

Peter Finnerty, an ancestor of modern war correspondents

Elías Durán de Porras
Universidad CEU Cardenal Herrera
[eduran@uch.ceu.es]

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Abstract

William Howard Russell, *The Times* correspondent during the Crimean war, has been considered by reputed specialists the true pioneer of war journalism or war correspondent. In the following article we focus on Peter Finnerty's coverage of the Expedition to Walcheren, in 1809, for *The Morning Chronicle*, to see if he can be considered an ancestor of Russell.

Keywords: William Howard Russell, Peter Finnerty, Henry Crabb Robinson —war correspondent—, *The Morning Chronicle*, *The Times*, Walcheren - 1809

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1. Introduction and Methodology

This work has been inspired by Jaume Guillamet's (2012c) article titled «Joaquín Mola y Martínez and the first war correspondents» which was published in the issue number five of this journal. In his work, the professor of the University of Pompeu Fabra presents the news coverage which this reporter from Alicante elaborated about the wars of Italy and Africa (1859-1860), concluding that the similarities between Joaquín Mola y Martínez and the legendary William Howard Russell are greater than can be drawn between the journalist of *The Times* and the two figures who have traditionally been credited with a pioneering status of war journalism in Spain: Pedro Antonio de Alarcón and Gaspar Núñez

de Arce. According Guillamet, both [Mola and Russell] «share an informative look at the facts, without a literary tone and political passion of writers, but his [Mola's] military status differentiates from the strictly professional profile of the British».

The purpose of this article is to present the role played by another, Irish reporter, Peter Finnerty, in the English campaign of Walcheren (1809) to see, by following the same path which Guillamet took in his study about Mola, if Finnerty could be considered Russell's professional precursor. Through the chronicles sent by Finnerty from Walcheren, it can be observed if any of the characteristics, that have made *The Times* journalist considered the first war correspondent, were also somehow present in the quill of the correspondent of *The Morning Chronicle*.

Nevertheless, it should be remarked that Finnerty's work was developed in a short period of time incomparable with what Russell dedicated to his coverage of the Crimean War, North American Civil War, Austro-Prussian War and Franco-Prussian War. In fact, Finnerty did not cover more than one conflict. Moreover, being reporters coming from different journalistic contexts, it is necessary to compare Finnerty's work with the work of one of the counterparts of his time, in this case Henry Crabb Robinson, a special envoy of *The Times* in Altona (1807) and A Coruña (1808-1809), considered one of the pioneer war journalists (Mathews, 1957: 46). To achieve this goal, this article is based on the following methodology:

- a) A review of the literature on the origins of the war correspondents in order to identify common characteristics which make this journalist «the miserable parent of a luckless tribe». This allows us to observe if these can also be applied to Finnerty.
- b) Present an outline of Peter Finnerty's life story in order to find out if he was either a professional journalist or a temporal journalistic writer, like in the case of the personage already studied, Henry Crabb Robinson.
- c) An analysis of Peter Finnerty's chronicles starting from Walcheren which was published in *The Morning Chronicle* and has been obtained in the British Newspaper Library. Studying them does not offer only quantitative but also qualitative information about the themes, sources and style, which help to draw some conclusions from Finnerty's journalistic practices.

2. *Origins and characteristics of the first war correspondents*

«The pen is mightier than the sword». The famous phrase of an English author Edward Bulwer-Lytton inspired Adrian Liddel Hart who, in *The Sword and the Pen* (Liddel Hart, 1976), compiled a series of texts which demonstrated the influence that the printed word had had on public opinion. For Liddel Hart, the journalist of *The Times*, William Howard Russell, was the first correspondent because his predecessors did not change or influence the development of the war (Liddel Hart, 4).

Most of the works concerning war correspondents follow the same pattern. There are some authors who introduce some pioneers, such as John Bell, Henry

Crabb Robinson, Charles Lewis Gruneisen, as well as Peter Finnerty, but most start the history of war journalism from Russell leaving the work done by some of their forerunners in the background. That is where we find such classic works as Altabella (1945), Mathew (1957), Knightley (1976 y 2000), Bullard (1974), Wilkinson-Latham (1979), Royle (1987), Roth (1997), Simpson (2002), Moorcraft y Taylor (2008), Brake y Demoor (2009) and Korte (2009).¹

For these authors Russell was the father of the «bohemian brigade» (Leguineche y Sánchez: 2001) because of six reasons:

1. He was a professional journalist, not a typical military or a civil traveller who sent sporadic messages to newspapers or whose letters ended up in daily news. When Russell arrived in Crimea he knew his profession well and excelled in it.
2. He was the first one bringing a soldier's suffering first-hand to the English public. His objectivity was above patriotism which English audience was used to.
3. His works coincided with the start of the industrial press and the thirst for the recent news from the front.
4. His chronicles provoked a serious political upheaval in Great Britain when learning how to catch the public's attention.
5. He visited the battlefield and learned to get informed by witnesses.
6. He covered more than one conflict systematically and for long periods of time. He gave rise to the journalist specialized in covering the wars continuously.

Jaume Guillamet (2004, 54), citing Knightley (2000: 1-18), summarizes well Russell's importance by claiming that the Crimean war «was the beginning of an organized effort to report about the war to the civilian population by civilian informers. It was a huge leap in the history of journalism whose social and occupational impacts are still present today».² According the professor, in Russell's path there are four coordinates given in Crimea (demand for news, professional profile, censorship and propaganda), all of which are necessary to be able to talk about war journalism and to «evolve unevenly from the end of the American Civil War, 1865, until the beginning of the World War I, 1914, which Knightley has defined as the Golden Age of war journalism».

The fact of being a civilian is also crucial because there are authors who do not consider civil persons as correspondents, among them Knightley (1976: 11). Another example can be found in Alfonso Bullón de Mendoza who relies on Knightley's judgment for not including Lichnowsky in his study about the correspondents of the First Carlist War, «he was a soldier at Don Carlos's service and

¹ There is another work that we did not include for not taking in the wars unconnected with United States history. Lande, Nathaniel (1995): *Dispatches from the Front. News accounts for the American wars, 1776-1991*, Nueva York, Henry Holt and Company.

² Enric González (2009) wrote in *El País*: «Never before had a civilian journalist been in charge of reporting on a war. The British public quickly noticed the difference from the traditional parts written by militaries».

as such took part in the battles» (2009: 347). In contrast, Jaume Guillamet, in his study about Joaquín Mola y Martínez which was cited earlier, argues that the military status of many reporters was common until the World War I and consequently they should be included in the list of modern war correspondents. In his opinion, the key point in considering these militaries, who were also journalists, is the approach each of them took toward the information: «The view of the correspondent is not the one of a fighter but of an observer who, in most cases, is an eyewitness to the events, and in others has an access to trustworthy people familiar with the facts and who, when deemed necessary, keeps on gathering the rumors and news even with no confirmation, expressing reservations about its veracity» (2012c: 231).

In the same way, Antonio García Palomares, in his doctoral thesis defended at the University Complutense on Spanish correspondents in the North African conflict between 1893 and 1925, concludes: «The longevity of the conflict has shown the evolution of the figure of the correspondent. Within the generation of those who narrated the war of 1859-1860 a correspondent was associated with a military who took over the functions of a journalist, while in 1893 the soldier chronicler began to be relegated by civilian personnel who exercised journalism, more or less exclusively due to precariousness, as a profession. That was when the professionalization of the military correspondent, as a journalist specialized in covering war continuously, had begun» (2014: 408).

3. *Peter Finnerty, a radical Irish journalist*

Peter Finnerty was a radical Irish journalist (1766-1822) and was prosecuted twice for libel.³ The first time was in his home land; the second for writing a rough article in *The Morning Chronicle* and *The Statesman* in 1810 against Castlereagh, the Secretary of War, as a result of what happened in the Walcheren expedition in 1809. Finnerty was jailed and his complaints about bad treatment he received in the time of his second imprisonment reached all the way to the British Parliament. His imprisonment was the subject of attention and there was even a public subscription organized for his support.⁴ After being served the sentence Finnerty returned to his ordinary position in the *Chronicle*, as a parliamentary reporter, where his *enfant terrible* character cost nearly a third prosecution.⁵

Finnerty's relationship with journalism started early, while working as a printer in Dublin (Andrews: 1968, Vol. II, p. 66). During this time he started moving in clandestine circles which took this military to the United Irishmen, an organiza-

³ The brief biographical notes are based on LEGG, Marie-Louise (2004). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, and also *Case of Peter Finnerty* (1811) and *The Trial of Peter Finnerty* (1798).

⁴ *The Morning Chronicle*, 21 February 1811. «Meeting for a subscription for mr. Finnerty».

⁵ Thorne, R. (1986) states that Finnerty ended up again in the prison of Newgate for not respecting the prohibition of taking notes during a parliamentary session.

tion which aimed at the independence of the Irish and which had in *The Press* an organ for spreading its ideas. Finnerty was in charge of the publishing. In 1797, a text considered as a «seditious libel» led to an arrestment and subsequent trial of this journalist who was sentenced to two years in prison, a fine of 20 pounds, and a 500-pound deposit. The judgement also obligated him to «stand in the pillory» for one hour.

After getting out of the prison, Finnerty left for London. There, we assume that because of the connections of his brotherhood with the *whigs*, he ended up writing for *The Morning Chronicle*, a newspaper run by James Perry. It was the most respected and sold newspaper due to its reputation based on pre-eminence granted to the parliamentary chronicles and was commonly known as «The Chronicle of the Opposition» or «Opposition Chronicle» by its rivals, the Tories (Asquith, 1973). The director must have seen in Finnerty a good journalist and thus, assigned him to the Parliament.

The connections of his director and the ones of the *whigs* enabled Finnerty to be sent to the Walcheren expedition. The forced return made him so angry that in one of his articles Finnerty accused the Secretary of War, the Viscount of Castlereagh, of conspiring against him as a person both in Ireland and in Walcheren⁶. Again, he was judged and sentenced to 18 months of imprisonment in the prison in Lincoln and to pay a deposit of 1000 pounds.

The imprisonment was echoed in the newspapers. The most radical press *The Examiner* (17 February 1811) and *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* (20 February 1811), denounced the act and encompassed it within a general campaign against press freedom. William Cobbett was also serving time in prison for libel.

Hence, we can see Finnerty as a clear example of a man of his generation, of those writers who between the 18th and 19th century saw in journalism an instrument which they could extend their revolutionary ideas with; their desires to end the Ancien Regime and to change society. By establishing a parallelism (even recognizing it may be a bit daring) in this Irish can be seen reflected persons like Olavarría, Clararrosa, García de Cañuelo, Abate Marchena or Luis Gutiérrez.

4. *Private Correspondence: Walcheren*

In 1809 Great Britain lived its darkest hours. The apparent victory of Napoleon in Spain, internal political turmoil and economic crisis had the government on the ropes. The English Press was not spared from all these phenomena and its tone was a true reflection of what was happening in the country. Harsh criticism of the government, opposition, militaries, etc. were constant in the editorial comments and anonymous letters abounded in newspapers (Duran, 2008b). Being disappointed because of the failure in Spain, the English found the only hope in Austria. The cabinet of Saint James decided to send a large amount of borrowings

⁶ «Lord castlereagh and mr. Finnerty. To the Editor of The Morning Chronicle», published on 23 January in *The Morning Chronicle and The Statesman*. The article is signed by Finnerty.

to Vienna (Sherwig, 1969: 209 y ss.) and to organize a second front that allowed the Austrians to have a chance against the eagles of the Corsican genius. Finally they chose to attack the naval base in Antwerp and its squad in the Scheldt River; an operation that was considered fast and low-risk (Bond, 1977: 11-17).

On 28 July 1809, three weeks after the Austrian defeat in Wagram, a total of 40,000 men sailed towards Scheldt. The French resistance in the city of Flushing, command errors, bad weather, Walcheren fever and Napoleon's victory in Austria were the reasons why only a month after the departure to England it was deemed unnecessary to proceed and repatriation of troops was ordered. This mistake, plus the general state of war resulted in the output of Castlereagh and Canning from the executive power and, in fact, in the fall of the sick and exhausted Prime Minister, William Cavendish Bentick, the duke of Portland, and his replacement by Spencer Perceval (Howard, 2012: 18).

As at other times, the press stood above the campaign, among them the *Morning Chronicle*, interested in showing the continuing disasters of Tory government. In order to obtain information in the field, or maybe being encouraged by the *Whigs*, James Perry, the leader, decided to send Peter Finnerty, who was admitted to the expedition by Sir Home Popham with whom he had had labour relations in 1806 (Asquith, 241). This sailor had participated in the general campaign strategy but doubted Lord Chatham's leadership in it. As a matter of fact it is possible he was annoyed for not being the one who would lead the expedition (Thorne, 1986). Moreover, it is plausible bringing Finnerty would guarantee him the benevolence of the Whig press in case they would fail in Walcheren (Popham's reputation had remained battered after the campaign of Buenos Aires in 1806).

Nevertheless, Finnerty was not the only correspondent who covered the conflict; neither was he the only one from *The Morning Chronicle*. By reading the information sent from the theatre, we can see that Perry's newspaper published letters from places such as Flushing, Middelburg and Ter Veere, all located in Walcheren. While all these have been considered work of Finnerty (Asquith, 1949: 241), we believe they were not, or perhaps so were only the ones from the last two locations and one from Flushing. Firstly, because the newspaper referred to its correspondents on 1 September 1809,⁷ where they are, moreover, displayed separated; secondly, because in his article against Castlereagh the journalist states that soon after landing he was to move to Ter Veere due to a «recommendation»; thirdly, because of the dates on which they were written. For example, *The Morning Chronicle* published two communiqués dated 30 August⁸ that were written from different locations. It is true that the distance between these two places was not even 10 miles (the distance between Middelburg and Ter Veere is five miles), but it is strange they were not sent at once or that they were published several days apart. Finally, we have the communiqués that the newspaper published on 6

⁷ «We have the satisfaction of being able to submit to our readers the following private communications from our correspondents, sent from the scene of operations» (*The Morning Chronicle*, 1 September 1809).

⁸ *The Morning Chronicle* 5 and 6 September 1809.

October, and which are presented in a different way and were probably works of some officers.⁹ These facts lead us to consider that some or all the communiqués that were written from Flushing and Middelburg were work of another correspondent, agent, military or «observer», as Finnerty himself called them.

It was not a new phenomenon: in the campaign in Spain in 1808 there were several agents working on the same heading, sometimes in the same city (Durán de Porras, 2008). Normally, the work of these «observers» was not presented as the work of a correspondent or under the section «Private Correspondence» although sometimes editorial comments called them correspondents. However, at times, when the letters were from *The London Gazette*¹⁰ or other media,¹¹ the newspaper used to indicate the origin of the letters. There are also examples of headings communicating that the information was elaborated privately or by journalists who they had at ports. A good example of this is the issue of 12 August where there can be found information from different ports under the section «The Expedition».¹²

After reviewing copies of the period and what Finnerty said in his subsequent letter against Castlereagh and judgment, we can consider that there were at least two correspondents or agents of *The Morning Chronicle* in Walcheren: Finnerty, who was probably the first in Flushing after landing in Roompot in early August and covered Ter Veere and Middelburg, and several «companions» who remained in the first city and whose identity, as well as civil and military status are unknown.

This implies that we have delimited the letters that are published in nine copies of the Chronicle (from August to October 1809, detailed at the end of the work) although we should not forget the fact that probably only a part of them were the work of Finnerty. They appear either headed with «Expedition. Private Correspondence», «Private correspondence», or embedded in the editorial itself almost without presentation. All of them are unsigned but the place and date are indicated. The articles show some thematic unity and make little reference to the confrontations. Two aspects are arisen: the soldiers' suffering of an epidemic and the lack of resources to cope with it, and the poor campaign strategy and the inability to maintain the French's safe island: acts which are used to criticize the Government and to follow the editorial line of James Perry's newspaper.

⁹ «We have received melancholy statements of the situation of our gallant army in Walcheren, from most respectable correspondents there [...] The following are copies of genuine letters».

¹⁰ We can find examples, among others, the one of 14 August 1809 or in several communiqués published by Lord Chatham on 23 August under the epigraph «Suplement from the London Gazette».

¹¹ «The Expedition [...] from some passages in the following article taken from *The Argus*». *The Morning Chronicle*, 15 September 1809.

¹² For example, in the editorial of 12 August can be read: «Yesterday some accounts were received from the Coast of Holland, through several private channels. Sir W. Curtis, who left Walcheren on Wednesday last, and reached town yesterday, states, that on the night of the 7th a sortie was [...] In consequence of this check, the enemy was obliged...»

4.1. *Walcheren fever*

One of Finnerty's subjects of interest was to present his readers the lamentable state of the British soldiers' suffering from Walcheren fever, one of the reasons for the English disaster campaign and for Lord Chatham to suspend the issue (Bond: 124 et seq.). The correspondent of the *Chronicle* referred to the epidemic in his chronicle of August 26.¹³

The diseases peculiar to this climate are already making their appearance among our troops; several Intermittent cases have been reported to the physicians within the last eight days, and I am sorry to understand that a considerable extension of such complaints is apprehended. The suffering of our troops during the siege, particularly from the rain and inundation, must predispose their constitutions for the endemic diseases of Zealand. The wounded go on every ill [...] Several officers complain of ill health

In the same dispatch he also adds:

The report of endemic complaints multiplies every hour. The two physicians at Middelburg, Dr. Faulkner and Knight, have had nearly 120 soldiers and 20 officers, consigned to their care within the last three days, the whole afflicted with intermittent, and low nervous fevers. The fevers peculiar to this climate have the same symptoms and appearance as those which belong to the yellow fever in the West Indies, although not quite so dangerous.

On 30 August¹⁴ the correspondent presented a list of service casualties caused by the epidemic, «according to the medical reports of this day». Finnerty, who witnessed the impact among the soldiers, affirmed that the drastic temperature changes that the troops suffered from made it worse. Obviously, the *Chronicle* reporter blamed the government for not taking this into account before starting the campaign and exposed to readers how the French soldiers suffered in May 1808 from the consequences of the disease. Castlereagh was in the centre of the criticism: «That this is an exceedingly unhealthy place, particularly in the month of September and October, is quite notorious. Indeed if the solicitude of our Minister of War, with regard to the lives of men, had disposed him to make any inquiry upon such a subject, he might have learned that fact from any medical man at all acquainted with the island».

Finnerty describes a bleak picture. The general prohibition of burials and funeral ceremonies before dark for not demoralizing the troops, the lack of potable water and of everything that would have been needed to make patients' life better, ill soldiers due to rigid discipline, makeshift hospitals without means, troops upset by the loss of the purchasing power of their salaries, etc.:

¹³ *The Morning Chronicle*, 1 September 1809.

¹⁴ *The Morning Chronicle*, 5 September 1809.

All the harm I wish those who planned this expedition is to have visited the sick for the last three days, and for that purpose to have climbed up ladders like the shrouds of a ship and to have descended into damp cellars as I have done. Had the hearts of Ministry been made of penetrable stuff, they would have been melted by the sight of the victims of their imprudence. The numbers of the sick I forbear to mention. It is to be hoped, the Ministers will in future weight well now they send out expeditions, and to whom they are entrusted.

From the same point of view on 8 August Finnerty, or another correspondent, wrote aptly about the observations of the symptoms and effects of the disease:¹⁵

We have at length received a supply of medicines of England. You will not perhaps at first view credit it, but I assure you must faithfully, that I, myself have seen the diseased and sick lying in the streets here, and as the stairs and passages, without beds or any other covering that their regimental cloathing [sic], and that so offensive from the inability of those un happy sufferers, that nothing but mortality could be expected. Indeed our streets for these last weeks, daily present to the eye no other view but the removed of the dying and the dead. The greatest medicinal want was in the article of bark, so necessary to impede the progress of fever and alleviate paroxysms of ague, the two prevalent disorders here. The chemist of Middelburg, the great medicinal depot of South Holland, said, when applied to for this medicine, that it was owing to our Act of parliament that they could not supply us. The disease here affects the liver and the brain; I was informed by the surgeon of the 36th, who had opened one of the bodies, that he found the part violently inflamed, and a great excess of water about the latter. But I must stop, as I fancy myself ill, from thinking of this deplorable subject.

According to the reference works about this unfortunate English expedition, the epidemic took the medical services by surprise because they had not been informed about the destination of the expedition and could not prevent the disaster. John Webbe, a hospital inspector, had shown his superiors his anguish about the lack of sufficient resources to fight against the epidemic (Howard, 2012: 171-72). The few useful buildings that served as hospitals in Middelburg were crowded. In Flushing there barely remained buildings that could be used as hospitals after a massive bombing it had suffered (Bond, 1977: 124); the fact that also appears in the officers' letters from the front:

Crowded hospitals [...] Here is the Misery; and here too great censure cannot be passed upon Ministers. When the men I allude [sick] to come to what is called a barrack, they enter a church yard; perhaps the building is without a roof, windows and no instance is there a fire place and as to bedding, it is not in the catalogue of barracks furniture here. Here you see the whole floor covered with convalescents, as they are called, with a blanket wrapped round them, lying on the cold floor, without anything under them, many of them in the height of a shivering fit of the

¹⁵ *The Morning Chronicle*, 6 October 1809.

ague, and in a room with a complete thorough draft from being without windows entirely. The consequence is, that not a day passes without numbers in this situation being carried of.¹⁶

It is also interesting how Finnerty, in his office on 30 August,¹⁷ describes how the landing delay and the lack of provisions among the soldiers had turned the transport ships into real hospitals.

Walcheren disease, a lethal combination of malaria, typhoid and dysentery, decimated the troops and the prestige of Castlereagh in London. The Secretary of War, when receiving the reports from the front (Vane, 1851: Vol.VI, 319) and what was published in the press, began to realize the full disaster of his plans and organized a shipment of new doctors and resources. «The fact that we are in this miserable situation is owing to the Ministers, our wants have been frequently stated, but they have been disregarded». One example can be read in the copy of 27 September, where it is stated that Sir Eyre Coote, the second in command of Chatham, William Dyott and Montesor «deserve every credit for their exertions to alleviate the situation of the troops here».

4.2. *Campaign strategy*

In addition to the Walcheren epidemic, another major theme in Finnerty's chronicles was the failure of the overall strategy of the military campaign.¹⁸ From the first article, published on 14 August, on deficiencies in command and the responsibilities of Chatham are evident. And so writes not only the journalist but it is also what the newspaper itself says. The campaign had suffered a noticeable delay that had obviously worried Popham. The strength of the garrison of Flushing had allowed the French to reinforce the naval base in Antwerp, the real goal of the campaign. The readers of the chronicle could read it directly in the correspondent of 28 August: «While our army and navy were occupied before Flushing, and Sir John Hope waited the result in Beveland, Bonaparte's agents were actively engaged in providing this force...». More details were offered on September 1:

Should that be the case it is the more to be regretted, as our army advances with divided strength in consequence of the force left behind here, and at other islands of Zealand, at some of which indeed it was unnecessary to leave a single man [...] and even the island many intelligent persons are of opinion we ought not to have touched until we had first gone up to destroy the French fleet, or to make an experiment upon the popular feeling towards revolt against Bonaparte, or to follow any

¹⁶ *The Morning Chronicle*, 6 October 1809.

¹⁷ *The Morning Chronicle*, 6 September 1809.

¹⁸ In the chronicle of the 20 August he informs: «I am engaged in making an inquiry as to the value of this island as a conquest to England, in a military, commercial and a political point of view». *The Morning Chronicle*, 28 August 1809.

other main object of the Expedition [...] If this plan had been adopted the delay we met with here would have been avoided, the enemy would have had his time to prepare Antwerp, and of course there would have been more probability of success.

Finnerty did not hesitate anytime to offer his own opinion. For example, in the case of the description of the French governor, General Monnet-Claude Louis: «Monet is not considered a man of ability —he is mere soldier devoted to Napoleon— but he endeavours to write. I have seen some papers he addressed to the inhabitants of Flushing in the course of the siege, and they are perfect rodomontade, quite as remarkable for vapour and inanity as some of our parliamentary speeches».

He neither cared about the fact that his judgments were contrary to the general view of the British militaries or of their own readers: «When I state this I am aware that I oppose the general opinion, that Flushing commands the mouth of the Scheldt».

Therefore he did not hid behind the typical patriotic speeches, like the most pro-government newspapers did, and showed the low fondness that people felt of the presence of the British soldiers: «As to the their inclination to reset Bonaparte, or to promote insurrection, you can judge of this when I tell you that not a single Dutch volunteer has offered to join our army since I landed, either in this island, Schoen, Beveland or elsewhere. Not a word either has reached us to encourage the hope of insurrection, or co-operation in the North of Germany».

On 26 August Finnerty already announces that there runs a rumour of a general retreat. He launches a crossfire against Castlereagh: : «In fact, if it were not for the torpedo movements of our War Minister, the Expedition might have reached this island before any of the reinforcements had been brought to it».

The dissonance among the military commands was also captured by this *Chronicle* reporter: «It is reported that rather a warm controversy has arisen among some of our Chief Commanders. The principals engaged in this controversy are Lord Chatham and the Marquis of Huntley [commanding officer of the second division], who are said to be opposed to each other».

From that moment on the disaster of the operations is reflected. On 30 August he writes that the overall objective of the campaign cannot be performed and that there is a widespread view implying that the epidemic and the resistance of Flushing have been decisive in the English defeat: «A great majority express either their concern at the delay which gave to the enemy such advantages, or the adoption of a plan of operations so difficult for us to execute at the same time, and so practicable for the enemy counteract». «I assure you, even such an effect is among us considered a sorry realization of our delusive dreams of conquest and of prize money».

One of the most interesting aspects concerning Finnerty's judgments was when he found out the British sought, leastways, to keep the island of Walcheren as a future base in the northern part of the continent. It was a piece of news the correspondent forwarded from Flushing on 30 August. The government agreed with it but Castlereagh, after reading the report of one of his inferiors, informed the King on 19 September about the need to leave the island (Howard, 185).

All these facts, which we know thanks to historians, can be read in the chronicles of Finnerty, which demonstrates us the way of doing great journalistic work. On 10 and 14 September, even before the Secretary of War informed the King (Vane, 1851: 319-20), this Irish journalist was able to offer his readers two texts from Ter Veere under a heading «practicability of retaining walcheren».

More than half of our men being in the hospitals, while several of our regiments are really without a sufficient number of officers to direct their operation [...] the natives state, in the month of October, that if the enemy postpone his attack until then we are likely to be without an army in any state to take the field Why the will Ministers persist in maintaining such a position? Why expose our army to destruction?

In the articles Finnerty, as his newspaper as well, exculpates the generals in the field¹⁹ and directs his criticism against the Government. This was not anything new. During Moore's withdrawal from Spain, between late 1808 and early 1809, the press most favourable to the Government tried to deflect the responsibility of the Cabinet of Saint James in the poor judgment of the English general. The same had happened with the heads of the Convention of Sintra (Durán de Porras: 2008b). In Finnerty's chronicles we never encounter criticism of officers, except of Lord Chatham. Following the editorial line of his newspaper, that had become clear in several editorials,²⁰ the reprobation directed against the cabinet of Saint James in an attempt to discredit the Tories. Likewise we do not find criticism of Popham, for the reasons described above. Coicequently «A heavy responsibility rest somewhere, with respect to this expedition, and punishment of the most severe kind ought to fall on the heads of the culprits». The responsibilities fell in Chatham and Castlereagh.²¹

4.3. *Finnerty's sources*

Finnerty's chronicles partially remind of those of his contemporary counterpart Henry Crabb Robinson, the correspondent of *The Times* in A Coruña (Duran: 2008, 173 ff.). Both discuss rumours, cite information from military or local authorities (in the case of Robinson), but there is one essential difference: while Robinson practically reported via Spanish newspapers, translated the reports for his readers and enjoyed a pleasant social life in the herculean city until the reloading of the redcoats, Finnerty ended up in a war zone and, although he was never in the front, he lived with soldiers and officers. Hence, his information originates

¹⁹ An example that can be read in the issue of 27 September where he affirms that Sir Eyre Coote, the second in command of Chatham, William Dyott and Montesor «deserve every credit for their exertions to alleviate the situation of the troops here».

²⁰ *The Morning Chronicle*, 22 and 24 August; 5, 7 and 18 September 1809.

²¹ *The Morning Chronicle*, 13 September 1809.

mostly from the British officers. Thus, we find Colonel Darey,²² the «Physicians» of Middelburg, the doctors Faulkner and Knight,²³ but also others who are not explicitly cited.²⁴

The troop appears on 28 August.²⁵ Civilians are identified only once.²⁶ Lastly, there can be found also times when provenance information is not provided or they are rather the result of the writer's own observation.²⁷

According to Martin Bell (Russell: 2008, 8), William Howard Russell criticized the high command but always exonerated the commanders present in the theatre of operations, like did Finnerty. He also distinguished himself by supporting his stories with first-hand accounts, which gave a great vividness to his chronicles. Similarly, as we have seen, the reporter of the *Chronicle* also relied on these statements.

5. Conclusions

After analysing the figure of Finnerty and his work in Walcheren, it must be placed in the context of the history of war correspondents. Henry Crabb Robinson, being Finnerty's contemporary counterpart, and William Howard Russell, the father of the specialization, are two good mirrors through which we can reflect Finnerty. In the introduction we outlined the characteristics that made Russell the first war correspondent and wondered if Finnerty would meet some of them, and thus, could be regarded as an ancestor in this journalistic field. Here are the conclusions:

1. First, we have to note that Finnerty, like Russell, was a civilian, a professional journalist, who had already performed his work previously and had known his job well for years. Henry Crabb Robinson, on his behalf, had barely experience when he went to Altona and A Coruña. In addition, shortly after his return to London he quit journalism.
2. Russell was noted for his objectivity and for bringing up the suffering of the soldiers in the field. That was his patriotism, distanced from what the English general staff wanted (Simpson, 2002: 37). Finnerty, unlike Robin-

²² «of the Engineers». *The Morning Chronicle*, 28 August 1809.

²³ *The Morning Chronicle*, uno y 18 de septiembre de 1809.

²⁴ «Why, the delay, is the question of every Officer here» (14 August); «Officers» (1 Septiembre); «An intelligent naval Officer has assured me» (13 Septiembre).

²⁵ «The troops murmured much before their departure in consequence of the loss sustained by the state of our currency».

²⁶ «The Chemist of Middelburg» (15 September). In the rest of the cases they are not identified: «Many intelligent persons are of the opinion» (1 September); «All persons here are agree» (6 September); «The more intelligent persons with whom I have conversed here» (13 September).

²⁷ «From every information that we can acquire» (14 August); «A report has been in circulation here today» (28 August); «I have been assured» (6 September); «I know from my own observation» (13 September).

son, also paid attention to the troops and their bad situation during Walcheren. Controversially, the chronicles from Walcheren were not impartial: their aim, like that of his newspaper, was to attack the Tory Government in London although the writings talk about the reality of the conflict. Robinson, on his behalf, did show signs of impartiality and was able to combine patriotism of the time with the obvious confusion of the Army and the British Government in his first season in Spain (Duran, 2008). Nonetheless, and like professor Guillamet does in his study of Mola which we cited earlier, we have set «an informative look» and designed a similar work because Finnerty, like Mola and Russell, «in most cases is an eyewitness to the events, and in others he has had access to trustworthy people familiar with the facts and, when considered necessary, he keeps on gathering other rumours and news even with no confirmation, expressing reservations about its veracity».

3. While it may be risky to make a comparison between different journalistic stages, basing on the development of press laws, profession, business and public opinion, the Napoleonic Wars, like the one in Crimea, generated a strong demand for news and extreme competition between the headers of London. During these conflicts in the early nineteenth century the approach of publishing private letters of travellers or officers who wrote from the front or the use of agents across Europe sending newsletters or news to newspapers became widespread (Morison, 1922: 209). Competition between the headers and the control of governmental information forced some publishers to send correspondents or special envoys from newspapers there where the news originated, through which «modern» military chronicles came into being (Espina, 1993: 20-21; Durán: 2008b d). It could be said, as in the findings of García Palomares we have quoted above, that the constant wars of the nineteenth century permit us to observe the development of the war correspondents, taking into account the particularities of each period, to end up with journalists, as Russell, who were specialists in covering conflicts.
4. Obviously Russell's fame is not comparable to that of Robinson and Finnerty, unrecognized by the public. Finnerty had some echo in certain circles because of his confrontation with the Secretary of War, but not due to the news that he sent from Walcheren.
5. Knightley and Guillamet (2004a: 54) opine that Russell was «the first civilian reporter to accompany a British expeditionary force to the war». Finnerty also left with the troops and landed with the redcoats in Roompot as stated in his article against Castlereagh²⁸. Robinson, in turn, lived happily in A Coruña until the war came to him. His intention was not to leave or live with the troops; it was another type of journalism (Hohenberg, 4).²⁹

²⁸ *The Morning Chronicle*, 23 January 1810.

²⁹ «Robinson never pretended to be a reporter in the modern sense, a primer requisite of a foreign correspondent, but rather despised that aspect of the job [...] a leisurely writer who sent letters on foreign affairs to his paper when he felt moved to do so». Robinson did get interested for a time in journalism and recommended his director some changes to improve the international news of *The Times* (Durán, 2009).

6. Neither Robinson nor Finnerty were war correspondents in the same sense as Russell. Neither systematically covered wars (even though Robinson was in two theatres of different operations). Finnerty was only in Walcheren and his few chronicles are not comparable to what Russell wrote from the various wars he covered with his writings. Therefore, the specialized journalist continuously covering the wars is born only in the journalist figure of *The Times*.

Nevertheless, we believe that the four coordinates marked by Guillaumet (demand for news, professional profile, censorship and propaganda) are found in Finnerty. Firstly, because Finnerty was a professional journalist and during his time the interest in the news from «overseas» grew exponentially. In addition, he was censured or at least his work got hampered by the Government, as was evident, at trial and in the article he wrote (always according to his version), a fact which demonstrates that the politicians of that time were afraid of the effects of the newspapers. Propaganda also existed, at least in the headers related to the cabinet of Saint James, as *The Morning Chronicle* denounced.

Moreover, the work of this *Morning Chronicle* reporter, despite the brevity of the conflict, made a big difference in what was customary at the time, as we have seen in the case of Henry Crabb Robinson. The correspondents had «large, powerful and sufficient analogies that identify them with the ones of today», they were civilians who accompanied the troops and narrated the news about the war, and «triumphed because of colourful, literary, somewhat baroque nuances, where the description was angular and the narrative ornate» (Altabella, 11). Reading the Finnerty's chronicles is not far from those nuances. However, they cannot be categorized with the ones that were published at that time given that Finnerty's works are quite modern and rigorous, full of sources and testimonies; they also contain interpretation and opinion, which brings them in some ways closer to the second stage of modern journalism: Informative (Benito Jaén, 1973: 71). In addition the aggressive and biting tone distinguishes them from the work of other correspondents, like John Allen, who had written in *The Morning Chronicle*. Likewise were the ones written for *The Times* by Henry Crabb Robinson (Duran, 2008).

Finnerty's testimony on the effects of the epidemic among the troops and his complaints for the lack of foresight and resources of the Government are evident. His work is, in relative terms, a precedent of the one that Russell was to develop because he either barely hit the «field of honor» and he dedicated himself to compiling information through the testimonies of those who came from the front line, as Knightley (1976: 16-17) notes:

He saw very little of the fight (and what he saw discouraged him) and he had to rely on the tactics which had led him to join *The Times* during the Irish elections and which have been the basis of the *modus operandi* of the war correspondent: he stopped as many officers and soldiers as he could and asked them to describe what had happened. At first, the tangle of impressions he collected only increased confusion. He found out what the most war correspondents shortly discover: witnesses' statements are often contradictory.

As Philip Sahagun says in an analysis of the evolution of the war correspondents (2004: 35): «Those who in the latest wars -from the Gulf in 1991 until Iraq in 2003, including Kosovo and Afghanistan- making an outcry about the lack of data on what actually happens on the battlefield should read Russell's chronicles about the battle of the Brits with the Russians at the river Alma on 20 September 1854: not a single story about victims, nor data on the movement of forces, just simply nothing about what the correspondent sees or hears». Closing the gap, Russell's work is very similar to that of his compatriot nearly half a century earlier. Finnerty offers in his chronicles some information sources in an attempt to provide a detailed aspect of the campaign to his readers. The same thinks Arthur Aspinall (1949: 36).

Therefore Finnerty's coverage is very different from those laconic stories written by the «news-gatherers» that focused on official institutions and agents who had been working since the late eighteenth century. Also officers' and soldiers' letter continuing arriving from the front. Henry Crabb Robinson considered his work as a correspondent a history of modern «war correspondents» which he called «special correspondents». This is how he noted it in his diary on March 30, 1858 (Hudson, 1967: 296):

This *Times* Special Correspondent is really a power in the state. In every country the marvelous establishment has its representative, and in the Crimean war actually took upon itself to distribute charity which the Government neglected to do. [...] During my short connection with *The Times*, fifty years ago, it was in its infancy.

Finnerty, as well as Robinson, can be considered an ancestor of modern war correspondents because of his way of working, always bearing in mind the particularities of the time. However, they were ever neither regarded exponents of war journalism nor viewed as such by their contemporaries. Possibly Finnerty would have been identified, since that is what people who have cited him do, as a political or parliamentary journalist, never as a war correspondent: a situation which is very different from that of Russell or Gruneisen's (Bullón of Mendoza, 348). Clearly Finnerty's brief chronicles did not alter the sign of war or caused an earthquake in public opinion. Neither are they comparable in numbers with those of Russell, who covered several wars. But that is not a reason for forgetting that there ran the same risks which are faced by many of those who perform this journalistic work: staying in a conflict zone and being pressured from one's own side.

6. *Appendix*

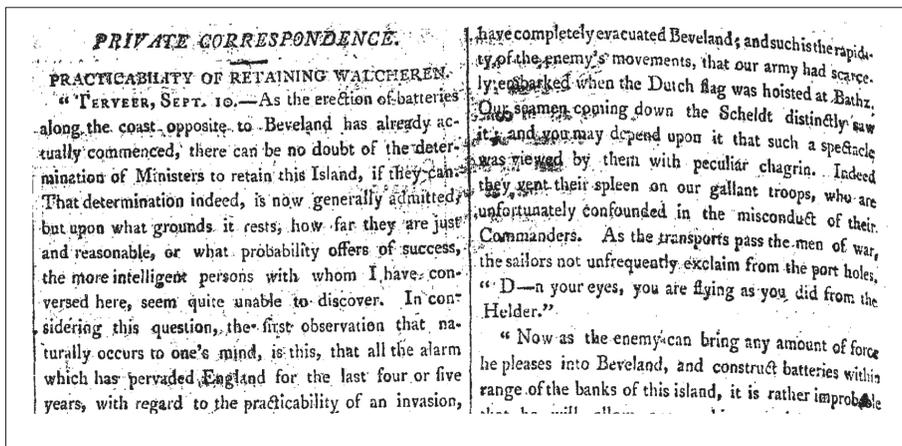
Articles from the Morning Chronicle's correspondents

| Date of Publication (1809) | Page | Date of art. | Place | Head/Headline | Lenght (*) | Editorial comments | Subject (**) | Sources (***) |
|----------------------------|------|--------------------------|--|---|------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|
| August, 14 | 2 | August, 9 | Isle of Walcheren, one mile N.W. of Flushing | Expedition. Private Correspondence | 79 | NO | 1 | 1-2 |
| August, 28 | 2-3 | August, 20-22 | Middelburgh-Ter Veere | The following are letters from Walcheren | 172 | SI | 1-2 | 1-2 |
| September, 1 | 2-3 | August, 25-26 | Flushing-Ter Veere | No | 182 | SI | 2-3 | 2-3 |
| September, 5 | 3 | August, 30, September, 1 | Ter Veere | Private Correspondence | 163 | NO | 2-3 | 1 |
| September, 6 | 3 | 30 de agosto | Flushing | Private Correspondence | 138 | NO | 2-3 | 1-2-3 |
| September, 13 | 2 | September, 10 | Ter Veere | Private correspondence. Practicability of retaining Walcheren | 162 | NO | 3 | 1-2-3 |
| September, 15 | 2 | September, 8 | Flushing | Private Correspondence | 71 | SI | 2-3 | 3 |
| September, 18 | 3 | September, 14 | Ter Veere | Private correspondence. Practicability of retaining Walcheren | 108 | NO | 3 | 2 |
| September, 27 | 2 | September, 17 | Middelburgh | Private Correspondence | 36 | NO | 2-3 | 1 |

* Number of lines. Composite matrix between 50-54.

** War affairs (1). English troops (2). Government Strategy / policy (3)

*** Observation / rumours (3). Military officers (2). Civilians (3).



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