Bund, to form a Jewish Combat Organisation, the Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (ZOB). After witnessing the brutal murder of family members and neighbours and the violent destruction of their communities, at this point, the 'daughters of the Resistance' stepped in. Dozens of young Jewish women, some still in their teens, organised themselves into a genuine anti-Nazi women's resistance movement. Documents, diaries and testimonies bring to light the names of Zivia-Celina, the leader of the ZOB; Frumka Plotnicka, a precious relay girl; Tosia Altman, a beautiful and unfortunate woman who died in the flames of the ghetto; Idzia Pejsachson, severe and authoritarian who will be remembered for always managing to hide her revolver in a loaf of bread, or Irena Adamowicz, a wealthy Catholic bourgeois and Zionist sympathiser. And again: Renia Kukielka, Chajka Klinger, Ruzka Korczak and Witka Kempner.

They were educated, spoke fluent Polish, had been part of Zionist groups and believed in socialism, manual labour and gender equality. Their action was strategic and focused: they improvised in everything and managed to play multiple roles in waging their war against the invading enemy. As couriers, armed fighters, secret service agents and saboteurs, these 'ghetto girls' risked their lives with courage and nerves of steel. Thanks to their cultural level and attractiveness, they could get in touch with their enemies more easily.

They bribed Gestapo guards to obtain valuable information, seduced Nazi officers and then killed them. They organised attacks on German railway

lines and blew up electricity grids. They wrote bulletins for the underground radio stations, negotiated with Polish landowners and took charge of much of the administration of the Resistance. They toiled to build networks of underground shelters; they cared for the sick and helped Jews escape the ghettos. They carried out espionage missions for Moscow and distributed false documents and leaflets, revealing to the world what was happening to the Jews. Hundreds of women activists fell into oblivion, working in over ninety ghettos in Eastern Europe and in major Polish cities. The memory of these women will always remain linked to the anti-Nazi ghetto uprising.

Their fates over the years were different. The relay girl Frumka Plotnicka died on 3 August 1943 after being captured by the Gestapo. The leader, Zivia-Celina, continued the action of the struggle until May '43, and one more episode is remembered about her: she was once seen emerging covered in sewage after walking miles through the Warsaw sewers. After the war, she moved to Israel, where she founded a kibbutz and left a memorial, and so did the partisan Renia Kukielka.

These proud 'daughters of the Resistance' wrote a significant page of history, and not only a tale of war and struggle but also of survival, friendship and female solidarity.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Batalion J., *The Light of Days. The Untold Story of Women Resistance Fighters in Hitler's Ghettos*, HarperCollins Publisher, 2020.

Seri M., *Così le partigiane ebree guidarono la prima insurrezione antinazista*, "La Repubblica", 7 January 2023.

Ringelblum E., *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*. The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum, translated and edited by Jacob Sloan, Pickle Partners Publishing, 2015.

## SITOGRAHY

<https://www.storicang.it> La rivolta del ghetto di Varsavia - Storica National Geographic

<https://www.scuolaememoria.it> La rivolta del ghetto di Varsavia

<https://www.raiscuola.rai.it> La rivolta del ghetto di Varsavia



by  
Fabio Vander

# WAR AND PEACE

Ernst Jünger,  
a protagonist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century







Ernst Jünger was born in Heidelberg, in southwestern Germany, in 1895. He was one of the greatest German military writers and analysts of the 20th century, as well as a naturalist and entomologist. Endowed with a multifaceted and complex personality and a sharp and enterprising spirit, in 1913, he ran away from home and enlisted in the Foreign Legion. Only his father's intervention with the German ambassador in Algeria could bring him back to Germany. Two years later, he volunteered again, but this time in the German army at the outbreak of the First World War.

Experiencing the world war was decisive in his education. In his works, novels and war diaries, his military doctrine was increasingly defined, together with the spiritual and, ultimately, political context in which his story took place. He was one of the exponents of the so-called German 'conservative revolution' in the immediate post-war period (with Thomas Mann, Oswald Spengler, Carl Schmitt, etc.); in the 1920s, he was close to the most radical German nationalist movements, although he opposed the Weimar Republic more than communism, which had triumphed in Russia and was growing in Europe. In the 1930s, he didn't join Nazism, and over the years, he increasingly distanced himself from it. In the Second World War, in the dramatic period of the occupation of Paris, he was a Wehrmacht officer. He was close to the anti-Hitler resistance within the German army; for this reason, although decorated with the Order 'Pour le Mérite', the highest German military honour, in 1944, he was dismissed because he was 'unworthy of military service'.

This short essay will delve into the original definition of Jünger's military doctrine, which resulted from a particularly intense personal experience during the interminable months of the Verdun battles on the border between Germany and France.

In the essay November 1920 'Outline of a modern conduct of combat', Jünger focused precisely on the innovations brought about by the war that had just ended.



He began apodictically: 'War is the hardest of professions; the cost of training is paid with one's flesh and life'. In the months and years of the world conflict, he had learned that the war had changed. It no longer was the old-modern war of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It had transformed into a 'total war', in which personal and public, economics and politics, the front and the rear, and military and civilian matters were juxtaposed in a massive process of 'total mobilisation'. Certainly, a return to 'classical' modern warfare had become impossible; there was no longer room for the 'formal excesses of the rigid form of training typical of the pre-war era'. The extraordinary

development of technology, even in the military field, had changed everything: 'Machines and materials have reached an overwhelming weight and give battles their increasingly frightening mark'.

It was precisely the triumph of the 'machine' over the individual, of the quantitative over the qualitative, which called for a change in the soldier, his training, and deployment in the field. 'Frederician courage and the ancient Prussian spirit' were no longer enough, as 'scientific training in the use of technical means' was now decisive.

The so-called 'war of materials' had accordingly changed tactics and strategies. No longer large masses poured into the assault, but cohesive and specialised 'elite ranks'

because 'if the troop is relatively small, their spirit can perform wonders'.

The new fighting conditions 'forced troops to abandon the road and break up units.

Forming columns, developing a line of defence is now inadequate'. It was necessary to move on to a condition and conduct of combat in 'small dispersed groups which, forming close-knit combat units, hurl themselves in series or en masse towards the target'.

With appropriate criticism, anyone aware of today's reflection on swarming warfare can establish parallels, find ideas, and give depth to the analysis and discussion. All the more so since it was clear to Jünger as early as the beginning of the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that

'the front thus constituted is disjointed, tangled, not linear, but profoundly sloping'. Speed and movement were decisive in these conditions: 'An assault as rapid as possible is desirable to avoid the complete petrification of the battle'. Which by no means excluded a war of position. Precisely in the operational area around Ypres, Belgium, where Jünger was deployed in the autumn of 1914, the German assaults towards the West had been repelled; the result was a long stabilisation and precisely in these conditions,

the action of small, cohesive and mobile groups became all the more important. 'Frontal attacks,' wrote Jünger, were still necessary, even if "their objective is to concentrate the action against a key point of the enemy position", i.e., never again attacks in line, but maximum convergence on one focus and intensity.

He wrote about this subject in 'Technique in Future Combat' of October 1921: technological development immediately brings about changes in warfare because 'ever greater importance is given to the purpose of gathering the most intense force in a small space'; by now, a 'tank or a tank equipped with machine guns and cannons is worth a company'.

Prophetic words, significant and enlightening to this day: 'The more the importance of technology grows, the more the significance of the territory will diminish, the greater will be the urgency to equip oneself with mechanisation and automatic schemes, as we have seen in the last few years of war'. And again: 'the actors in the conflict, as a consequence of the increased effectiveness of weapons, will move away from each other to an ever-increasing extent'; dilation of spaces, but concentration of power (this is why he speaks of a 'battle of very high echelonment'). Technique makes all this possible.

'War of position' indeed, but what sense does it have in a condition where 'the significance of the territory diminishes'? New and unusual problems. The point is that attack and defence, extension and intensity, position and movement were





destined to change meaning and determine articulated 'force fields' where the old, rigid, and formalised categories would soon reveal all their obsolescence. Certainly, however, finding synthesis and finding it in the heat of battle could not be learnt from books; it remained an 'art' inherent to 'the innate command instinct'.

The conclusion was that adopting 'new tactics' was imperative after the world war. In Jürgen's famous 'The Battle of Material' of January 1925, he speaks of the need to 'make pure mass mobile', that is, to make the immobile mobile, to reconcile movement and position.

A circularity of ways and practices will be decisive in future warfare. Jünger spoke of 'rotating machines and mobile masses', not so different from today's 'loitering munitions'.

Let's conclude with a late Ernst Jünger's text. In 1979, he returned to Verdun with French writer Henri Amblard, who also survived the battle. They commemorated all the victims of the enormous massacre. Jünger's speech was completely free of any youthful warmongering, which had left room for one of his usual acute analyses, which he concluded with the conviction that the 20th century 'total war' had to be considered definitively over. That is, the era of hostility that could only end with the destruction of all the fighting parties was over. Because 'fire no longer threatens to destroy this or that, but both friend and enemy'. Two world wars and the Japanese atomic bombs proved it.

Consequently, overcoming the logic of 'total war' meant rediscovering 'the truth that man is the measure of all things'. 'Man', not the 'material'.

After the century of totalitarianism, a new season was possible. But it was essential to rediscover the meaning of civilisation and politics rather than the war of annihilation. Man must return to being 'adversaire, if circumstances require it, not ennemi. Agon and not polemos'.

In 1993, French President François Mitterand and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl went together to visit an almost 100-year-old Jünger at



**Fabio Vander**, graduated in philosophy and political science. He works at the Senate of the Italian Republic. Among his books on military topics: *Metafisica della guerra* [Metaphysics of War] (Milan, 1995); *Kant, Schmitt e la guerra preventiva* [Kant, Schmitt and pre-emptive War] (Rome, 2004); *Posizione e Movimento. Pensiero strategico e politico della Grande Guerra* [Position and Movement. Strategic and Political Thinking of the Great War] (Milan, 2013).

his home in Wilflingen. They paid tribute to a great writer, but it was also the statement of the end of an era of hatred, misunderstandings, racism, and bloody wars. Before being a witness, Jünger was this era's acute and suffering protagonist.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Jünger E., *Outline of a modern conduct of combat, the technique in future combat, the battle of material*, in Jünger E., *Political and war writings: 1919-1933*, LEG, Gorizia, 2003-2005.

Jünger E., *Speech of Verdun*, in Jünger F.G., Jünger E., *War and Warriors* (edited by Guerri M.), Mimesis, Milan, 2012.







by  
Giuseppe  
Cacciaguerra

# INTELLIGENT MACHINES

## Interview with Nello Cristianini

*'Knowledge is a remedy for anxiety and fear'*

Prof. Nello Cristianini teaches Artificial Intelligence at the University of Bath in the UK. He has been a well-known researcher in this field for over twenty-five years, having published influential articles and books on machine learning theory, automatic language understanding, and the social effects of artificial intelligence. Before Bath, he worked at the University of California and the University of Bristol. He has just published the book: *'The Shortcut. Why Intelligent Machines Do Not Think Like Us'* (CRC Press Taylor and Francis Group, 2023). We met him at the 'Festival della Comunicazione' in Camogli where he gave a well-attended lecture: 'Living with intelligent machines'. We asked him some fundamental questions.

**Professor, what do we mean when we talk about intelligence?**

*Intelligence is not exclusive to human beings but has existed since before us: various animals display intelligence without having the other characteristics of us humans. In short, neither consciousness nor language are necessary to be intelligent. The snail that seeks and finds my basil is using a form of intelligence. And this is the type we are now creating in our machines.*

**What, then, is Artificial Intelligence?**

*The ability of a device, or an algorithm, to act effectively even in conditions never seen before, and therefore, when it is not possible to have memorised the right answer. Imagine a chess player faced with a chessboard configuration never seen before or a translator faced with a document totally new to him/her. Our algorithms*

*are constantly doing this: recommending recent news or videos to new users learning how to improve their performance with intelligence. Jean Piaget said: 'Intelligence is about knowing what to do when you don't know what to do'. It also applies a little to machines.*

**Can you help us understand what an algorithm is?**

*An algorithm is not necessarily intelligent, although there needs to be more clarity in the media these days. Instead, it is a recipe to be followed rigidly to transform an input into an output: for example, the procedure we learn in primary school to add up two numbers. It is rigid, it is automatic, and it always works. It is an algorithm for calculating addition. There are similar algorithms for finding the shortest path on a map or for finding information quickly. Some of these, only some, are so advanced and flexible that they can learn from experience and reason. Only these should be considered 'intelligent algorithms'.*

**Last question. Should we be afraid of the machines we are building?**

*Taking all new things we do not know seriously is good, but fear is not a productive response. We have been through many other changes, and what awaits us soon will be a significant change and the world that will come after is difficult to predict. I recommend knowing the facts, which are simple when appropriately explained because knowledge is a remedy for anxiety and fear. We will likely find a safe way to coexist with our creatures, thanks to the contribution of researchers, politicians, philosophers, and teachers. Now is the time to work together.*



RC-33

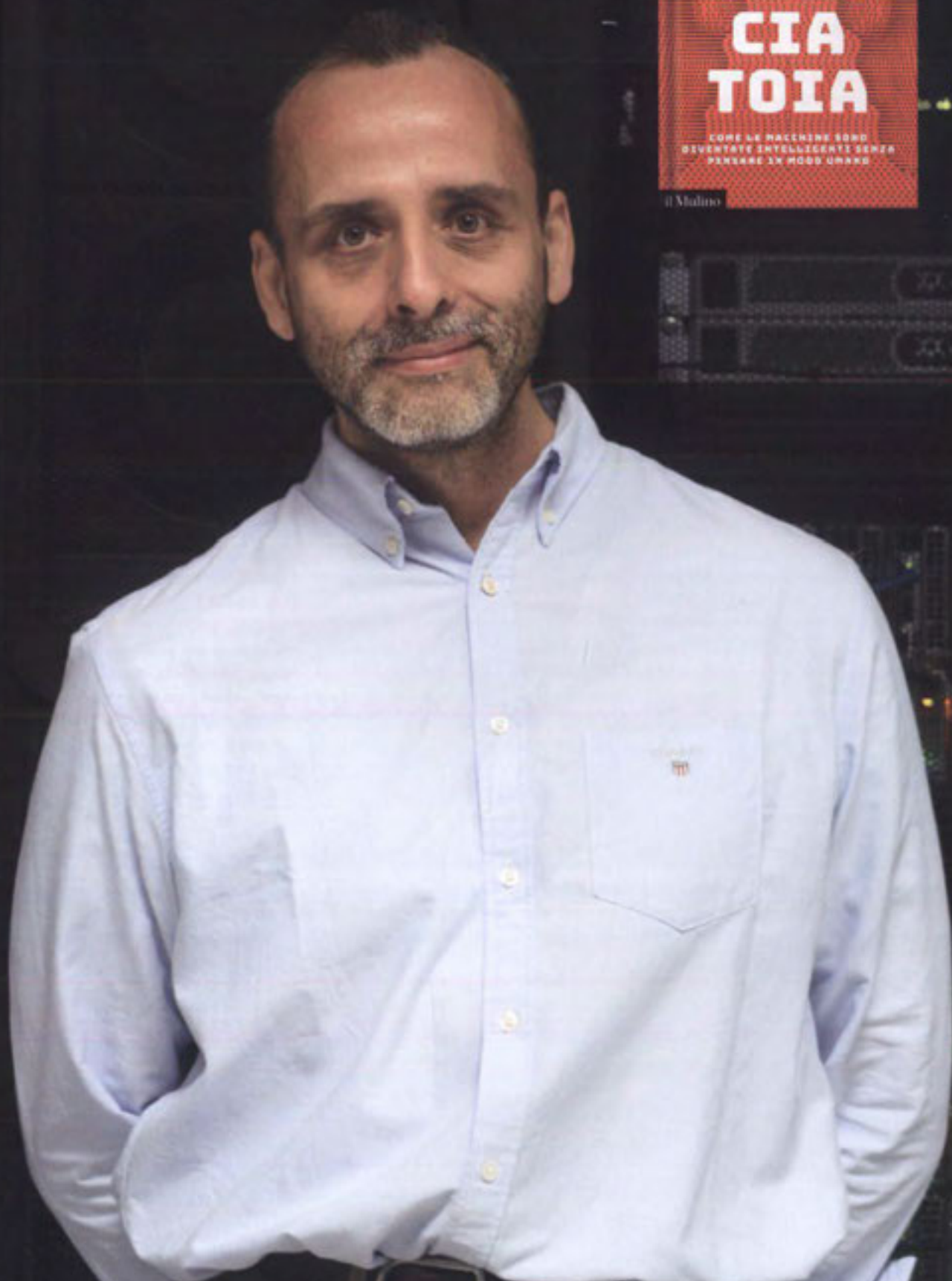
INFOCOM

NELLO  
CRISTIANINI

# LA SCOR CIA TOIA

COME LE MACCHINE SONO  
DEVENTATE INTELLIGENTI SENZA  
PENSARE IN MODO UMANO

il Mulino





# FEMALE BEAUTY OVER THE CENTURIES

by  
Anna Maria  
Isastia

## The “algorithms” of the past

The earliest female images that have come down to us from the distant past remind us how mutable the concept of beauty is. The oldest Palaeolithic statuettes show opulent bodies with wide hips and no face: the 'Venuses' of thousands of years ago represented Mother Earth, fertility, and

prosperity. The Venus of Willendorf, made of limestone and dating back some 30,000 years, is famous. The 11-centimetre statuette has two huge breasts and a very prominent vulva. It is painted in red ochre, which perhaps refers to menstrual blood and thus to fertility and the ability to generate new life. This female depiction is repeated in many small statues found over time and preserved in many museums. Known as *steatopygia* due to the adiposity of the thighs and buttocks, the so-called 'Palaeolithic Venuses' also clearly indicate that beauty was combined with fertility and prosperity.





Completely different was the concept of beauty depicted by the sculptors of classical Greece, who portrayed nudes of young people of both sexes, carefully studying the anatomy and proportions of the bodies.

Greek Venuses are images of perfect female bodies; think of the Venus de Milo from the late 2nd century B.C. or Praxiteles' Aphrodite of Knidos from 360 B.C., which have soft shapes and pronounced curves. Harmony, balance, measure, grace, perfect proportions, and attention to anatomy make the bodies of Greek goddesses and athletes timeless masterpieces. The Greeks went so far as to develop 'canons' codifying the ideal proportions of a body. The most famous is the canon of Polykleitos, reworked by Vitruvius. At the same time, Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man can be seen as an extreme development of the canon of Polykleitos. This classical canon would later be taken up in the neoclassical era by Canova with his splendid Paolina Borghese.

In the Middle Ages, we find many descriptions of female beauty. In one sonnet, we read:

*As beautiful as your mother made thee. She is said to have been on her knees for a year. The angels to pray. To make thee as beautiful as the sun. Then she sent thee to Cupid to learn. And there thou learned the verses of love. And when thou began to compose them.*

*Thou came, oh beautiful one, and stole my heart. Seven beauties a woman must have. Before she can be called beautiful.*

*Tall she must be without her slippers. White and red her carnation without make-up. Broad her shoulders and narrow her waist. Only then can she be called a beautiful woman.* The woman, therefore, had to be tall, broad of shoulder and narrow of waist and with white facial skin but naturally coloured cheeks, without make-up.

The many Renaissance portraits reveal great attention to women's hair, neck and clothing. There is an infinite variety of hairstyles in Pisanello, Masaccio, Paolo Uccello, Antonio del Pollaiuolo, Filippo Lippi and Piero della Francesca paintings. Hair had a powerful sexual attraction, and only young women searching for a husband were allowed to wear it long and loose on their shoulders. In fact, Sandro Botticelli's 'Birth of Venus' shows the young woman with long, thick, coppery hair, just as the canons of the time favoured blond or otherwise fair-haired women.

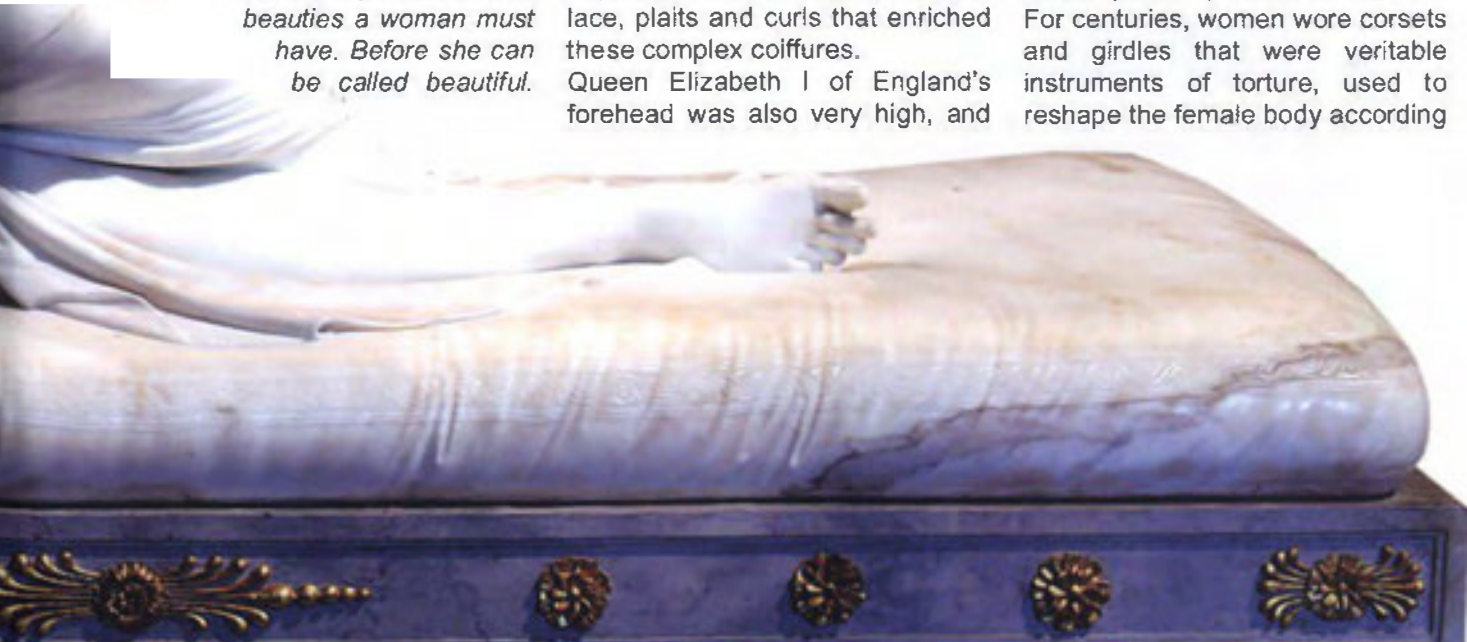
On the other hand, married women wore their hair styled in a thousand different ways. But one thing they all had in common: the neck had to be long, and therefore, the hair was shaved at the nape of the neck, while the forehead had to be high, which forced them to shave the front part of their hair as well. Many portraits were taken in profile precisely to highlight the spaciousness of the forehead and the length of the neck and to better depict the wealth of pearls, clasps, lace, plaits and curls that enriched these complex coiffures.

Queen Elizabeth I of England's forehead was also very high, and

she covered her smallpox-scarred face with a thick white lead that contained egg white and lead carbonate. The Queen's stiff white face appears in all paintings of her, and lead poisoning was probably what led to her death.

In a portrait of 1545, Eleanor of Toledo, who was married to Cosimo I de' Medici, displayed not only the beauty of her face but also the extreme richness of her dress, a true manifesto of the power of Eleanor's family. The dress was laden with symbols of fertility, following the fashion of her country of origin (Spain), but was at the same time the manifesto of the revival of Florentine silk work, with pearls on her ears, neck and belt. Eleonora made the history of Florence, and this portrait by Bronzino demonstrates the power of the Medici family.

Alongside portraits, the most famous painters of the Renaissance painted nudes of women that show us a completely different sense of female beauty from today's. Powerful thighs and soft, white flesh, as in Tintoretto's famous painting 'Susanna and the Elders', but also in nudes by Titian or Giorgione. The prosperous body indicates the wealth and well-being of a society, and thus, abundance becomes beauty. In the century of the rich merchant bourgeoisie of the Netherlands, Rubens also painted a 'Venus in front of the Mirror' (c. 1612) with a robust form. For centuries, women wore corsets and girdles that were veritable instruments of torture, used to reshape the female body according





to the erotic-aesthetic tastes of the various eras. Corsets tightened to the unthinkable, giving the body an hourglass or pigeon-breasted shape, and ladies needed a maid or two to tighten the laces to the desired result. Made of metal wires, whalebone or wooden splints, they caused bone deformations and breathing difficulties. Nineteenth-century novels are full of women fainting from the slightest excitement because – forced into very tight corseted girdles to flaunt a very slim waistline – they simply struggled to breathe.

During the years of the French Revolution, women's clothing changed utterly, leaving the figure free. Still, with the Restoration, fashion also went back to covering and caging bodies with corsets, crinolines and long skirts supported by wooden or metal cages.

In all cultures, female bodies have been modified with painful consequences to adapt them to what was considered 'beautiful' and 'sensual'. Such were the high necks of the women of some African populations. Women were forced to wear stiff rings around their necks. The number of rings progressively increased until their necks reached disproportionate lengths, considered the ultimate in beauty. And what about the Chinese women whose extremities were deformed from an early age because a small foot was considered very sensual? This excruciating practice involved breaking bones and tight bandages to prevent the feet from exceeding 10 or 12 centimetres. The 'lotus-flower' foot was considered a sign of beauty and distinction and guaranteed marriage, but it forced women to stagger in precarious balance, preventing them from any autonomy.

Women's entry into the world of work turned everything upside down: busts disappeared and were replaced by soft dresses that allowed free movement and changed the canons of beauty. The woman of the 1920s-1925s was thin and lithe, wore short



**Anna Maria Isastia**, has taught History of the Risorgimento and Contemporary History at the Sapienza University of Rome. She was national president of Soroptimist International of Italy and is currently president of the Soroptimist Club of Rome Foundation. She is co-editor of the series 'La memoria e le fonti. Identity and sociality', national secretary of the Italian Society of Military History (Sism), national councillor of the ANRP (National Association of veterans of imprisonment, concentration camps and the war of liberation). A writer and lecturer, she has over 250 scientific publications including 16 monographs and 18 edited works. 'Military Volunteering in the Risorgimento. La partecipazione alla guerra del 1859', USSME, 1990; 'Soldati e cittadini. Cento anni di Forze armate in Italia', SMD, 2000; 'L'Unità delle donne: il loro contributo nel Risorgimento 2011'; 'Donne in magistratura. The Women's Association Magistrato Italiane', 2013; 'Una rete di donne nel mondo. Soroptimist International, un secolo di storia (1921- 2021)', 2021.

dressess, and wore her hair 'boyish', i.e. short – a real revolution. But thinness does not please fascism. In fact, the images of slender, supple models portrayed by famous artists were replaced with shapely, tanned and muscular women with young, healthy bodies who must bear children for the fatherland. The image of the woman with prosperous hips and breasts, which marked the fortunes of actresses such as Sofia Loren and Gina Lollobrigida, still triumphed in the 1950s. However, at the end of the 1960s, these icons of feminine beauty were replaced by skinny women such as the actress Audrey Hepburn and the model Twiggy, a kind of doll with incredibly large eyes and make-up. The latter became the muse of Mary Quant, who exported the image of an androgynous teenage woman in tights and a miniskirt all over the world.

Female imagination and male desire have powerfully influenced women from the distant past to the present. We should convince ourselves that 'beauty' is being comfortable with ourselves and not chasing fashions, which are constantly changing.



The model Twiggy.



**BEST PICTURES  
OF 2023**

