

American national government

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What a piece of writing must that be, one inevitably thinks, the story which contributes to and precedes by two months the scandalous fall of a President. All the President's Men is the real account of Washington Post's two young reporters, Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward who conducted two years of investigations to untie the Gordian knot and eventually expose of a very complicated political conspiracy mounting up to the Chief of State.

The actual report starts one sunny Saturday in the Capital in 1974, when the two authors have started working on the topic of the Watergate break-in and develops into a broad inquiry through the political fraud and crimes that lead to the resignation of the then president Richard Nixon and his administration. Even though narrated in a simple and succinct manner, almost telegraphic, the story astonished me because of the huge bid of the search and the courage of taking it to its end, the chain-reaction it provoked, which obviously disrupted the political life of the US and fired up the world's public opinion.

Placing it in real-time, we see that President Nixon resigned two months after the story was published. Carl Bernstein & Bob Woodward's investigation was altogether a great factor which contributed to the disclosure of a dirty business including moneylaundering, fraudulent electoral campaign, illegal wiretapping and other crimes that contravene to the very principles of the American Constitution and the Governmental establishment, and to the values of democracy in total.

Undoubtedly, the sum of notes, papers and inquiries that the two reporters have gathered for the two-year coverage in The Washington Post has given

birth to a book full of suspense, easy to read for the less initiated, full of insight into the political machinations and hierarchies at the White House and other organisms like CIA and FBI. The true story was awarded the Pulitzer price and inspired a very faithful cinematographic adaptation in 1976, which in my opinion respects exactly the long and thorough problem-solving demarche of the two reporters through a net of hundreds and hundreds of leads.

What I liked is the rhythm of the story and the perfume of the time. It is astounding to read the original chronicles of a journalistic investigation that made so much difference in the political and administrative life of the United States. At first, I found it a good, fast-paced detective story that appeals to the adventurer hidden in any of us, featuring a burglary intrigue and two “ordinary” heroes describing their obstinate effort to penetrate a very scary wall of silence that lead higher than either of them had imagined.

Until then, it was like all good detectives normally do. But some dozen pages later, the heavy responsibility of the whole account struck me. I mean, as a foreigner, this gave me a very crude and abrupt insight into the ramifications of the American administration seen through the eyes of professional journalists at that time, without much of introduction or decryption. This could account for a negative point, the rapidity of the narration, if the book had been meant to be didactic, not informational: a snapshot of the event.

And because it was written at a time when this scandal grew to be central to the daily life of Americans, it achieves a role that I find essential for a very good documentary: the pulse of the time, the organisms of decision, the

power structures and pressure games, the small hassles at the Post's headquarters etc. Even though I had some notion about the affair before, the book launched me into a roller-coaster ride into the world of politics, newspaper journalism and communications.

Before reading it as a sensational story, for me it was a manual of journalistic methodology and intuition. I particularly liked considering the ethical issues of such a public-related endeavor and the responsibility towards the audience, sources and actors, the dedicated meticulousness in working their way through this spider web of secret connections and political protocols. But overall, I found particularly inspiring the unequal buildup of the whole scheme up to the final takeover.

There are several stages where Woodward and Bernstein's findings give butterflies in the stomach, like discovering that one of the Watergate intruders was a CIA security agent, or when the two reporters meet the secretive agent "Deep-Throat", and then when they publish the findings of the FBI regarding the greater scope of the burglary, which was in fact a huge misappropriation of funds, sabotage meant to create funds for Nixon's reelection. And even though this book is not written in a pedagogical manner, the facts speak for themselves beyond any morals or heavy conclusions.

As their echo proves, the articles, book and then the movie they inspired created a completely new approach to America's institutions and, most probably, raised a great questioning mark over the political regimes worldwide. Taking up by the traces it left, I believe "All the President's Men"

managed to prove that any earthly institution is deeply questionable and may be biased or fraudulent despite its ideology. However, from a historical point of view, the book further shows that these regimes are savable provided the freedom of speech and research is allowed.

The very principle of democracy is that each individual has the privilege and the duty to contribute for the collective well-being, and so they can become agents of change, when irregularities happen. I deeply believe this book stimulates such awareness and, why not, the reflex to keep one's eye open and act with abnegation when needed. In consequence, the papers make an excellent material for our American National Government course because it provides a very strong case study of the American federal scheme of government and its potential breaches.

It underlines how the 4th state power, the mass media, can contribute to the regulation of an eventually corrupted system by rendering it transparent. We also have a very intricate access to very confidential information and behind the scene leads in the governmental hive. Because I come from a different culture, I esteemed the way this story, written with modesty, reveals the power of the press within American political process, as well as the power of the individual(s) within the hierarchies of power.

The determination, perseverance of the two reporters, even after hitting apparent dead-ends lead to a huge mobilization of forces and a substantial change. In accordance, I would like to mention the patriotism of the veteran "Deep Throat", revealed after more than 30 years of confidentiality as "FBI's No. 2" official, W. Mark Felt". This is an example of a personal belief

initiative taken despite the great threats, without which the whole story could have passed unproven.

Wondering about the real contribution of Felt, I came about the statement of the two reporters in a 2005 Washington Post article. According to article's author David Von Drehle's, " Woodward and Bernstein expressed a concern that the Deep Throat story has, over the years, come to obscure the many other elements that went into exposing the Watergate story: other sources, other investigators, high-impact Senate hearings, a shocking trove of secret White House tape recordings and the decisive intervention of a unanimous U. S. Supreme Court. " To my understanding, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein have been very aware of the boom their investigation would consequently incite. There followed a great chain-reaction by which the juridical power, the intelligence services and other institutions have equally contributed to the making of the complete case against the President and his administration, through extensive legal procedures. For me, this is in a sense a revolution.

It is a revolution because the corruption and the anti-constitutional deeds are denounced to the public opinion and, even though this mounts up to the head of the state, the guilty part finishes exposed, with reprimands in accordance. Even though this book has been written in a short and snappy manner, without personal elaboration or explanations, it surely reconstructs the pulse of the time and the dramatic beat of the ascending inquiry. Personally, I feel I had been dragged also in the " present tense" of the best politics& detective story of the passed century.

Even though the authors do not make any deep analysis either about the power structures they touch, or about the consequences of their investigation, it remains a grand dissertation-scenario of the changing nature of political actions and the particular framework of the state powers during the time of Nixon and beyond. References: Bernstein, Carl; Woodward, Bob. "All the President`s Men". New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006. Von Drehle, David. "FBI's No. 2 Was 'Deep Throat'". June 1, 2005; Page A01. Washington Post. 8 Sept. 2007 < <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/31/AR2005053100655.html> >