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Creatively escaping insularity and encouraging internationalism: British radicalism, history from below, and public relations historiography

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Abstract

In this article, we examine what PR history can learn from a small but internationally influential group of radical historians in Britain. In particular, we examine how they managed to be powerfully democratic through an imaginative sensitivity to the voices of people often excluded from history; through grounding research in specific, often small, localities, and communities; and paradoxically, managing to avoid enough of the insularity associated with the notorious “little Britain” mindset to attract interest and interactions from historians across the world. Our article highlights the relevance to PR history of the following four aspects: 1) their awareness of the need to interact locally and beyond national boundaries; 2) their concern for inclusion (especially for subjects excluded or marginalized in earlier historical accounts); 3) their strategies for escaping insularity and increasing interdisciplinarity; and 4) their illustrations of imagination as a vital component in historical writing. For contemporary PR history writing we argue: that the first aspect, the fusion of the local with the post-national, has become a necessity as globalization keeps expanding; that the second, strategic inclusiveness, has

urgency for a field reflecting on the social shortcomings of its own organization-centered past; that the third, interdisciplinary, has intensified in utility as fields adapt to the massive growth in different kinds of knowledge (from big data to neuroscience); and that the fourth, passionate and engaged imagination, is needed for revisionist accounts of the past to help reclaim more prosocial futures.

Keywords: Public relations historiography; History from below; Communist Party Historians Group; E. P. Thompson; George Rudé; Eric Hobsbawm.

1.- Background: Thompson, Hobsbawm and public relations historiography

Public relations, including PR history, is saturated in U.S. capitalism from its myth of origins to at least the end of the 20th century. This can be seen through Bernays' foundational work in both 1920s books (Bernays, 1923; 1928) and his continuing advocacy of his kind of PR (Bernays, 1965). It broadens out as others fill in compatible stories of similar timeframes and the same single-nation perspective with Raucher's (1968) account of the 1900-1929 period and Tedlow's (1979) coverage of the 1900 to 1950 timeframe. The next decade features Olasky's (1987) revisionist interpretation of much of the same territory of corporate PR and U.S. private enterprise. The apex is Miller's (1999) end-of-century approach to postwar (from 1945) PR through narrowing the historical lens to one single U.S. PR consultancy as the touchstone. Given these concerted efforts, it might – apart from increasing diversity – seem strange to focus our attention on a few historians associated with a subdivision of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB); namely, the Communist Party Historians Group (CPHG). Nevertheless, the CPHG formed part of a cluster of British Marxist historians who did not just influence British and international history but forged a theoretical tradition with a continuing lineage in British and general historiography (Bentley, 2011). That tradition continues to be widely cited in different histories and, we will argue, has much to contribute to contemporary history writing in our field.

To supplement our claim of PR as a field saturated in U.S. capitalism, and to foreshadow this saturation as a partial attempt at colonizing the field's history and future, we revisit some of the titles of the authors cited above. Although grounded in the U.S., both of Bernays' titles make pronouncements that are implicitly universal about their subjects of *Crystallizing Public Relations* (Bernays, 1923) and *Propaganda* (1928). After promoting his business, and himself, Bernays (1965) furthered his claim to be the progenitor of the public relations title in *Biography of an Idea: Memoirs of Public Relations Counsel Edward L. Bernays.* With one exception, the Englishman Pimlott (1951) who also differed not in his U.S. focus but opting for democracy rather than commerce in *Public Relations and American Democracy.* Subsequent historians, however, tended to fall in behind Bernays at least in terms of the U.S. PR experience being business-centric and the prototype for future PR as in Raucher's (1968) *Public Relations and Business: 1900-1929*; Tedlow's (1979) *Keeping the Corporate Image:*

Public Relations and Business, 1900-1950; and Olasky's (1987) *Corporate Public Relations and American Private Enterprise; An History.* At least Olasky (1987) has the modesty to acknowledge he is not addressing PR across time and space but only in the U.S., while the others cover three or five decades of U.S. business and corporate history while their titles implicitly, but inaccurately, claim universal coverage.

Meanwhile, in the postwar period across the Atlantic, the CPHG's famous members, probably best known for contributing to "history from below," included such leading lights of 20th-century British history as Christopher Hill, Eric Hobsbawm, George Rudé, and E. P. Thompson. Clearly influenced by currents that carried across the channel from the French *Annales* movement, and inspired to develop the ideas further, these historians were not at all concerned with promoting business. Instead, they moved the point of view of historical subjects and events away from looking down from the perspective of the powerful to looking up from below from the perspective of those near the base of social pyramids (and barely visible, if not invisible, in earlier historical accounts). In France, Lucien Febvre first used the phrase "histoire vue d'en bas et non d'en haut" (history seen from the bottom up and not from on top) in 1932 when praising Albert Mathiez for seeking to tell the "histoire des masses et non de vedettes" (history of the masses and not of starlets).

However, it was a British Marxist, E. P. Thompson, who, in his essay *History from Below* in *The Times Literary Supplement* (1966), thrust the phrase with its emphasis on ordinary people's history to the forefront of historians' and public attention. Accompanying his shift was a move to enrich history with a broader social sweep more usually associated with the methods and perspectives of sociology. Even at this much later point in time, we argue for the continuing utility of approaching PR history as a history of social change. Indeed, it is significant that, alongside L'Etang's (2008a) consistent foregrounding of the importance of sociological history, three of the most important books on PR history not listed above, that do take a more social perspective are Anthony's (2012) *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain*; Ewen's (1996) *PR! A Social History of Spin*; and Marchand's (1998) *Creating the Corporate Soul.* All were written by "outsiders" to PR history: Anthony came from writing on media studies and history; Ewen from books on advertising and consumer culture; and

Marchand from writing on advertising, the American dream and modernity). It is also noteworthy, that each to a degree sought to include a wider social sweep than Cutlip's (1994; 1995) classic histories of PR as "unseen power."

The British historians, as well as drawing from their European counterparts, and widening the social range of history to bring the disadvantaged into the frame, reframed history from their perspective by learning from immersion in the histories of their own geographical locations. While writing *The Making of the English Working Class*, Thomson (1966) taught worker education classes on local history to working people. Unsurprisingly, from that location, he sought to reimagine conventional history turned upside down. Considering a small group of working men meeting as part of the London Corresponding Society (LCS), Thompson (1966) writes of their agreed protocols and "the leading rule: 'That the number of our Members be unlimited'" (p. 21) and continues:

> Today we might pass over such a rule as a commonplace: and yet it is one of the hinges upon which history turns. It signified the end to any notion of exclusiveness, of politics as the preserve of any hereditary *élite* or property group. . . . To throw open the doors to propaganda and agitation in this "unlimited" way implied a new notion of democracy, which cast aside ancient inhibitions and trusted to self-activating and self-organising processes among the common people. Such a revolutionary challenge was bound to lead to the charge of high treason. (Thompson, 1966, pp. 21-22)

Thompson (1966) reframes a meeting between ordinary people as "one of the hinges on which history turns" (p. 21). He turns people previously hidden from history – apart, perhaps, from when they were hung as traitors for such mild democracy – into a hinge of history. This was history from below with inclusiveness and imaginative power. It compares favorably with the famous formulation of Bernays: "The conscious manipulation of the opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society" that still acts as the banner for the Twitter handle @EdwardBernays1. An earlier awareness of these very different historical formations could have opened up

different pathways but amidst contemporary calls for reimagining democracy the perspective remains valid.

In addition, Thompson defended the use of a Marxist notion of social class understood as "historical formation." This was a tenet of Marxism at the time and Thompson rebelled in two ways – he left the Communist Party because of the USSR's 1956 invasion of Hungary and theoretically, he distinguished his position from the rigid economist view to argue that cultural aspects were as important as economic ones to capture politics and society. Nevertheless, he maintained that these are incomprehensible without the detailed study of the "class struggle."
When Thompson started an argument with the implicit or explicit economicism of the notion of "mode of production", he did it by applying the analysis to other historical formations among which capitalism is only one formation among others. Thus, in the 1980s he argued that we cannot begin to describe the feudal or capitalist society in economic terms independently of the relations of power and domination, the concepts of use or private property (and its corresponding laws), the culturally imposed rules, and the culturally formed requirements, all of them features the mode of production (Thompson, 1989).

For PR history, this matters. To expand the meaning of the modes of production beyond the economy, opens PR to a twofold Thompsonian historical materialism. On the one hand, developing a history of public relations as a history of production methods in the process of building relationships or reputation so that the use of language throughout history to build persuasive messages would be an example of this approach. The second approach involves analyzing the role of PR in processes of historical formation referred to Thompson (1979) — for example, the strategic use of communication to create consciousness for a class, or on a smaller scale for employer organizations seeking to curb the power of unions. Thompson (1966) was convinced that:

> class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born — or enter involuntarily. Class-consciousness is the

> way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value systems, ideas, and institutional forms. If the experience appears as determined, class-consciousness does not... Consciousness of class arises in the same way in different times and places, but never in *just* the same way. . .. [so] that we cannot understand class unless we see it as a social and cultural formation, arising from processes which can only be studied as they work themselves out over a considerable historical period . . . In the years between 1780 and 1832 most English working people came to feel an identity of interests as between themselves, and as against their rulers and employers. (pp. 9-11)

In these texts, Thompson denies the narrowly materialist content – common to many Marxists of the time – of the concept of class. For him, it is social consciousness that defines social being. The class appears when its members feel their interests' identity and the contradiction of those interests with those of other classes. They, in turn, also become aware of such antagonism. Therefore, while there is no such consciousness we cannot speak about the existence of classes. The question remains of how, in cases of lack of consciousness, society is structured? Thompson finds his answer coincides with Hobsbawm's view that the class and problems of consciousness are inseparable. Class in its fullest sense only comes into existence in the historical moment when the class begins to become aware of itself as such (cited by Thompson, 1979, p. 37).

Because PR, like a class, cannot simply derive its existence from capitalism but is closely linked to the concept of public, the effects of a Thompsonian perspective on building a history of PR are fundamental because, as Muñoz (2009) puts it: "culture is introduced as a criterion of group identity" (p. 32) so that

> Everyday life not only refers to the network of productive relations as to a shared ways of understanding reality. Consciousness levels therefore overlap to living conditions, highlighting the evaluative preferably against the productive. The cultural shift toward culture as alternative to a narrow historical materialism means diluting economic relations and highlighting elements of family, education, urban, holidays... The popular consciousness and the consciousness

> of working class are equivalent. And, at the same time, the collective memory becomes a daily practice. (pp. 32-33)

Certainly, the linking of class, and class consciousness, with traditions, value systems, ideas, and institutional forms involves recognizing a process of consciousness of class construction. In that process, PR plays an important role by communicating identity symbolically and by foregrounding shared interests. In consequence, one of the challenges of the history of PR should be to include in the object of study the role played by PR itself – in the service of the powerful or the disadvantaged. Ewen (1966) wrote of how corporate PR incorporated the innovative promotional techniques of advocates of the New Deal but long before that, *The Making of the English Working Class* offers a huge picture in which the underlying experiences of history construction are drawn. In those experiences, everyday life expresses the interests, the social experiences, the traditions and the value systems that, as Thompson (1966) states, define a class from the disposition to behave like a class defined itself in its actions and their conscience in relation to other groups of people. The Thompsonian approach is, thus, situational and its links are historically similar to the ones defined by Grunig (1989, 1997; Grunig & Hunt, 1984) in the situational theory of publics. From this standpoint, *The Making of the English Working Class* is a (secondary) historical source to analyze the existence of publics and the shape of its relationships with the environment prior to the consolidation of capitalism.

Thompson (1966) does not forget that the popular daily routine is made of resistance and opposition. He structures the book around it with the first part on the political culture and traditions of struggle against industrialization. His second part focuses on the everyday through the multiplicity of aspects of life such as life in community, leisure and family, and new forms of exploitation. In the third part, Thompson places the new political and struggle culture developed by the working class. From a global perspective, the book expresses a humanist sense of solidarity that crosses national boundaries as the new relations of exploitation and alienation introduced by capitalism, are embedded in detailed descriptions of interpersonal actions. Microhistory, despite its rich methodological innovation, overwhelms the dialectical point of view with large structures.

Accordingly, Thompson culminates the work of British historiography that since l946 had begun Eric Hobsbawm, Rodney Hilton, Christopher Hill, who investigated everyday life from social consciousness with others historians of *Past and Present*. The primacy given to the values were their great contribution. Hence everyday life is understood as: (1) the individual subject and his/her most common and consistent experiences; (2) the symbolic and imaginary mediations that, under experiential traditions forms, influence attitudes; and (3) the resistance and dissidence defended by the popular culture and autonomy against social domination. The processes that occur within this everyday have the same elements that appear in today's public relations: notions of symbolic mediations or resistance are part of PR research. L'Etang (2008) observes how focusing on everyday life reoriented PR research to the consideration of cultural impact. Daily life can be perceived as a continuous process of accommodation and resistance in front of promotional culture, alongside individuals interpreting and constructing their own meanings. This would be a contemporary expression of the construction processes of class consciousness analyzed by Thompson (1966). That is why every historian of public relations should have *The Making of the English Working Class* and *Customs in Common* (1993) among their paramount (historical and theoretical) sources.

Thompson (1966) shows how, on the basis of a common set of shared meanings, particular appropriations, disputes, arguments and consensus occur. The existence of a shared central meaning is required for communication between different positions — occupied by Patricians and Plebs— but at the same time there are a plurality of signifying practices, linguistic turns and different symbols (or appropriate differently by social groups). In his later *Customs in Common* (Thompson, 1993) describes the English society of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which public relations have a place, when, for example, in referring to the popular actions of certain social groups, such as bakers, he writes: "Indeed, the baker had sometimes to attend to his own public relations, even to the extent of enlisting the crown on his side" (p. 222).

While Thompson addressed the customs, Eric Hobsbawm —perhaps the most famous representative of this historiographical school— has been interested in similar, yet different phenomena: traditions. In *The Invention of Tradition* (Hobsbawm, 1983), he distinguishes between custom and tradition: "The object and characteristic of

‘traditions’, including invented ones, is invariance. The past, real or invented, to which they refer imposes fixed (normally formalized) practices, such as repetition” (p. 2). In contrast, traditions can be invented:

> The term “invented tradition” is used in a broad, but not imprecise sense. It includes both “traditions” actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and —dateable period —a matter of a few years perhaps and establishing themselves with great rapidity. The royal Christmas broadcast in Britain (instituted in 1932) is an example of the first; the appearance and development of the practices associated with the Cup Final in British Association Football, of the second. ‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity 1 with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past. A striking example is the deliberate choice of a Gothic style for the nineteenth-century rebuilding of the British parliament, and the equally -deliberate decision after World War II to rebuild the parliamentary chamber on exactly the same basic plan as before” (Hobsbawm, 1983, pp. 1-2).

Accordingly, “the historical past into which the new tradition is inserted need not be lengthy, stretching back into the assumed mists of time” (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 2).

By using the verb "insert" the historian implicitly recognizes the strategic nature of the invention of a tradition and its close association with memory. In their editorial for the special section of *Public Relations Inquiry* on public relations and memory, L’Etang *et al*. (2015) similarly asserted:

> Historical scholarship can be seen as professionalised form of memorialisation, but memories may be framed by elites to further political ends. The French sociologist Halbwachs argued that this framing provided a social and collective support for individual memories that eventually contributed to stereotyped assumptions... The discursive processes entailed are clearly relevant to public

> communication (political and heritage commemoration and events) including public relations. They are also rhetorical, raising questions of cultural production, representation and multiple interpretations. Scholarship in memory studies encompasses oral and literary dimensions both print and digital since collective memories are expressed within the public sphere. Thus, memory studies alert us to the centrality of public relations in the complexities of history making and historical understandings. (pp. 127-128).

Hobsbawm (1983) argues that national elites invented many traditions to justify the existence and importance of their respective nations. Moreover, he continues that these invented traditions play an important social and political role, because they are invented precisely for that purpose: to put down roots in the social body. However, he wonders to what extent they can be easily manipulated. Hobsbawm's own answer is that historians and social anthropologists have to work together to try to understand why, in social terms and in changing situations, there is the need to invent a tradition. The PR historian has also much to say, beyond relating the inventions of tradition for national building and reputation purposes. A historical analysis of the reasons that lead to the invention of tradition is essential for building a social and cultural history of public relations. This means focusing not only on the events, but on the reasons that generate attitudes and behaviors to invent traditions as well. One trivial example was the institution of bread and cheese as "a ploughman's lunch" in British pubs a few decades ago. Ploughmen never ate such lunches but the customers seemed to like the idea so this invented tradition served the purpose of selling easy to make but still profitable food.

2.- Luddite movement and the development of protest public relations

Hobsbawm, together with Rudé, initiated the social dimension of history that forms the basis of *history from below*. Indeed, one of the privileged fields of study of history from below were the social revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. According to Thompson (1966), the riots were ritualized processes, which were part of the nature of things and there was, therefore, a ritual experience to appease and answer them. That is, they were not sporadic, but strategic and tactical phenomena: "The provincial magistracy were often in extreme isolation. Troops, if they were sent for, might take

two, three, or more days to arrive, and the crowd knew this very well" (Thompson, 1971, pp. 120-121).

Within the phenomenon of the crowd in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe, lay Luddism, a subject that attracted some of the most eminent members of the CPHG. Luddism arose through the application of the new inventions of machines in the textile industry, which led to a significant worsening of working conditions of workers in the Industrial Revolution with steeply falling wages and rising unemployment. A machine could do more work than workers and the workers who were not fired suffered lower wages. Consequently, it does not seem irrational or strange that the workers expressed their discontent destroying the machinery. Strategically, It was one way to put pressure on employers to avoid layoffs, improve working conditions and to seek better wage. Hobsbawm (1964) called this stage "collective bargaining by riot" (p. 107). These actions had some degree of organization, although very rudimentary. Workers sent threatening statements to employers before a violent action against the machines. Following an old tradition, they were signed with the name of Ned Ludd, a legendary youth who allegedly smashed two stocking frames in 1779, and allowed them to protect their own anonymity. This is the origin of the name of that movement, Luddism, and refers therefore to the actions organized by the British workers in the last decades of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century against factory machinery. Similar actions took place in the rest of Europe.

It is not, therefore, a stretch to consider that the Luddite movement represents an early demonstration of what Moloney *et al*. (2012) call protest PR (i.e., persuasive communication to implement ideas, behaviors and policies into law, regulation and other forms of executive action) before workers had access to the vote. One recent form of this is the movement to occupy public spaces (e.g., the action of Spanish social movement 15-M or the "London Occupy movement setting up tents on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral and deploying media relations to publicise their anti-capitalist argument" (Moloney *et al*., 2012, p. 4).

One major contributions of the British Marxist historians, and other European colleagues (e.g. Le Roy Ladurie, 2002), is the demystification of the narrative that these movements exclusively used violence against people. The resistance of Luddites was

quite rational, had strong support among workers of his time, and was even successful to the extent that led to reflection and political awareness by workers in relation to capitalist exploitation. This became evident years after the first union struggles of the proletariat in England and elsewhere in the world. Furthermore, Luddite resistance "was by no means confined to workers, but was shared by the great mass of public opinion, including many manufacturers" (Hobsbawm, 1952, p. 61).

Luddism faced not technology but the social changes produced by the new technology. As Noble (2000) claimed, Luddism struggled against the power of capital, which used technology to restructure social relations and production models to the detriment of workers in order to return significant profits to the manufacturers.

Strictly speaking, Luddism rebelled against the transformation of social relations, in which mechanization was a complementary element, but not the only nor the most important. Luddism was a political and moral response of workers to confront the forces of capitalism interested in destroying the social relations of traditional type that organized their life. Workers had to defend their way of life, with its own morality, from the destructive ravages of industrial capitalism. They defended tradition and law, the rights of artisans and crafts, ultimately a way of life. Their opposition to the industrial machinery was also a symbolic action that symbolized their rejection of the manufacturing system.

In sum, Luddism "was a form of direct action which arose in specific conditions, which was often highly organised and under the protection of the local community, and as to which we should be chary of generalization" (Thompson, 1966, p. 62). As such, it was strategic and an early form of protest PR. From current perspective on the risks AI poses to employment, it is easier to understand Luddism as popular movement, shaped by workers and craftsmen. Luddism is a clear antecedent of today's activism but in a very different context of, sometimes violent, protest PR. Certainly, for instance, when the London Occupy movement deploys media relations to disseminate their anti-capitalist messages, they are acting for the same purpose as the Luddites when they broke industrial machinery. At that time newspapers did exist, but had not been developed and institutionalized into today's traditional and social media with the new access to public opinion. Violence against machines was also a form of event

management to attract attention of employers, politicians and public opinion. It was a planned strategy; and survives now as one of the best-known historical practices of protest PR. It formed within the various revolutions that hit Europe in the mid-nineteenth century and especially during the Paris Commune. In fact, neo-Luddism is a new form of today's activism that uses public relations to publicize their arguments (Jones, 2006).

3.- George Rudé and the historical legitimation of violent PR before the wisdom of the crowd

One of the less visible members of the British Marxist school was George Rudé, who was actively involved with the Communist party, an affiliation which caused him many hardships during his life. Rudé contributed to the history from below focusing his research especially on those who participated in the riots and rebellions.

Taking up Hobsbawm's (1964) elaboration of crowd action as "collective bargaining by riot", Rudé explored the ways in which the survival of traditional values and ideas was the key issue in arousing popular responses like machine breaking, a theme adopted and adapted from Thompson's (1971) exposition of a moral economy for the English crowd. In his reconstruction of the *mentalité* of the crowd, Rudé, especially in *The Crowd in History* (Rudé, 1964) hoped to demonstrate the essential rationality of the English popular class focus on violence against property rather than people and the heavy-handedness of state repression against all forms of popular agitation.

Rudé's (1964) book was one of the earliest histories devoted exclusively to the study of the popular classes and their movements as protest movements. At the time, it was a chapter of history that attracted little attention from historians; and it is still an absent chapter in the history of protest PR. Around the same time as Thompson, Rudé also founded a new theoretical perspective within the social history. Rudé's purpose was threefold: to reclaim many social groups not considered by traditional, or social, history for legitimate research agendas; to reconstruct their motives and experiences, and to restore them to their active role in shaping historical processes. From the perspective of PR, such history from below can aid the restoration of historical images or reputations of excluded or vilified social groups and reclaim their, often essential, role in historical development. Therefore, history and PR link not only by the historicity of public

relations, but by the PR function that historiography (not history) can have, in fashioning the historical images of certain groups. This differs from the propaganda function by being an image building role.

Rudé (1964) was neither satisfied with the two nineteenth century historical perspectives on the crowd and popular protests that had previously prevailed. On the one hand, there were those historians who saw the crowd as a mass composed of marginal social groups and uprooted, guided by irrational reasons, and directed by the desire to plunder (e.g., Le Bon, 1895). On the other hand, there was the viewpoint of idealizing of the crowd, that considers the crowd as people moved by pure ideals (e.g., Michelet, 1847). Although Rudé confesses to have more sympathy for the latter approach, he considered both as unsatisfactory because they were stereotyped, abstract and lacking a historical basis, whereby the crowd lacks face and identity. Moreover, both perspectives are drawn from above, from the perspective of high politics and through sources generated by the powerful.

The history of PR is mostly a history from above, from the point of view of those practitioners serving large corporations or relevant celebrities or personalities. Rudé (1964) advocates the realization of historical research that develops a more complete vision of the composition, motives and objectives of popular protest movements. That is, his purpose was to restore the historical identity of the lower sectors of society — what, in PR terms, would be called an historical image repair strategy— and recover the mental universe and mindsets of anonymous people in order to understand and explain their actions (almost always fragmentarily documented).

Rudé (1975) did the same with some figures maligned by history as the case of Robespierre. Indeed, he argues that Robespierre was never a liberal. The English parliamentary tradition was wholly alien to him and his passionate defense of popular sovereignty —he spoke in support of the people's right to take up arms, he condoned demonstrations, riots, even rebellions against "tyranny"— clashes with the liberals' trust in representative institutions. Nor was Robespierre a socialist, and it is anachronistic to view him as one. Unlike Lenin, who based his policies on an expanding proletariat, Robespierre's economic ideas were those of the menu *peuple* —the artisans, traders and

small producers who were a large but historically declining class. Though ardent in extirpating the wealth of the emigres and the enemies of the Republic, Robespierre never questioned the fundamental sanctity of property. Rudé (1975) places Robespierre, the *watchdog* of the Revolution, in the long tradition of radicals who believed that freedom was a constant struggle.

Picking up the subject of the crowd again, Rudé's (1964) precise empirical inquiry resulted in a series of radical findings hitherto unknown. The first affects the composition of the crowd: most members, although of lowly social position, were socially rooted with a stable occupation (e.g. artisans, employees, shopkeepers, small businesses or landowners). That is, there were people with ability to process and search for information in terms of the situational theory of publics (Grunig, 1989, 1997). This is because one of the advantages of Rudé's (1964) conclusions is that we can approach them as a history of the formation of active publics according to situational theory. Indeed, this is most clearly seen from the findings of this historian on motivations and objectives of the participants in the popular revolts in France and England during the eighteenth century. The participant were not irrational mobs, motivated by the desire to participate in the loot, but reputable people who acted motivated by belief systems and rational values, who believed that natural justice was on their side and frequently invoked the authority to legitimize their actions (Rudé, 1964). Their protests were not, either, merely irrational and spontaneous outbursts; they followed regular patterns, complied with established code of conduct and were directed against specific targets; in other words, they were strategic.

As mentioned, *The Crowd in History*, as one of the foundational works of history from below, is written with the aim of rescuing the lower classes from the anonymity, incorporating them into written history and highlighting their role as active participants in building historical processes. In addition, it is a history that intended to analyze and explain the actions of those classes from below, which is based on their beliefs, motivations, aspirations and therefore does not comply with the interpretation given by the upper classes and outside observers (Cabrera, 2009). Specifically, history from below not only refers to the object of study, but also to the theoretical approach. Consequently, from a PR perspective, history from below is not just a technique to give

visibility and build historical reputation of social groups or even individuals. It is also a relevant methodology for historical analyses of the profession.

We cannot declare that the history of mass communication and its media has the same level of methodological and theoretical development as other areas of social history. What is indisputable is that this history does not include groups such as PR professionals —or media relations ones— who have dedicated themselves to influencing the media agenda. Both the history of PR —and communication in general — could benefit by considering, and by using, a history from below approach. Take the example of a history of how of a group of professionals were active participants in shaping the mass media agenda and, consequently, the public and political agenda. This was the case in Hill & Knowlton's campaign to get the U.S. to intervene in Iraq in response to the invasion and annexation of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein's Republic (Walton, 1997). It is an example of the influence of PR in shaping the international political agenda and history itself.

Indeed, mass media not only write the present history —one reason why PR practitioners would also be historiographers from below— but have played a crucial role in historical events. PR historians should ask why communication historians, media historians, and even many business historians overlook PR practitioners —as happened with the crowd in the history of France and England until the arrival of members of the CPHG. It might be time to approach PR history as a history from below, from the perspective of those professionals who, unlike the popular classes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were at the service of power, but whose hegemonic history remains unwritten. This is a huge gap in the history of PR as a profession. PR would benefit from initiating histories from below, in the sense of developing a historical explanation from the perspectives, beliefs, and knowledge of its practitioners.

As Cabrera points out (2009), the aim of taking as a starting point of historical research, the experiences and motivations of historical actors (without exception) makes history from below part of a broader movement of theoretical transition from social history to cultural history. That movement accelerated in the early 1970s. This transition involved

a growing flexibility in relation to the causal connection between the material conditions of life and the subjectivity of the actions of individuals and groups. Without entirely denying the existence of causal relationships, cultural historians consider that this link does not operate spontaneously and automatically, but through the aptitudes and cultural resources of people (Burke, 2008).

Undeniably, PR plays an important role in the creation and use of cultural resources as illustrated in discussing Hobsbawm's (1983) invention of tradition. Nonetheless, as demonstrated in such historical disciplines as Assyriology (Xifra & Heath, 2015), the history of humankind is also the history of the creation of cultural universes.

4.- Conclusion

The work conducted by group of radical historians in Britain points to the possible existence of a hidden historiography of public relations. The same happens with the French historical movement of *Annales* (Xifra & Collell, 2014). These historiographies can help public relations scholars learn more about the history of the discipline and how today's critical concepts, such as protest and dissent, played an important role in the past, in particular in the rise of the industrial age. Indeed, these historians have analyzed research fields, such as activism that are relevant to fighting the abuses of the emergence of today's capitalism, yet they have been of little interest to public relations history scholars.

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