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The Long (Belt &) Road Forward

**Pio d'Emilia travels China's new
transcontinental Silk (Rail) Road**

Open season
Increasing violence
against journalists

Member profile
Political asylum and
business success

Suicide or murder?
The curious death of a
Reuters reporter

contact the editors
no.1shimbun@fccj.or.jp

Publisher FCCJ

Editor Gregory Starr
Art Director Andrew Potheary
www.itsumo-music.jp/design
Editorial Assistants Naomichi Iwamura
Photo Coordinator Akiko Miyake
Publications committee members
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The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan
Marunouchi Nijubashi Building 5F
Marunouchi 3-2-3 Chiyoda-ku Tokyo 100-0005
Tel: (03) 3211-3161 Fax: (03) 3211-3168 fccj.or.jp

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In this issue

THE FRONT PAGE

From the President by Abigail Leonard 4



ALBERT SIEGEL

William Horsley, p4

Freedom of the Press news: In the line of fire 4

by David McNeill

From the archives: The pacifist Prime Minister 5

by Charles Pomeroy

FEATURES

Fast and Forward: China's new silk (rail) road 6

by Pio d'Emilia

Death in Kudan 10

by Mark Schreiber

PROFILE

Mehdi Bassiri 12

by Gavin Blair

COLUMNS

Making every pitch count 14

by Tim Herrera

Last month in photos 16

by photographer members

CLUB NEWS

Exhibition: Portraits of Artists by Benjamin Lee 17

Join the Film Committee . . . 17

Hello Nijubashi 18

photographs by Albert Siegel

New Members, New in the library 19

THE FCCJ ONLINE: www.fccj.or.jp

MEMBER EVENTS

PRESS CONFERENCE VIDEOS

CLUB CALENDAR

CLUB INFORMATION

SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS

No. 1 SHIMBUN ONLINE

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS INFO



FROM THE PRESIDENT



DEAR FELLOW MEMBERS,

I write to you from our new home in the Marunouchi Nijubashi Building on behalf of President Peter Langan, who is recovering from a bicycle accident (for more on that, please refer to his previous column on Murphy’s Law). We all wish him a very speedy recovery.

I’d like to extend the Board’s sincere thanks to all Club staff who worked incredibly hard and put many sleepless hours into making the move go as smoothly as possible. It was a massive undertaking and despite a few hiccups, most functions are operating normally.

To celebrate, the Club hosted a successful opening celebration, with nearly 300 guests who were treated to a Noh blessing, sake barrel breaking and performance by Club favorite Pikotaro.

Our daytime activities have been top-notch as well. The Professional Activities Committee kicked off events in the new space by wasting no time in hosting two major press conferences in one day on Nov. 9: Okinawa Governor Denny Tamaki, followed by journalist and former hostage Jumpei Yasuda. Both were well attended and filled our new briefing room nearly to capacity. A special thanks to Ito-san and the hard-working front desk staff for pulling off the events seamlessly and making sure all journalists found their way to the press conferences in time, which in some cases meant rescuing them from the basement.

There are some big happenings ahead: On Dec. 3, we’ll host Rugby Appreciation Night, when members will meet and raise a glass with Rugby World Cup, Japan Rugby Association and World Rugby Association officials, local ambassadors, and special guests. The World Cup relationship is certain to bring even more athletes and sports officials to the Club.

We also hope to draw more students and to that end, the Scholarship Committee recently announced a call for entries for this year’s award for aspiring journalists, so please spread the word. We plan to hold a joint Scholarship/Freedom of the Press award ceremony in the spring.

Of course, it’s not all good news: Our food and beverage service is still in limbo but we are working hard on a fix. The Club is in talks with several companies and we hope to have a contract soon. One major problem is staffing – the inevitable consequence of a shrinking workforce – but in the meantime, we’re fortunate to have Marybeth Boller, the former US embassy executive chef, running the kitchen and turning out beautiful banquet food.

Thank you, everyone, for your support, and please be in touch with any questions or concerns.

– **Abigail Leonard**

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS NEWS

In the line of fire

It’s open season on reporters worldwide, laments the author of a guidebook on journalists’ safety.



William Horsley
at the Club

ALBERT SIEGEL

By *David McNeill*

WHEN JARROD RAMOS BLASTED five people to death in the newsroom of the *Capital Gazette* in Annapolis, Maryland last June, it was another grim marker in a bloody period of violence against media workers.

The Committee to Protect Journalists lists 44 reporters killed worldwide this year, including Jamal Khashoggi, reportedly lynched inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul by assassins armed with syringes and cutting tools. While well below the 155 deaths recorded in 2006 (at the height of the chaotic Iraq War), the number is deceptive: Instead of dying in crossfire, journalists are increasingly being targeted just for the work they do.

“Killings, attacks and jailings of journalists worldwide are at an all-time high,” says William Horsley, author of the *Safety of Journalists Guidebook*. Thanks partly to the rise of illiberal governments, he says, many people now speak of “open season” on reporters.

Horsley says the state of the media is an “absolutely crucial warning” of when things go wrong in society, and is “very intimately tied to structures of power,” noting mounting hostility to the media, from China to Europe and even the United States.

For journalists, he says, the most dangerous development in this trend is the fusing of partisan politics with media power. In many places, the media have become a tool of ruling parties, “with ruthless domination of the information sphere through technology, violence and the misuse of law.”

The template is China, where the ruling party keeps its hands around the throat of old media, while jailing bloggers and using monitoring systems and firewalls to control cyberspace. In Russia, media watchdog Reporters Without Borders recently noted the “steady decline in media pluralism” and growing control of media outlets, which are used to “inundate the public with propaganda.” Then there are European countries in the grip of various shades of authoritarianism, including Hungary, Poland and Turkey.

Paradoxically, says Horsley, the framework of legal protections for media workers has never been stronger. But more countries are flouting these protections. Even countries like Britain, which helped create the system on which the free press has been built, seem determined to pull it down, he says, noting, for example, the way the current British government has insulted and vilified the European court.

THE SPEED OF DECLINE in media freedom has been striking, he says. “The surprise has been that state power has been so adept and quick at using software to track and monitor its enemies, and create armies of trolls to frighten and intimidate people, and buy up more and more of the media landscape.”

Even more worrying, he says, has been the growing hostility to independent journalism in the citadels of advanced liberal capitalism. Horsley describes Donald Trump’s media baiting as “a torpedo” fired right at the heart of America’s First Amendment, which protects freedom of speech.

“The demonization of journalists and the vilification of journalism is seen by many as incitement to violence and hatred,” he says. Though America still has some of the strongest media protections in the world, the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker website notes over 40 major physical assaults on journalists in 2018.

In August, outgoing United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad al-Hussein didn’t mince words when he said that Trump’s rhetoric “echoed that of the worst eras of the 20th century.” Says Horsley: “Is this not incitement to violence against the press coming from the president of the United States himself? And it is giving cover to other countries that abuse journalists.”

The rise of Trumpism shouldn’t surprise too much: The Republican Party helped pave the way when it scrapped the media fairness doctrine in 1987. “Given that, and the turbo-charging provided by the internet, it was only a matter of time before the American media landscape lost its key distinction between fact and comment – and its attachment to facts and standards.” But given the robustness of the American system, he says, critical journalism will survive there.

As for Japan, which Horsley spent over seven years covering as the BBC’s bureau chief in the 1980s, he believes the practice of critical journalism, never particularly robust, is being weakened. “Compare it to countries that do have a free press and you see the enormous difference. The expectations and behavior of Japanese journalists are so much more conditioned by their relations with sources and the government. There is little real narrative of fighting for press freedom, and against abuse. There are flashes here and there, but the overall record is not at all clear.”

The bright spot, he says, is that you often find the “spunkiest journalists” in the most troubled spots. Sometimes we are at our best when things are at their worst. 🗣️

**Safety of Journalists Guidebook is published by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, an intergovernmental body of 57 participating states with a mandate that includes fair elections, human rights and freedom of the press.*

David McNeill writes for the *Irish Times* and the *Economist* and teaches media and politics at Hosei University.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The pacifist Prime Minister



Then Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda, who spoke at the Club on March 10, 1977, takes in the view from the Club’s previous premises, the Yurakucho Denki Building. Next to him is the FCCJ President at the time, Bill Shinn (Sisa News Agency).

Born in 1905 of samurai heritage, Takeo Fukuda was exposed to politics from an early age by his father, who was the mayor of Gunma City. He was educated at top schools, including Tokyo Imperial University, and early in his bureaucratic career served in the Ministry of Finance and as Chief Cabinet Secretary. Post-war, he directed Japan’s banking bureau and budget bureau before being elected to the Diet in 1952. He became secretary of the LDP in 1957. During the decade from 1969 to 1979, Fukuda headed three ministries – agriculture, finance, and foreign affairs – as well as the Economic Planning Agency.

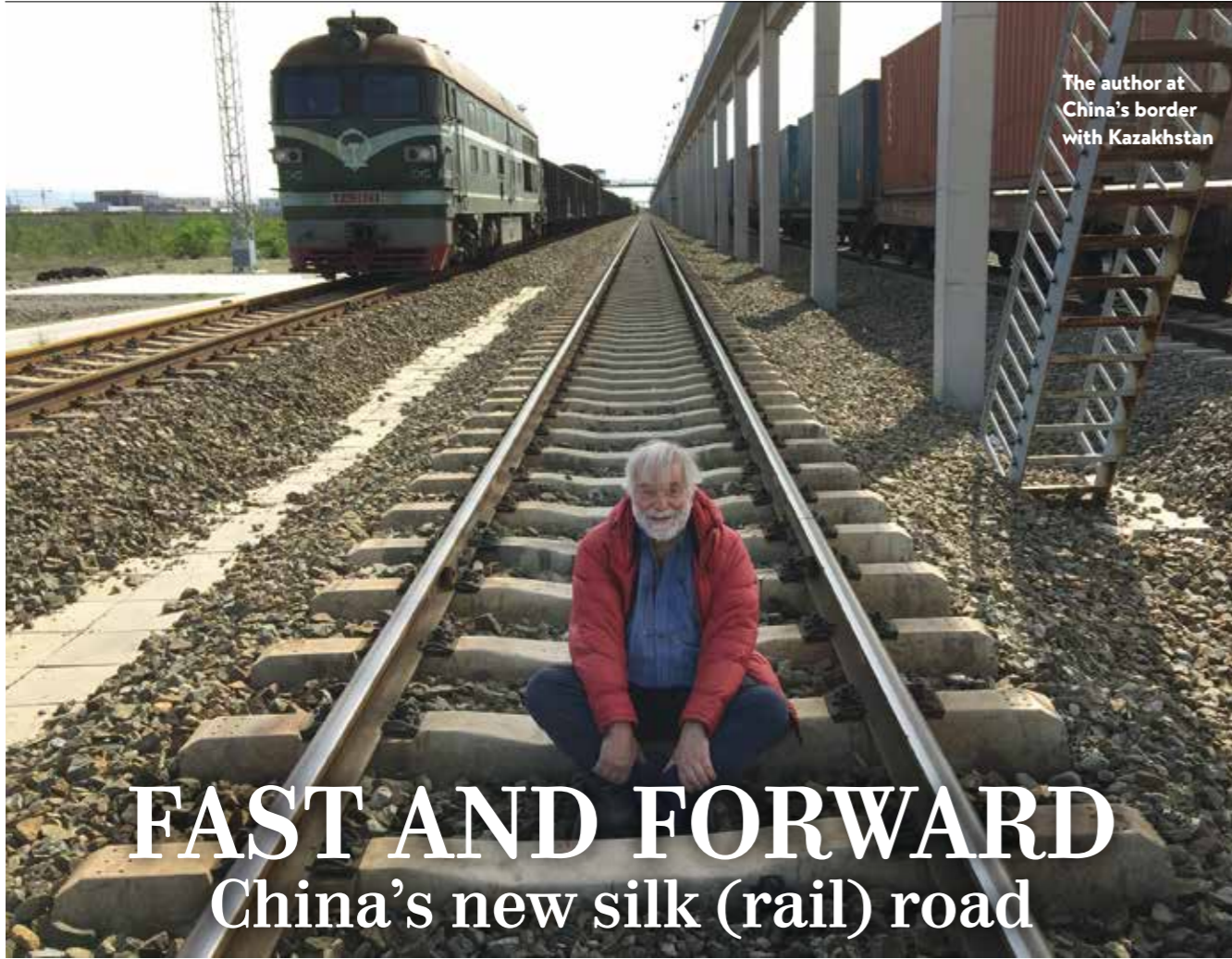
At a low point for the LDP in 1976, due partly to infighting among factions, Fukuda assumed the premiership and served for two years with the support of minor parties. Although economic and political problems weighed heavily, he affirmed his pacifist mindset by establishing the Fukuda Doctrine in 1977 that stated Japan would not again become a military power and would better its relations with Southeast Asian nations. Fukuda also played a key role in concluding Japan’s 1978 peace treaty with China.

His failure to stabilize a deteriorating economy, compounded by a decline in the public’s trust in the LDP following the Lockheed bribery scandal, led to Fukuda’s downfall. His earlier attempt to weaken the faction system by introducing primary elections ironically resulted in his defeat by Masayoshi Ohira in the first such LDP election in 1978. He remained active politically, and in 1983 founded the InterAction Council in Vienna that brings together former world leaders and encourages them to utilize their expertise in resolving world problems.

He married and fathered three sons and two daughters, with the eldest son, Yasuo, becoming the first son of a Japanese prime minister to become a prime minister himself in 2007.

Takeo Fukuda died of emphysema on July 5, 1995, at the age of 90.

– **Charles Pomeroy**
editor of Foreign Correspondents in Japan,
a history of the Club that is available at the front desk



The author at China's border with Kazakhstan

FAST AND FORWARD

China's new silk (rail) road

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF PIO DE MILIA

“Let China sleep, for when she awakes, she will shake the world.” Used and abused as it has been, this phrase of Napoleon’s – though very likely wrongly attributed to him – still resonates. For China has awakened, and is indeed shaking the world. Not violently, as other fast-growing, hegemonic powers have done.

An Italian documentary team tries to grasp the scope of China's Belt and Road Initiative, and finds a society undergoing drastic transformation while accepting the direction of Party leadership.

By Pio d'Emilia

production processes from sweatshops and intensive labor factories to international financial and third sector services and technological hubs is bringing along in its wake a massive social mutation. The Chinese middle class is becoming something like a new, internationalized bourgeoisie aristocracy, proud and self-

Instead, it seems, the centuries of ups and downs, natural and human-provoked catastrophies, aggressions and exploitations, invasions and occupations have taught the Chinese a lesson: economic and cultural pressure is much more effective in conquering – and much more important in maintaining power.

As millions of Americans and Europeans grew up with Rambo and other Western icons, hundreds of millions of Chinese now revere Jin Wu, hero of the blockbuster series *Senrou* (“Wolf warriors”). Cute, just and generous, he shows up in timely fashion in locations all over the world to protect and save Chinese citizens and Chinese interests. But this guardian never champions revolutionaries, insurgents or freedom fighters in struggles against bloody regimes or arrogant and corrupt dictatorships. No. He always sides with the establishment, protecting the status quo.

And here's why. China's relentless transformation of the

confident, at times even arrogant, and very far from Westerners' expectations. Instead of feeding a desire for democracy and undermining the establishment, it cements the support for the regime, perceived as the source of security, stability, order and growth.

In other words, do not expect a former Soviet Union-like collapse, nor another Tiananmen. When Chinese dream about their future, they don't dream about the Dalai Lama's return, free and “democratic” elections, self-determination or the end of the brutal repression of ethnic and religious minorities. They dream about when they will be able to buy and live in a big apartment in a high-rise, something that hundreds of million citizens have already achieved, despite the ever-rising prices. In big cities like Shanghai the cost for one square meter in a high rise may go up to US\$40,000, making a mansion in Ginza a real bargain.

This is what dictators love and Western powers never understood: just feed the establishment, and let people decide what to do with their “dear” leaders. The rest of us had now better learn to get it right. Or we may all end up like the *Blade Runner* replicant Roy Batty, talking about “things you humans could never believe.” After a few months of reporting in and on China, riding trains, driving on highways, witnessing the immense, apparently inexhaustible energy and optimism, I do believe. This is it. China is taking over.

The future is here
Ever since I devoured colleague and former *Guardian* Tokyo correspondent Jonathan Watts' marvelous book, *When a Billion Chinese Jump*, I've dreamt of somehow doing the same thing, but with a camera. Everybody knows at least a little about what is going on in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and eastern China. But very few know about the interior of the country, north and especially northwest. This is where the Dragon's awakening is at its most fast and furious: 30,000 kilometers of high speed railroads (and another 20,000 to come in the next ten years); over five million kilometers of highways; 800 million people shifted from poverty into middle class with 700 million expected to travel abroad in the next few years.

What is happening in China is already affecting the whole world, and the Belt & Road Initiative, whether you like it or not, is poised to make history. The so-called new Marshall Plan, already worth more than a trillion US dollars and very likely to double by the year 2050 is not only going to expand China's commercial, financial and political tentacles over Central Asia, Europe, Africa and probably South America, it is going to change China herself. Make no mistake, though: While it is possible that economic progress and social development may bring a new consciousness, a new approach to civil freedoms and human rights, I find it doubtful that it will destroy, or even reduce, the crucial, central role of the Communist Party. Applications to join, which were declining until Deng Xiaoping's new “Great Leap Forward,” are now increasing yearly. Over 20 million applied last year, of which less than 2 million were accepted (and these are subject to revision within the first two years).

For years I tried to convince my editors to invest in coverage of this story, and eventually I succeeded. Supported by a decent budget and, most important, the full confidence and trust of my editors, on April 4 we started our journey. After a few days in Beijing to organize things, we set off for Chongqing. Still relatively unknown abroad, Chongqing has in the last few years become the largest megalopolis in the planet. We arrived there at night, by air, and I am still mesmerized by what we saw on our visit. *Blade Runner*, if I may make another reference to that film. Or Hayao Miyazaki's fantasy world in *Spirited Away*, since many people seem to believe he got his inspiration for the magical bathhouse from a popular

On the road
Top to bottom: Chongqing at night; Family ties are still very strong – Chengdu delivery driver Huang is taking care of his mother who has Alzheimer's; Guarding the “strategic” border at Horgos.



THE REST OF US HAD NOW BETTER LEARN TO GET IT RIGHT.

THIS IS IT. CHINA IS TAKING OVER.

restaurant here, and the resemblance is striking.

To say Chongqing is booming is a ridiculous understatement. The greater metropolitan area has already reached 40 million inhabitants. There are 77 universities, over a thousand public hospitals and three different urban “people movers,” moving sidewalks that carry people at two speeds over 12 kilometers. But the city is also becoming – with new, strict rules about construction and environmental issues – the symbol of a historical switch from the country’s long and disastrous war against nature to a new era of sustainable growth. No nation has ever challenged mother nature – mostly disastrously – as China has from ancient times. But authorities now seem to view nature not as an enemy to subdue, but a precious ally.

Smooth roads hit a rough spot

Travelling through China with an improvised and somewhat anarchic TV crew was easier than expected. The Chinese Embassy in Rome issued us multiple three-month visas (for non-resident journalists) without setting limitations or conditions on our reporting, other than requesting a very rough itinerary and a list of the public and strategic places we wanted to shoot. Over almost two months of travelling back and forth over the main “silk” railroads that connect China and Europe, we were never stopped, bothered, or asked to show footage. We even changed our schedule several times, causing lots of trouble, yet received no avoiding warnings.

With one exception: Xinjiang, the autonomous region where a conflict with local Muslims is ongoing. We had come from Lanzhou in Gansu Province, where we had been the first foreign TV crew allowed to shoot inside the Weather Modification Agency, which shoots at clouds to make them rain. Arriving in Urumqi felt like a different country, maybe a less polite North Korea. From the very moment we checked into our bizarre hotel, the Yema Desert Silk Road (where, thanks to a hypervisionary, billionaire owner, the room fee included a ride on one of the hundreds of horses who are fed and coddled there) until we left the region one week later, we were constantly followed by at least two “minders” who were supposed to “help” us but who did their best to make our journey a real nightmare.

Not even in my trips to North Korea have I had to negotiate for each single, innocuous shot. At one point, we were taken into custody by the police because we were doing some “unauthorized” shooting of the main road from our car, and they managed to keep us detained for hours, with our “helpers” unable to explain who we were and why we were shooting. The odd and unpleasant situation was finally solved by diplomatic authorities, after our helpers proved helpless. Note that we were not trying to shoot anything “sensitive.” We were not looking for dissident Uighurs willing to speak about the recent violence and round-ups. From the very beginning



Borderlines

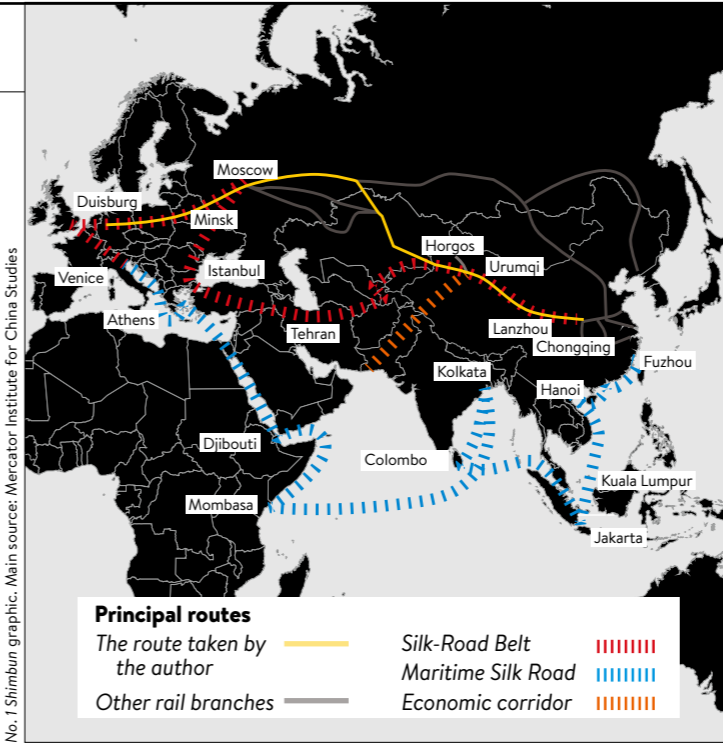
Top to bottom: Shooting at clouds at the Weather Modification Agency; A hard fought-for shot of sunset at the border; With Zhang Duo, the young, proud director of Horgos Railway Station.



of our trip we decided to stay out of trouble in order to finish our project without any problems.

And so we had, carefully avoiding any kind of potentially risky location or situation. But we couldn’t help, in this huge, beautiful ocean of land in Urumqi and the rest of Xinjiang, to feel as if the constant and pervasive tension could detonate at any moment. There’s no doubt this is their most sensitive, most difficult to handle local challenge, and while the Chinese government is handling it with overpowering determination, it could get out of hand at any moment.

Actually, we also had lots of fun. Our hardest and most absurd negotiation took place on the very last day. We needed



—带一路* Yi Dai Yi Lu: Our Silk Railroad documentary

SINCE THE FIRST ONE left the station in 2013, more than 10,000 “China Express” trains have made the passage between China and Europe, a journey that covers about 11,000 kilometers in 17 to 19 days. Most of them end up in Duisburg, Germany, but there are now a total of 15 direct destinations in Europe, and more are to be added in the next years. We started reporting from Chong Qing, where we were able to film loading operations; on average, every day a train of 50 cars departs the station for Europe.

More than 10 stations, including Chengdu, Lanzhou, Xi’an and Senzhou, are seeing off China Express trains, most of which pass through Horgos or Alashanko, in Xinjiang, where after a time-wasting and costly transfer onto a larger gauge track they enter Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland and, eventually, Germany, which is where our reporting ended after almost two months. Although there are hundreds of handlers, logistic and loading companies involved, China Railways, a public company, is directly managing the entire operation, which for the time being – and at least until the end of 2020 – is heavily subsidized by the Chinese government.

While most trains travel fully loaded from China, on their way back the average rate is about 30 percent of their capacity. This trend is slowly improving, but it will take a few years until European companies may find out the land/rail transportation could be a good alternative to sea freight, at least for certain products.

* One Belt, One Road

to shoot a nice sunset, and for various reasons, we had not yet been able to get one. All day, we’d been shooting trains crossing the border in Horgos, the last town before Kazakhstan, and we asked the station master to please allow us in again, in the evening, to film the sunset. The young and sharp Mr. Zhang, a 23-year-old naval engineer from Chengdu who had ended up managing a train station “in the heart of history,” as he proudly and repeatedly put it, immediately said yes. Only to be harshly reprimanded by another Mr. Zhang, our young and arrogant “government team” leader, who bluntly refused the request.

“This is not in your shooting list,” said the latter Zhang. “It is very late, and we have organized a dinner for you, and you

should not get too tired, since you *must* leave tomorrow.” “Your thoughtfulness is appreciated,” we replied, “but still . . . we do want to shoot the sunset.” And, believe it or not, we spent the next couple of hours getting everyone from the Italian Embassy in Beijing, the Chinese Foreign Ministry and the Xinjiang Autonomous Province International Public Relations office involved. But the answer was still no, we were told.

We were almost going to give up, forfeiting dinner and the formal greetings, when I realized that our presence there was far from welcomed, mainly because the whole government team was obliged to follow us instead of enjoying what was actually a long period of holidays. So I said: “Sorry, but this is very important for us. And since I understand this must be taken to higher level, which will probably take time, this being a period of public holidays, after all, we are going to wait here until the problem is solved. After all, our visas don’t expire for 10 days, so we will just relax and stroll around. But you don’t have to accompany us, of course. We’ll manage on our own.”

A few minutes later, we had their permission. And, in the end, they became thoroughly involved in taking selfies with the wonderful sunset, apparently surprised that even the border could offer a romantic side.

Welcome to the Party

Eventually we left China in a good mood. What we were able to see over our long journey on the “silk trains” (although it’s likely they carry everything except silk) could not be dampened by the heavy-handed Xinjiang way of dealing with their local conflict. And I now actually believe it is time to avoid the “yes, but” approach, and learn from Chinese pragmatism. Every country, every society has corpses in their closet, old and new. To different degrees, we in America, Europe and Japan still have to clean up our past and present misdeeds. China’s astonishing performance and achievements cannot be blurred by continuing to denounce the invasion of Tibet, the cruel treatment of some religious and ethnic minorities and the ongoing, blatant violation of human rights. The “yes, but” approach, if applied to Italy, for example, could very well translate into: “Yes we have a full-fledged democracy, freedom of speech and free elections . . . but one-third of the population lives below the poverty level, and it is going to get worse”.

At the risk of being repetitive, I believe the new emerging leading class made up of engineers, researchers, managers and financial wizards is not going to challenge the “system” because they are not against the Party. On the contrary, they are grateful. Despite what we usually read and hear from Western “experts,” in China we won’t witness anything close to Gorbachev’s *glasnost* and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union Empire. More competition, market economy and globalization – and the undeniable social development that result – are not challenging the role of the Party and its leaders. On the contrary, they have given them the future. ●

Pio d’Emilia is the East Asia Correspondent for Italy’s Sky TG24.

Death in Kudan

The unexplained demise of a Reuters correspondent while in Kempeitai custody in 1940 is a reminder that Japan was not always a cozy assignment for journalists

By Mark Schreiber

At approximately 12:30 p.m. on July 29, 1940, Reuters correspondent Melville James Cox fell to his death from a fourth-story window at Kempeitai (military police) headquarters in Kudan. The 55-year-old Cox had been detained two days earlier, along with 10 other British nationals, for questioning on suspicion of espionage. His death, reported as a suicide in Japanese newspapers, was treated more suspiciously by the international press.

Tensions between Japan and Great Britain had been building from the previous January, when the British Royal Navy cruiser *Liverpool* halted the NYK passenger liner *Asama Maru* in international waters off the coast of Chiba, near the end of its voyage from San Francisco to Yokohama. An armed boarding party from the *Liverpool* took into custody 21 German passengers suspected of being German military personnel.

Japan was inching closer to an alliance with Germany – with which Britain was already at war – and for such an incident to occur adjacent to home waters infuriated the Japanese. Diplomacy prevailed, however: The British released nine of the detained Germans, and the Japanese government under Prime Minister Mitsumasa Yonai in turn agreed not to give

passage on civilian ships to Germans of military age.

Japan at that time was well along in the process of secretly building up its fleet of capital ships, and the Kempeitai had been under heavy pressure from the navy to plug leaks about the refitting of the *Nagato*, a 32,200-ton battleship originally commissioned in 1920. The Kempeitai had been tailing Cox as a person of interest for three years, after intercepting a letter of uncertain origin that contained a passage in what appeared to be secret code.

In an article titled “The secret of Japan that I saw” in the Dec. 25, 1957 issue of *Tokyo Shuho* magazine, Hisashi Nemoto, a former Kempeitai captain who had been assigned to watch Cox – and who personally witnessed much of what transpired – gave his version of events. Nemoto wrote of the travails of his hardworking operatives, noting that they had trailed their subject to night clubs featuring “erotic performances.” The operatives also reported that “Cox often visits the Imperial Hotel, where he meets with various suspicious persons, both Japanese and foreign,” “He uses the post office inside the hotel to send mails” and “He always uses the same type of envelope when sending mail abroad.”

The Kempeitai also observed that Cox appeared to have formed a “close relationship” with an intelligence officer at

the embassy of “a certain foreign country” and suspected he was able to prevail upon the diplomat to forward reports to intelligence agencies in the UK, a violation of Japan’s law regarding use of the telegraph.

IN LATE JULY, NEMOTO was dispatched to Cox’s residence in Chigasaki, Kanagawa Prefecture, to bring him back to Tokyo for questioning. He was accompanied by an English interpreter named Taguchi who had spent 20 years practicing law in the US. The group returned to Tokyo by train, and Cox spent the nights of the 27th and 28th sweltering in a tiny, airless cell in the basement of the Kempeitai sub-headquarters in Kudan, not far from Yasukuni Shrine.

On the 29th, Cox underwent a third day of questioning in a room on the 4th floor. The police allowed him to receive a *sashi-ire* lunch of Western food delivered from outside, and after the meal he had been pacing inside the room when suddenly he made a dash for the open window.

As Nemoto relates, “Sgt. Kamata, who had been guarding the prisoner, rushed to stop him . . . grabbing Mr. Cox’s left foot with both hands. But he was already too late, as Cox’s entire body was outside the window, and in a flash his body fell from the fourth-story window to the rear yard.”

Nemoto described Kamata’s face as “pallid” as he rushed into the former’s office and said, “Sir, we’ve got trouble! Cox has jumped. Come quick!” Irritated by the intrusion, Nemoto rushed to the window and looked out into the yard, to see Cox’s prostrate body.

The reporter was pronounced dead at 3:46 p.m. The timing was unfortunate in the extreme: Unbeknownst to the Kempeitai and Cox, Reuters had asked the Domei news agency to help secure his release and Inosuke Furuno, president of Domei, had been meeting with the War Minister at the time of his death.

A note was found on Cox’s person, apparently addressed to his wife, which the Japanese authorities claimed to be a “suicide note.”

REPORTER OR A SPY? AND WAS HE MURDERED OR DID HE DIE BY HIS OWN HAND?

It read, “See Reuters re rents. See Cowley re deeds and insurance. . . . I know what is best always, my only love. I have been well treated but there is no doubt about how matters are going.”

In his work *Britain & Japan Biographical Portraits*, Sir Hugh Cortazzi, the late British Ambassador to Japan, included a report by the embassy on the incident. It stated that an American doctor who viewed the body noted that the injuries were such that they could be attributed to a fall from 40 feet, that there were no signs of prior physical ill treatment and that the body was found so far out from the building that it could be presumed that he leaped, disproving a fall from foul play. The British consul had examined the “suicide note,” which he believed was in Cox’s handwriting and had the impression that the correspondent was “sure gendarmerie intended to convict him by hook or by crook.”

A FUNERAL WAS HELD for Cox at St. Andrew’s Cathedral in Shiba Park, with four Kempeitai officers, including Nemoto, in attendance. Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka, who had known Cox personally, made an *ex gratia* payment to his wid-

ow of ¥100,000, equivalent at the time to £5,833.68, and a considerable sum in those times.

The British government immediately retaliated against Japan for the arrests of its nationals, detaining the branch managers of the Mitsubishi and Mitsui trading firms in London, and eight others in the U.K. and several commonwealth cities, including Sydney and Hong Kong. (They were eventually all released unharmed.)

So what was Cox, a reporter or a spy? And was he murdered or did he die by his own hand?

Then British Ambassador to Japan Sir Robert Craigie refused to believe that Cox “could have been connected even remotely with espionage.” He was highly critical of Kempeitai interrogation techniques, noting that their “method of submitting the prisoner to long and intensive grilling lasting sometimes from 9 in the morning to 10 p.m. was of a character to test the strongest nerves and that it was a well-known thing that in the case of someone of Cox’s disposition, intense depression was thus induced.”

Two weeks after Cox’s death, R. Selby Walker, the Reuters acting general manager for the Far East, who was resident in Shanghai, submitted a lengthy report to the company’s managing director in London. According to him, Cox had been receiving hints for some time that the authorities were after him because he knew and said too much about the activities of the Nazis and Japanese with pro-Axis sympathies. He noted that an AP correspondent had been arrested and interrogated for five hours in connection with a telegram he’d sent about Cox’s arrest, and that he’d been left “so mentally battered and bruised that he could not think of anything but how to get away.” Walker also assumed that Cox took his own life, but that he’d been driven to it, and he believed that the report of the American doctor seemed to disprove any idea of murder.

Although Cox was popular among colleagues at the American Club for his “bright and cheery disposition,” Cortazzi noted that he “had been ‘making himself a nuisance at Gaimusho press briefings. He asked a barrage of awkward questions and made no effort to cover up his contempt and growing animosity for the Japanese militaristic state.’”

Punishments were meted out to at least two Kempeitai members responsible for Cox’s safety. As the officer in charge of the interrogation, Captain Nemoto was ordered confined to his barracks and received a punitive wage cut. Sgt. Kamata was subjected to “administrative punishment” and reassigned overseas. Interestingly in 1948, Nemoto was sentenced to three and a half years imprisonment for his alleged involvement in the deaths of 17 U.S. air crew members shot down over Japan. Describing Cox’s death in the magazine article 17 years after the incident, when he was under no threat of prosecution or punishment, Nemoto maintained that no foul play had occurred.

Former Ambassador Cortazzi, who presumably had access to whatever evidence was available, eventually concluded that, “The true facts about how Cox died will probably never be known. . . . The Kempeitai had nothing to gain by his death except perhaps that in their interpretation it tended to confirm his guilt. . . . Whether it was suicide or not, it is clear that the Kempeitai behaved with brutality and inexcusable callousness.”

Mark Schreiber currently writes the “Big in Japan” and “Bilingual” columns for the *Japan Times*.



A death reported
Cox’s note – top left of this July 30, 1940, edition of the *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun* – is reproduced opposite the headline, “Foreign spies arrested in simultaneous roundup,” above.

COURTESY OF HIBIYA LIBRARY

Mehdi Bassiri

By Gavin Blair

Eschewing the offer of a career in the post office in the ancient Iranian city of Hamadan, a young Mehdi Bassiri had already set his sights further afield. A desire to travel and meet people, combined with the fact that “The foreign ministry was the most respected government office in Iran,” had Bassiri determined to represent his nation abroad.

His first extended posting was to the Iranian Embassy in London in 1972 as an attaché. Mehdi remembers his four years in the British capital as the “most enjoyable time in my career,” recalling garden parties at Buckingham Palace, where he met the Queen and other royals. Returning to Tehran in 1976, Bassiri looked after foreign diplomatic missions and foreign leaders visiting Iran for two years.

After being posted to Japan in 1978, he worried about the direction of Iran and the fate of his relatives there. Within a few months the Islamic Revolution was underway and Bassiri began to realize life would never be the same. “I tried for a year and a half or two to carry on working with the new regime, but it was impossible,” he says, explaining that many high-ranking diplomats, including his former boss and friend, and the former foreign minister, were executed without trial. “Their only crime was working with the old regime,” Bassiri says.

Bassiri effectively defected, asking for political asylum from Japan. Although he says the authorities were kind to him, “They wanted to help me go to the US or UK, not stay here.” However, after four years, he received approval for his family to live permanently in Japan. In the meantime, the new regime in Iran had seized his house and financial assets.

An unscheduled visit from a compatriot while he was still working at the embassy would lead to his first job after the diplomatic service. After handing Bassiri two packages, the visitor explained he was importing medical equipment from Japan into Iran and was looking for an introduction to a reliable person to open an office in Tokyo.

“After he left I opened the packages, and one of them was a big portrait of the [Ayatollah] Khomeini. I telephoned him and told him to come back immediately and take it away. Later he called me and asked to meet him in a coffee shop. He asked me to come and work with him,” recounts Bassiri.

THIS SERENDIPITY GAVE BASSIRI a job and a way out of his untenable position representing a regime he strongly opposed. Working for the company for around 18 months, he learned the ways of business after a career in diplomacy, until his employer collapsed and died in the disco of the Tokyo hotel

where he was staying. So Bassiri formed his own business and continued exporting medical equipment to Iran until the 1985 Plaza Accord sent the value of the yen spiraling upward, making his goods prohibitively expensive. The currency fluctuation, however, made importing from Iran a viable option and Bassiri began to supply Persian carpets to Japanese department stores. His persona non grata status in Iran was overshadowed by the government’s desire for foreign currency, according to Bassiri, and left him able to source carpets, but not return to his homeland.

The business model he developed continues to this day: taking his wares to display at regional department stores and sell to wealthy local customers. Although traditional wool Persian carpets, with thousands of years of history, are prized worldwide, it is the newer silk varieties that are popular in Japan. “Silk Persian carpets only began to be woven maybe 100 years ago, but 90 percent of them are exported to Japan, where people find silk very attractive,” he explains.

Once his business success allowed him to pay back the people who had helped him after he had left the embassy, in 2000 he joined the FCCJ, which he had visited numerous times during his diplomatic days. He has since been an active member, sitting on the associate liaison committee, organizing a

Persian New Year Night for a decade and serving in various roles on the Food and Beverage Committee, of which he is currently co-chair.

After almost two decades in Japan, Bassiri was able to return to Iran to see his sick brother after a close friend in the foreign ministry received assurances during the tenure of relative moderate President Mohammad Khatami, that he would be safe. He returned to Japan unscathed, but the fear he felt while there gave him chronic stomach pains. He returned a number of times since, but the more hardline direction the regime has taken in recent years has again dissuaded him from visiting.

His three children are all working overseas, in New Jersey, Brussels and London. Bassiri visits his youngest daughter in London, a city he still has great affection for, but worries about the future of his homeland. “I don’t know what will happen to my country; I hope something good,” he says sadly.

Recent geopolitical tensions have once again cast a shadow on his life. The latest US sanctions, imposed on Iran from Nov. 6, have left Bassiri unable to send money to his suppliers there. He is now seeking a solution, but says he is not hopeful. ●

Gavin Blair covers Japanese business, society and culture for publications in the US, Asia and Europe.

THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION WAS UNDERWAY AND BASSIRI BEGAN TO REALIZE LIFE WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME.



RODRIGO REYES MARIN

Making every pitch count

Freelancing is tough! And getting the attention of commissioning editors is a large part of the job. Here is some advice from several experienced editors on how to catch their eye.

By Tim Herrera

AS "SMARTER LIVING" EDITOR at the *New York Times*, the bulk of my job is working with freelancers. On the slowest days, I'll get around a dozen cold pitches in my inbox; on busy days, almost 200. (Lol sorry if I owe you an email, promise I'm working on it.) The thousands of pitches I've read over the last few years usually fall into one of three categories: great (very few), something we can work with (a small, but decent, amount) and bad (everything else).

Before we go on, it's worth remembering: **A bad pitch is not the same thing as a bad story idea.** Pitches get turned down for countless

If you're going to ask an editor to pay you for your idea, make sure it's an idea worth paying for. Think scope, reach and impact.

reasons – you pitched the wrong outlet, the wrong editor, your idea wasn't fully fleshed out, the timing wasn't right, etc. And especially as news outlets are evolving in their approaches to digital storytelling, publications are increasingly open to nontraditional storytelling structures. So don't be shy about getting weird sometimes. (I, for one, love when I get an out there or innovative story idea.)

But most bad pitches are bad for the same few reasons, and they're often salvageable with some tweaking. After consulting with about a dozen editors who commission stories at publications ranging from small, niche blogs to national magazines and newspapers, I've pulled together the six most common mistakes freelancers make when pitching – and what you can do to impress an editor.

You don't know what your story is Most editors are willing to take a chance on a great story idea, even from a new writer – 75 percent of the

stories I commissioned last year were from first-time *New York Times* writers. But we can't help you if you don't know what you're pitching.

The most common variant is this: "Hi, I'm a freelance writer and I'm interested in covering [x topic] for your section." I'm glad you're interested, but... what's the story?

Another version is the super-lengthy email pitching a meandering, unfocused "look," "exploration," or "deep dive" into a topic. I'm glad you've thought so much about your topic, but don't forget to think of the actual story you're telling.

Even worse: You want *me* to tell you what your story is. "Freelancers should always come with story ideas," said

Sarah Kessler, deputy editor of *Quartz at Work*. "I get a lot of emails that just say, 'I'd like to be a contributor for *Quartz at Work*.' That isn't much help."

A good safeguard against this is to write a solid, clear, powerful nut graf. It'll be just a draft – after all, you won't have done all the reporting for the story yet – but knowing exactly what your story is about is crucial to piquing an editor's interest.

You didn't check the archives

Even if you think you have the most original idea in the world, and you're 100 percent sure the outlet you're pitching has never done it, check anyway to see if the outlet has already done it. Then check again. Skipping this step shows you're either blindly shooting off pitches en masse, or you just don't care enough to look.

Meet your new best friend: Google site search. Just type "site:[newsoutlet.com] [your keywords]" and you're set. (Do not rely on a news outlet's built-in search engine.)

"Pitching a version of something I've already published, or a version of something the writer has already published but for a different pub" never works out, said Lisa Bonos, editor of "Solo-ish" at the *Washington Post*. "This latter one really gets me. You don't get to sell the same personal essay more than once. If you're writing a variation on a story you've told before, be upfront about how this new story is different."

You pitched the wrong editor or section

It's sloppy and it shows you didn't do the basic research required to get your story published. Be absolutely sure that your idea fits within the section or outlet you're pitching, and that you're emailing the right editor.

"Pitching me something that doesn't make any sense for the publication, subject-wise or tonally, shows me you haven't read through the site," said Gina Vaynshteyn, editor-in-chief at First Media. "If you haven't done your homework, I wonder how diligent you'll be about your story."

You're too aggressive with following up

"It's O.K. to follow up on unanswered pitches, but wait a week, not 24 hours," said Kristin Iversen, executive editor of *Nylon*. "When a freelancer's pitches are turned down, they should not follow up with more pitches a day or two later; please don't pitch me more than once a month, unless it's something very timely."

Your story is too low-stakes or narrow

This mistake is a little hard to define, but it probably accounts for at least half of the stories I decline. If you're going to ask an editor to pay you for your idea, make sure it's an idea worth paying for. Think scope, reach and impact.

This problem emerges in a lot of ways, but the most common issues

I see are: Your story requires very little – or no – reporting; it could be written by anyone; it applies to a very small demographic (caveat: this isn't a problem if that's intentional and the publication is interested in that audience); your story has a very limited shelf-life (again, not a problem if that's intentional and you know the outlet would be interested); or it just doesn't have any sweep or scope. Editors want important, substantive stories.

Ask yourself: If an editor responded and said, "So what? Who cares?" – would you have a real answer?

destination all at once. Often, it was a trip I was invited on myself and had to decline.

A writer pitched me one of these stories, and I wrote her back politely giving her a heads-up about the no-press-trips rule. Her response: "You must have figured out I was on a press trip because *you're stalking me!*"

Good tip: Don't accuse editors of stalking you. And also be honest about stuff.

So now you know what *not* to do – here's what you *should* do. It boils down to basically three things:

a better sense of your raw copy than your edited clips do. If your pitch has a fascinating, beautifully written lede, your story probably will, too. If the pitch is confusing, the filed story is likely to be, too."

To end, here's one of the best cold pitches I've ever gotten. This was my first interaction with this writer – Anna Goldfarb – and she's since become a regular *New York Times* contributor:

Hello! I saw your call for pitches so I figured I'd toss my hat in the ring. Let me know if any of these ideas resonate! [She had sent three different ideas, but I'm including only the one I accepted and later published.]

(Essay) What I wish I knew before moving in with my boyfriend – I'd always pictured moving in with a guy like diving into a pool; a graceful, swift action. It turns out I was absolutely wrong. Instead of a dive, it was like doing the Macarena, in that there's a series of

steps that need to be executed in a certain order for it to be considered a success.

A little bit about me: I'm a culture and food writer based in Philly. I'm currently a contributor to Elle, The Kitchn, Refinery29, Thrillist and more. You can see my full list of writing clips here. Thanks for your consideration!

Why's this so good? Four simple reasons: There's no filler; she told me everything I need to know about the idea without getting bogged down in irrelevant details; *she knows exactly the story she's pitching and how to execute it*; and she sent clips with a link to more.

Yes, it's that simple. Don't overthink it. ●

Tim Herrera is "Smarter Living" editor at the *New York Times*. This originally appeared on the NiemanLab website and is used with permission.



You don't disclose conflicts of interest

Most publications have codes of ethics and/or guidelines around conflict-of-interest disclosures. They can vary widely, so always – always! – err on the side of over-disclosure. The worst-case scenario is that outlet finds out you had a conflict *after* publication (and they will find out), which usually results in a correction with the disclosure and that writer possibly being blacklisted from the publication.

A travel editor at an international outlet shared this story:

I'm not allowed to accept press trips, and same goes for people who write for us. I can usually tell when someone went on a press junket even if they don't disclose it, because multiple writers all pitch me the same story about the same

Be concise yet informative.

Very few cold pitches need to be more than, say, 10 sentences, and the best ones are often less.

Explain why anyone should care.

Get me interested to learn more, but more important, make me want to tell this story to the readers of my publication.

Show that you can pull it off.

If you want to pitch the huge, ambitious, weighty feature you've been mulling over months, go for it. But make sure you've laid out how you're going to put it together, along with the clips to demonstrate that a story like this is within your range.

"The best freelancers use their pitches to showcase their writing skills – especially when pitching an editor for the first time," said Nick Baumann, an editor at *HuffPost*. "A pitch gives me



Last month in photos

Shibuya
Facing the onslaught on the scramble crossing in Tokyo
by Richard Atrero de Guzman



Kart-ography
The (controversial) kart ride in Tokyo hits Marunouchi
by Rodrigo Reyes Marin



Eyes on the try
Japan's Kenki Fukuoka fights against All Blacks players during a test match against New Zealand on Nov. 3. Japan was defeated by the the All Blacks 31-69
by Yoshikazu Tsuno

FCCJ EXHIBITION



PORTRAITS of ARTISTS by Benjamin Lee

BENJAMIN LEE'S CAREER HAS taken him from creative advertising in London (1974-1987), working for international advertising agencies and magazines like *Vogue*, *Elle*, *Esquire*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *GQ* to more creative and artistic photographic experimental image making in Tokyo (1987-2018 and beyond). Imaginative portraits of Yayoi Kusama, Frank Gehry, Picasso, Issey Miyake, Haruki Murakami and Kengo Kuma are a few of the portraits in this exhibition.

For more information please see www.benjamin-lee.jp

JOIN THE FILM COMMITTEE...

... on Thursday, Dec. 13 at 7:00 pm to celebrate the madcap cult-musical classic *The Legend of the Stardust Brothers* – the 1985 feature debut of Makoto Tezuka (now Macoto Tezuka), son of the great manga artist Osamu Tezuka. Despite the film's local success, infectious charm and natty costumes, *Brothers* never got English subtitles and was never shown outside Japan. Earlier this year, working with British distributor Adam Torel, the director remastered the film and created a subtitled Director's Cut. In October, it premiered at the Sitges Film Festival in Spain, wowing an audience that never even knew it existed. A time capsule of musical stylings and cinematic inspirations, it also features some of Japan's most famous creators of the time, including musicians Kiyohiko Ozaki, Issay, Sunplaza Nakano and Hiroshi Takano; and cameos from mangaka Monkey Punch, Shinji Nagashima, Yosuke Takahashi and even emerging film directors Kiyoshi Kurosawa and Daihachi Yoshida. The director and composer will be on hand for the Q&A session after the screening. (Japan, 1985; 100 minutes; in Japanese with English subtitles.).

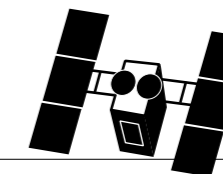
– Karen Severns



CLUB DIARY DATE

12/12

Press Conference: "Hayabusa2 Project - Mission Update"



"I AGREE THAT A JOURNALIST'S JOB IS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION WHICH IS NOT CONTROLLED BY THE POWERS THAT BE. WITH REGARD TO MY APOLOGY, WHAT HAPPENED WAS A RESULT OF CERTAIN MISTAKES I MADE. THAT'S WHAT I'M APOLOGISING FOR."

Jumpei Yasuda,
journalist who was held hostage for 40 months by militants in Syria,
at the Club
Nov. 9, 2018



Hello Nijubashi!

On Nov. 22 the FCCJ held a Club-warming party in our new Marunouchi premises.

Welcome speeches

by Sandra Mori (who has been with the Club at all its premises) and behind her Club Events Committee Chair, Akihiko Tanabe. Below, Tetsuo Yuasa, Senior Executive Officer, of Mitsubishi Estate



Performance art

Above, the Fuka Daikoh drummers from Gunma and, right, entertainer Pikotaro



Dance floored with music provided by the Moonshots



Smashing

Left-to-right: Club treasurer Willem Kortekaas, Sandra Mori, Director-at-Large Khaldon Azhari and Club Secretary Daniel Hurst open the sake, provided by Born Saké – flanked by the night's Noh performers Otomasa Sakai and Otoharu Saka, below).



Meeting

Pikotaro meets Club Exhibition Chair Bruce Osborn and his wife Yoshiko; Stirling Elmendorf, Norman Tolman, Kumiko Elmendorf and Club GM Marcus Fishenden



Cheers

Above, Mew Iwabuchi, Grady Loy and Phoebe Amoroso; above right, Masanobu Tsukagoshi, Kuniko Isa, Milton Isa, Mikuni, Katsu and Shozo Tsukagoshi; right, Chris Lawson, Reiko Sugioka, Kathryn Wortley, Yuntao Fan and Daniel Hurst.

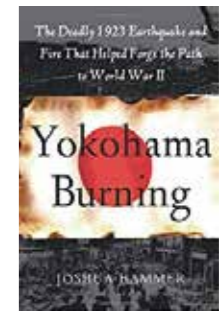
ALL PHOTOS BY ALBERT SIEGEL



NEW IN THE LIBRARY

Return from Siberia: a Japanese Life in War and Peace, 1925-2015

Oguma Eiji; David Noble (trans.) LTCB International Library Trust: International House of Japan Gift from Georges Baumgartner



Yokohama Burning: the Deadly 1923 Earthquake and Fire That Helped Forge the Path to World War II

Joshua Hammer Free Press

Tadao Ando (GA architect: 8)

Ando Tadao; Yukio Futagawa (ed.); Criticism by Kenneth Frampton; Yoshio Takase (photo) A.D.A.EDITA Tokyo Gift from Georges Baumgartner

An Investigative Study of End-stage Care in Japan: from the Perspective of International Comparison

Takashi Sasaki Chuohoki Gift from Takashi Sasaki

Convenience Store Woman

Sayaka Murata; Ginny Tapley Takemori (trans.) Grove Press





New Membership Campaign

¥5,000 ~ ¥20,000
Dining voucher for introducing a new member

¥20,000

F&B voucher if you introduce:
Associate, Diplomatic Associate or
Five-Year Associate member

¥10,000

F&B voucher if you introduce:
Regular, P/J Associate, Young Associate or
Outside Kanto Associate member

¥5,000

F&B voucher if you introduce:
Young Regular, Young P/J Associate,
Outside Kanto Regular or Outside Kanto P/J Associate member

THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS' CLUB OF JAPAN

Marunouchi Nijubashi Building 5F, Marunouchi 3-2-3 Chiyoda-ku Tokyo 100-0005, Japan
www.fccj.or.jp E-mail: front@fccj.or.jp Tel: +81-3-3211-3161 Fax: +81-3-3211-3168

Terms & Conditions of Dining Certificate

1) Certificate may be issued for any new member whose application is received by the FCCJ office and whose membership is paid-in-full immediately after membership confirmation. **2)** Only one certificate per new member will be issued. In case of multiple claims, reward may be split. **3)** Certificate may be redeemed at Pen & Quill Dining Room, Main Bar and Masukomi Sushi Bar during the campaign period. **4)** Certificate cannot be credited to member's account and is valid for one use only. **5)** Any unused portion of the value is non-refundable. The certificate holder is liable for any amount consumed in excess of the value of the certificate. **6)** Certificate valid for 6 months and is non-transferable.

The FCCJ may end promotion at any time. Please check with the office to confirm still active.