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## The News Business

# Western Press Gets No Medals for Reporting on East

By Dan Morgan

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BELGRADE — When the nations of East and West finally assemble in Helsinki for a European security conference, it is a sure thing that the press of both will be there to record the event — each from its own point of view. Like the conferees themselves, the man from Pravda and the man from the BBC will bring their own biases and their own differing perceptions of truth to that meeting.

Over the years, not much study has been given to the press' role in the cold war, particularly to the role of the Western press. Newspapers and radio stations, of course, did not divide Europe or make the confrontation. But they have been heavily involved in it, right from the start. So it is hard to imagine any real relaxation in Europe unless both sides temper their words and, if such a thing is really possible, refine their images of each other.

Leaving aside the known role of the Communist press as a controlled vehicle of state and party policy, it might still be worth asking whether the "independent" Western media do not serve also as an occasional conduit for propaganda, and unwitting tool of Western ideology.

A few years ago, an American newspaper carried a story about Vietnam under the headline, "Americans Kill 54 Reds." A Yugoslav diplomat discreetly pointed out to the editor that the headline could not possibly be correct. While U.S. troops may have killed 54 Vietcong, he noted, in all probability not more than four or five of the victims were Communist Party members, or "Reds." The distinction may seem a technical one. But to the Communist diplomat it seemed a callous misrepresentation subtly reinforcing the idea that "Red" equals enemy.

In August of this year, this correspondent reported from Bucharest that Soviet units would maneuver jointly with local troops in Bulgaria in September. The source of the information was a very high ranking Western diplomat. Maneuvers have since taken place in Bulgaria — but apparently without the three Soviet divisions mentioned by the diplomat. Whether he was duped, or the correspondent was, or whether the originating source was the CIA, M-15 or even the KGB cannot be ascertained. Maybe joint maneuvers were called off. Maybe they will still take place. Whatever the truth is, or whoever's purpose was served, the story had the effect of increasing tensions in the Balkans.

Nevertheless Western reporting of the Communist world has become vastly more sophisticated and discriminating in the last 10 years.

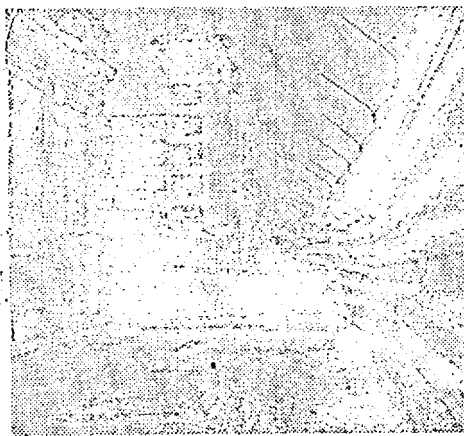
To some degree, eastern journals also may have become somewhat more even and objective on events in the West. This has long been true of the lively, informative Yugoslav press, though Yugoslav journalists in America admit that it takes all their skill in

dialectical writing to report on workers demonstrating in support of U.S. Vietnam involvement.

This summer, the Warsaw weekly *Polityka* opened up its columns to an East-West "dialogue" on European security between its editor, Mieczyslaw F. Rakowski, and the editor of the London *Economist*, Alastair Burnet.

Otherwise, there has been very little refinement in Communist commentary on the capitalist world. Thus, the Polish newspaper *Slowo Powszechnie* recently described the press-government struggle over publication of the Pentagon Papers in the United States as one involving "powerful interest groups of American capital."

Nevertheless, the question can be raised



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whether ideology imposes certain limits on Western as well as Eastern reporting.

A sociological study of this might focus on several of the following questions:

- Does our press report more positively on Communist countries with which the United States and Western Europe have good relations than with those with which relations are bad? For instance, what is the ration of "positive" and "negative" articles between, say, Yugoslavia and Romania on the one hand, and East Germany and Bulgaria on the other?

- How does the number of articles devoted in the Western media to, say, lack of civil liberties in Brazil, Bolivia and Greece compare with the number devoted to restraints on individual freedom in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia? If there is a substantial imbalance, has the reason for it been explained adequately to newspaper readers?

- Would it have been conceivable for an American newspaper in 1963 to have made a dialectical argument supporting the invasion of Czechoslovakia — perhaps on grounds that Alexander Dubcek was leading a movement that could have brought the world to war?

The point may be that the Western media, free and uncensored though they are, also operate perforce within the confines of a rough ideological framework, though the economic and political vectors that make this so are little understood.

On Aug. 13, 1961, the West enjoyed the most spectacular propaganda victory of the entire postwar period, with the building of the Berlin Wall. In the flush of anger and frustration, it would have been an unpopular editorialist who applauded the act as a positive contribution to stability and peace. It is likely that anyone who did so could even have been suspect as a "Communist sympathizer." Yet few would deny today that the wall, repugnant as it is, did stabilize East Germany — an indispensable condition for European peace and security.

If some new kind of ethical code for East-West reporting after the security conference were to be drawn up, it might start from the premise that both sides are defending a social system and neither is entirely objective. It might then go on to require every story critical of the other system to balance this with some criticism of its own.

The Western media, of course, are already a long way toward doing this. *Time* magazine's article on the December Polish riots spoke of "a nation in flames" . . . Its cover story on Belfast in August was called "Northern Ireland in Flames."

Under the "balance" system, the Soviet media writing about the American government's secret involvement in Indochina would be obliged to write that the Soviet Union had concealed the full extent of its own aid to the Arab states from Russian taxpayers.

The East, in other words, is prepared to believe the worst about the West, and vice versa, and as the history of the last 20 years indicates, not without reason.

However, the general impression is that the Communist press usually gets its facts straight. The copy is often dull, slow in coming, limited in depth of perception, and conclusions are slanted. But the raw data is usually correct. Until the East matches the West in providing ways to check information and collect data, Western reports will remain at a disadvantage, and the Communist regimes will have few grounds to complain about errors.

If the European security conference speeds that day it could be a small step toward relaxation, and a new era for the foot soldiers of the cold war, the editors and journalists of East and West.

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Law, John Phillip  
CIA - Bulgaria

## Dave McIntyre's FRONT ROW

Appropriately, I met Baron Manfred von Richthofen, widely known as the Red Baron, at Boom Trenchard's, the restaurant hard by Lindbergh Field which features memorabilia from World War I.

The setting was perfect for our discussion of Spads, Fokers, Tigers Moths and Stamps, which were the flying craft of the era. The baron was, of course, Germany's most celebrated aviator credited with downing 80 Allied craft before he, himself, was shot down.



JOHN PHILLIP LAW

Naturally, it was not Von Richthofen himself at Boom Trenchard's but John Phillip Law, the actor who portrays him in "Von Richthofen and Brown," motion picture opening Wednesday at the California Theater.

The "Brown" of the title refers to one Roy Brown, a Canadian flying for Britain's Royal Air Force. He was the one who was officially credited with downing Von Richthofen's plane.

"I'm afraid that is not exactly true," Law said as we

looked over the model World War I planes at Boom's. "About 90 percent of the plot of our picture would be destroyed if we didn't go along with this supposition, but it can't be supported by fact.

"All of the research that I was able to do led to the conclusion that Von Richthofen was shot down from the ground -- by some of Brown's fellow Canadians, members of a machine gun crew."

Law enjoys researching his roles, even though it sometimes leads to conclusions the movie can't support. But he has picked up considerable information this way, as well as some interesting friends.

### Played in 'Russians Are Coming'

The first role he had in a hit film was as the love-sick Russian seaman in "The Russians Are Coming, the Russians Are Coming." When he was cast, the director, Norman Jewison, told him to look at a fine Russian film called "Ballad of a Soldier" and to pattern his characterization on that of Vladimir Ivashoff, who had the lead role.

Law did better than he expected when he was invited to attend an international film festival in Cartagena, Colombia, and he made arrangements to go there, too.

"The Russians sent a big delegation," Law said, "but there was no one else from the United States. I was the one one, so when the flags were introduced or toasts exchanged, I just fell into representing the United States and as a result I got invited by the Russian delegation to attend the Moscow film festival the following year."

He also cemented his friendship with Ivashoff and has continued corresponding with him.

Most recently, Law spent six months in Bulgaria, where he played the lead in a film version of a Jules Verne adventure "Michael Strogoff." His most interesting experience there was being arrested during the May Day celebration.

### Bulgarians suspect espionage

"I had my camera out on the street, taking pictures of the parade. Some imaginative general got it into his head that I was a CIA agent taking incriminating pictures of him. He certainly must have had a guilty conscience about something."

Law was let free after a few hours when his Italian employers were able to explain to the Bulgarians that he was only an eccentric American actor who liked to take pictures.

Back to "Von Richthofen and Brown," it was filmed in Ireland, primarily because that's where most World War I-type planes are, having been used in such previous productions as "The Blue Max" and "Darling Lili." Also there are members of the Irish Air Force willing to fly them.

"I don't know how much longer this will be able to continue," said Law. "We lost five men during the filming of this picture alone. It's not always the glamorous, fun-filled business it's supposed to be."