

Correspondents in Korea—

Safety and Frustration

LEE JUDGE

ALONG WITH the popular fancy about the big-city reporter who solves all the murders and then tells the police, there has been circulated an image of the average American war correspondent as a grimy, bearded, neck-risking hero who hoofs it up the hill with the riflemen, scoops out his own foxhole, and then sets up shop to record the feel of front-line action.

From what I've seen in Korea, it seems to me more likely that you'd find a fair percentage of your warring journalists sacked safely back at a division command post, where the principal hardships are an occasional real or imagined shortage of liquor or a mess sergeant's unimaginative approach to his job.

In Korea the group that would venture even as far forward as a division command post represented a minority, for the bulk of their colleagues in combat letters were holed up in even greater leisure back at the correspondents' billet in Seoul, or off in Japan making a valiant but futile effort to put a recognizable dent in the seemingly self-multiplying stock of liquor at the Tokyo Correspondents' Club.

It is not my intention here to cast professional scorn on the good living provided for the men who have been covering the war in Korea, but rather to bring into the open a type of life that any reporter, or for that matter anyone who is disturbed by the thought of working for a living, might well enjoy.

The situation wasn't always so comfortable, notably during the early days of the war when every square foot of Korean terrain was explosive. At that time the lot of the war correspondent wasn't much better than the lot of the infantryman or the clerk or the cook. Everybody was fighting on four sides, and none of those sides was per-

manently at your back as a reliable gate for escape.

My observations cover the war in Korea loosely for the calendar year 1951, during which I shared the life of the war correspondents as public information officer for a famous combat division which was almost perpetually on the target. This assignment, plus numerous roving adventures with the press, placed me in perhaps more personal and more constant association with more war correspondents in Korea than any other public information officer. Being a newspaper reporter and a public-relations man by civilian trade, I enjoyed a bond with the correspondents which does not usually exist between the Army and the press.

I knew all the men and women who covered the war, and I knew most of them well. I lived with them at our division command post, and I was with them on the press train at Munsan-ni for the peace talks. I shared their billet at Seoul and the abundant comforts of their club in Tokyo. They were not only competent journalists; they were entertaining hosts and magnificent guests.

Throughout the press corps in Korea, I was known as the "good provider," Mine Host to the Fourth Estate. From out of nowhere or, even more miraculously, from out of Army Special Service allocations, I was always able to provide appreciable quantities of potables just when it seemed as though temperance forces had seized control of the peninsula.

But Don't Go Near the Water

We always had a sizable representation of the press at our division—wire services, special correspondents, TV and radio men, and so on. To accommodate the group and to handle general

publicity matters for the division there were, in addition to myself, one officer and anywhere from ten to fifteen enlisted men. Occasionally a particularly energetic correspondent would actually go up to an area somewhere near the fighting and take some pictures or scout out a story. But for the most part, a day in the life of the average war correspondent was a lot like camping out with the boys on a fishing trip when nobody has any intention of fishing or even of going near the water.

There were outstanding exceptions. Fred Waters of International News Photos got hit twice taking front-line photos; Bob Pierpoint would take his CBS recorder on infantry attacks; Mike Rougier of *Life* was almost reckless in his lack of respect for enemy bullets. Bob Vermillion of UP, Fred Sparks of the *Chicago Daily News*, Dave McConnell of the *New York Herald Tribune*, George McArthur of AP—they are all lucky to be alive today. But these boys and a few others were exceptions.

The Forgotten War

Those of us who were on the military payroll had to emerge from the sack at seven in the morning, just as though we had something urgent to do, but the press usually slept on until around ten-thirty or eleven, at which time one of the enlisted men would be dispatched to the officers' mess tent for some coffee and toast in order that the correspondents would not have to approach the day's activities on empty stomachs.

A half hour or so later, a quick inventory would be under way to see how much liquor was immediately available for pre-luncheon cocktails. In those dark early days, because of the lack of suitable accessories, the correspondents

were frequently obliged to drink raw booze from a canteen cup. However, after some particularly thorough foraging and several trips to Tokyo, we were able to provide various types of glasses. At times we had special delicacies in the form of olives, cherries, and orange slices. We were never quite able to overcome the inconvenience created by the lack of ice, but occasionally we could rig a deal with the quartermaster or the mess sergeant in which otherwise wasted pieces of ice could be exchanged for whiskey.

The daylight hours generally found us absorbed in the latest offerings of Mickey Spillane or quarterbacking the high-level strategy of whatever military operation was then in progress. There were also considerable planning for coming trips to Tokyo as well as post-mortems over what was left of those who had just returned from that city's American adaptation of Oriental life.

Following evening cocktails and dinner, we'd trek over to G-2 and G-3 for the latest reports from the front and whatever tactical data and plans were available. This information was necessary for the composition of stories to be phoned or teletyped to Seoul for eventual transmission to a world that, it seemed to us, didn't give a damn any-

way. Frequently, the day's combat would be of very little significance, and then the boys would draw lots to see who would be stuck with filing a pooled dispatch for the group.

In fairness it should be noted that field telephoning in Korea was a monstrous thing. You often had to go through three or four switchboards to call an office fifty miles away, and often at least one of the switchboards would be out for hours at a time. This, of course, added to the frustration of wondering whether anybody was ever going to read what you wrote anyway.

Sometimes we were able to wrap up the chore in time for an open-air movie, weather permitting—a diversion that occupied a couple of hours before nightcap time.

The Joys of Travel

This existence, although pleasantly unhurried, got to be wearing every so often, largely because the physical surroundings remained so monotonous, and weren't much to look at in the first place. Whenever the boredom became too stiff to take, a sure cure was available in a trip down to the correspondents' billet in Seoul. The division air section could fly you down there in about thirty minutes, while a jeep ride

through the twisting mountain trails consumed an agonizing five to seven hours.

No matter how you got there, the end result was amply rewarding. Checking in at the billet was something like arriving at Grandma's for Thanksgiving dinner. You got a handsome reception from the crew on duty, and pretty soon you were hip-deep in a stimulating bull session while the cubbyholes and closets were raided for booze. There were always correspondents flying in from Tokyo, and the unwritten house rules demanded that each of them bring back at least a case.

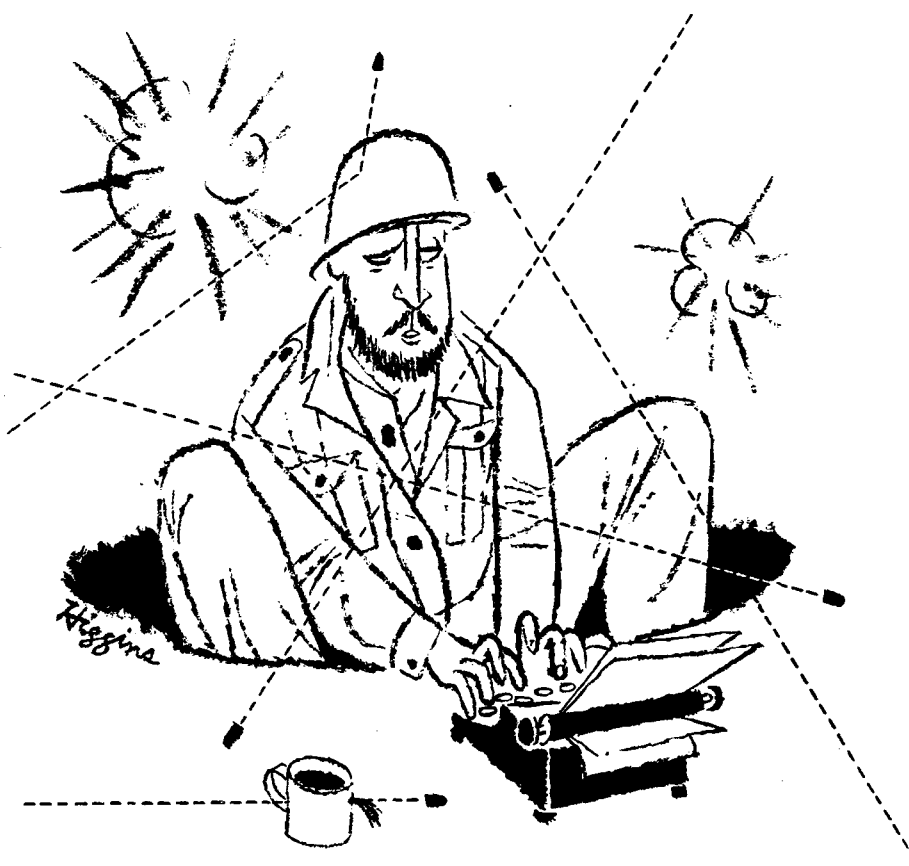
From the standpoint of appearance or comfort, the Seoul billet couldn't compare with a rather poor American hotel. It was a damaged four-story stone apartment building that had been used to house U.S. government workers in the palmy days preceding the shooting war. But it was always a welcome change from life in a tent, and it was only a five-minute jeep ride from the hundred-foot-long bar at the ornate saloon known as the Fifth Air Force Officers' Club, notable for its fifteen-cent Martinis made with real ice.

Mornings at Seoul were generally free until the Eighth Army's ten-thirty briefing, which was a lecture on what was happening all along the front. If you had the Seoul slot for a wire service, you attended the briefings regularly, took the phone calls from the men in the field, and filed a morning and a night war lead. Features were fed through you, or you could write them yourself. Complaints from the home office and wranglings with book-bound censors were the crosses you had to bear.

A lot of good newspapermen were on the desk in Seoul—Nate Polowetsky and John Randolph of AP; Dick Applegate, Bob Gibson, and Bob Miller of UP; Cecil Brownlow, Don Dixon, and Bob Schackne of INS; Greg MacGregor of the *New York Times*; John Dille of *Life*; Al Smouler of Agence France-Presse, and quite a few others. But frustration over a war the world seemed to have forgotten was like a dark cloud over Seoul.

The Good Life at Munsan-ni

In June of 1951 the Communists expressed an interest in seeking an end to the war, and peace negotiations began at Kaesong and later at Panmunjom.





The Army set up a press headquarters on a train situated at Munsan-ni, about twelve miles south of the conference site and some thirty miles northeast of Seoul. Here life for the correspondents was to blossom, for a while, into its brightest flowering.

It wasn't the Twentieth Century Limited or the Super Chief, but the train represented the finest job of transplanting standard U.S. comfort to barren, Godforsaken Korea that any of us had seen. In addition to the ordinary rolling stock, the train carried a number of hospital-type Pullman cars. The beds were longer, wider, and much more comfortable than ordinary railroad berths. There were a couple of cars containing davenportes that had seen better days, but were still good for lounging. There was a long press car with desks, typewriters, and telephones, and a dining car where you had your choice of several selections at each meal. And no tipping.

The procurement of energizing refreshments presented a problem at first. I managed to round up twenty cases of beer one afternoon, but by bedtime nothing remained but a colossal pile of empty cans and a vast array of hangovers in the making. The whole alcoholic supply system stumbled along on just such an unprofessional basis for a time, but the frequency of return trips to Tokyo generally assured the regular availability of the hard stuff.

American know-how finally provided a more permanent solution. A couple of the correspondents set up a club car,

bought quantities of liquor in Tokyo, arranged for shipping, and peddled it by the drink at cost plus a small handling charge.

Life on the train traveled at a pretty fair clip for a while because of the feeling that you were in on something big. Competition to get on the daily press truck up to the conference site was intense, dealings with the censors bristled, and everybody was busy trying to figure out some way to cut somebody else's journalistic throat. Even though you couldn't cover the actual talks, you could go up to Kaesong or Panmunjom and pick up a lot of color for feature stuff. You got your regular story from the briefing officers at the nightly press conference, and you got a lot of inside material talking with the Communist correspondents.

But as the talks wore on, boredom once more took over. Day after day of trying to write a different lead for a "no-progress" story began to manifest itself in rattled nerves. Once in a while there would be a lively flurry of activity, but for the most part life settled into the same old pattern of eating, drinking, and sleeping. Sometimes there'd be a volleyball game alongside the train, but only when the journalists got fed up with booze and bed.

On to Tokyo!

No matter how dreadfully dull things got to be at a division command post, in the Seoul billet, or on the train, the frustrated press could always reach

out for the most invigorating tonic ever devised for stimulating aching bodies and yawning minds—a leave in Tokyo.

Wire-service men would habitually spend about five weeks in Korea and two in Japan. Special reporters would vary their trips according to the demands of their own assignments. And Junior never got a Christmas bike that brought the gleam of wild exultation which you could see in any correspondent's eye as he headed for Kimpo Airport to board the C-54 to Tokyo.

Theoretically, the idea was for a man to work in Korea and rest in Tokyo, but any red-blooded male, given two weeks in the Japanese capital, would need a rest. He usually had to go back to Korea to get it.

Under the benevolent occupation that the United States maintained in Japan, Tokyo became the horn of plenty. The finest of whiskey, women, and comfort were available in staggering volume at prices that prevail in America only on Skid Row. The Press Club of ancient Babylon never saw anything like the revelry that formed the pattern of daily life for correspondents on the loose in Tokyo.

Unhappily, though, the gaiety was always short-lived, and the leave would end. The wreckage would climb once again into his field uniform, heft himself and a case of whiskey onto a plane, and head back to cover the war.



Moscow: Behind The Outstretched Hand

ISAAC DEUTSCHER

WE ARE going to this International Economic Conference as merchants, not as Communists," Lenin told the Soviet diplomats who went to Genoa in April and May, 1922. As if to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of that event—the Russians love such commemorations—the Politburo decided to convene an "International Economic Conference" in Moscow for the first half of April, 1952.

One might say that while the original conference was a serious event, its imitation was farcical. In 1922, the Soviet government did in fact negotiate with western governments about resuming trade. No results were reached immediately, but in the last analysis the Genoa conference brought an end to the West's economic blockade of Russia.

At the recent Moscow conference, among the nearly 350 delegates from forty-odd countries who assembled in the impressive Trade Union Hall, only one delegate officially represented a western nation—and that was the Argentina of Juan Perón. Most delegates had little or no practical experience in international trade and little or no influence on the trade policies of their countries. They were journalists, academic economists, politicians, philanthropists, and nondescript self-styled "intellectuals" of the sort who are usually prominent at Moscow-sponsored conferences. Only the eminent Dean of Canterbury was absent.

There was also a sprinkling of businessmen, none of whom represented any leading western concern. In the course of a fortnight, this somewhat amateurish group discussed trade among eastern and western countries, adopted resolutions, and with quite serious mien signed scores of "trade contracts." When the delegates re-

turned home they could not agree even among themselves about the immense sums to which the contracts amounted.

The Ulterior Motive

Yet it would be a mistake to see only the farcical side of the show. The conference is having serious repercussions; and it was for the sake of these repercussions that the Russians arranged it.

This was the first propaganda battle of a larger offensive that the Russians have launched against the U.S. Battle Act, which prohibits countries receiving Marshall aid or other American assistance to sell materials and goods of strategic importance to the Russian bloc. The list of prohibited goods contains over three hundred items and includes, apart from armaments proper, metal, raw materials, and capital goods.

It should be admitted that the Russians have waged this battle with a shrewdness, subtlety, and discretion rarely found in their propaganda campaigns. The conference adopted no political resolutions. No direct and open attack was launched against any western country or government, not

even against the United States. The erstwhile "monopoly capitalists" of the West were politely referred to as "western business circles." The Battle Act itself was hardly ever mentioned. The Russian press gave fair reports on the speeches of the western delegates, even those that defended Marshall aid.

The main theme of the conference was the need for the resumption of trade between East and West. "Business as Usual" was the slogan which this time resounded from Moscow. The theme and the slogan have their indubitable appeal, especially in those western European countries whose well-being has in the past depended to a degree on trade with the East. For West Germany and western Austria this issue has been especially vital, because for them it is no longer a matter of foreign trade only but of the revival of their own domestic trade.

The Psychological Moment

The timing of the conference was extremely shrewd. Western Europe had reached an economic turning point. The rearmament programs there have undoubtedly stimulated economic activity. It is possible that without this stimulus the western European economy would by now have been in the throes of a normal cyclical slump. But the stimulus has worked one-sidedly. Whereas western Europe's heavy industries are producing at full pressure and are assured of an expanding demand for the next few years, its consumer industries have experienced something like a recession.

European rearmament, unlike American rearmament, is not accompanied by a rising demand for consumer goods. On the contrary, that demand has been shrinking, or has at

