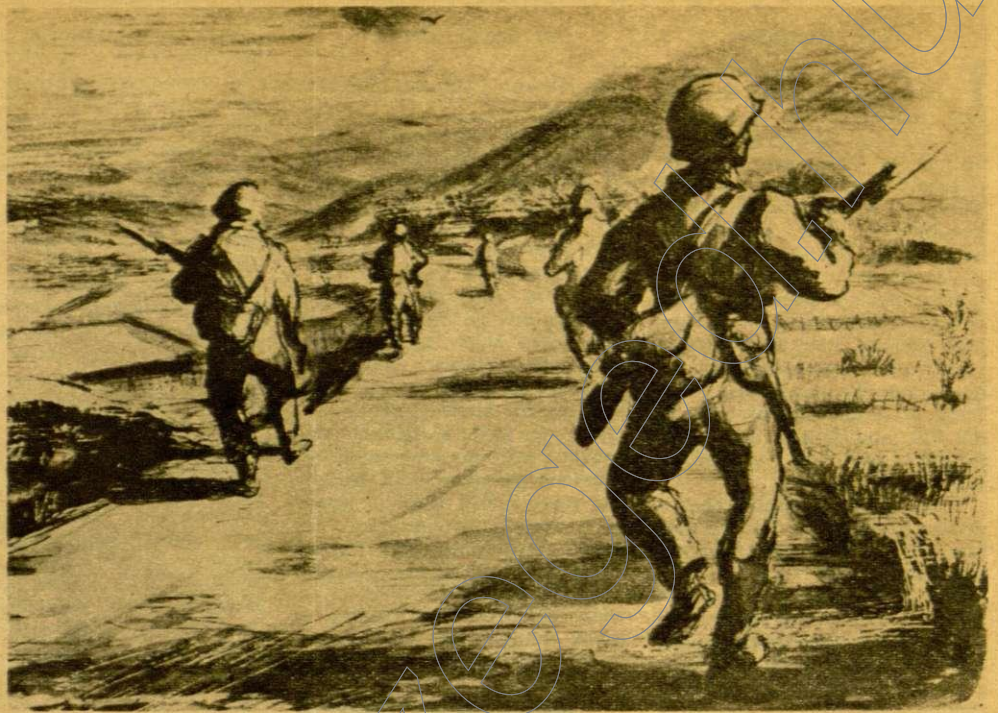


1952 Dec. 7



Illustrations by the author for "Studio: Asia."

A Reporter-Artist's Picture of War-Torn Asia

STUDIO: ASIA. Written and illustrated by John Groth. 208 pp. Cleveland: The World Publishing Company. \$4.95.

By QUENTIN REYNOLDS

WHEN John Groth's "Studio: Europe" appeared in 1945 it was greeted by an avalanche of superlatives. Book critics liked the warmth, the humor and the poignancy of his writing; art critics enthused over his uncanny ability to capture the vital moment of excitement in his drawings. This was indeed World War II as the G. I. saw it, and John Groth moved right into the company of Ernie Pyle and Bill Mauldin as the leading exponents of this particular type of war journalism.

The war over, Groth went back to drawing bullfighters and ball players and horses and his work was exhibited and praised in the Dayton Art Institute, the Whitney Museum, the Corcoran Gallery and the Museum of Modern Art. He taught at the Art Students League, where he told his classes that he couldn't be bothered trying to teach anyone who wasn't willing to make a hundred drawings a day. And then John Groth packed his bag, got himself a set of press credentials, and went off to Korea. "Studio: Asia" is the result of his second war.

The obvious thing to do is to drag out the same superlatives we all used in 1945 to describe Groth's first book. This is a very good book about a very bad war; it has all of the ingredients (plus a few new ones) that made "Studio: Europe" so memorable. From Korea he went to Japan and Hong Kong

Mr. Reynolds, a veteran war correspondent, is the author of "Leave It to the People."

and Formosa and French Indo-China, and wherever he went he carried his sketching pencil in his right hand and his typewriter in his left. He used both with equal facility. "Studio: Asia" is a big and wonderful book about big and wonderful and small and miserable people. Groth has the same knack Pyle had of catching the atmosphere of war as it is felt by the participants and being able to communicate that atmosphere to us.

FOR a soldier sitting on a frozen Korean peak, life was immediate and very real. Most of his time was spent in an effort to keep alive against a fanatic enemy and Arctic cold. He knew only what his red-rimmed eyes saw and what his half-frozen ears heard. He had experienced seven months of all-out war and none of it had been good. Before him stretched endless rows of Korea's east-to-west mountain ranges, every one of them held by an enemy that barked fire until dead. He was alone except for the man on either side of him."

Groth found that the American G. I. in Korea was not the G. I. he had known in World War II. The 1952 version was much younger. He was apt to be a volunteer from sub-standard areas in Southern states. He had gone into the

Army direct from high school; he had never held a job or had really known American girls.

"The only girls they knew were the Terukos and Mitzios they had met while on occupation duty in Japan. The word 'home' awakened little nostalgia. These men had 'found a home in the Army.' Their other home was Japan. The colonel of the regiment that reached the Yalu first told me that 'Welcome home' banners, anticipating the regiment's return, had been strung above the streets of the Japanese town where they had been stationed in occupation duty. The same colonel described the men of the army in Korea as a beginning of a 'true professional Army, America's Foreign Legion.' He described them as 'the lost generation of World War II.'

"In the main I found that what he said was true. However, the draftees who were beginning to trickle into Korea reminded me of the World War II civilian soldiers."

THAT'S the war that Bill Mauldin drew and Ernie Pyle wrote about. Most American war correspondents have, understandably enough, been concentrating on the activities of our own troops in Korea. Groth went further than that. He spent a great deal of his time with the Turks, the Greeks, the South Koreans and the French,

and he has put their efforts in proper perspective. They've been doing a lot of fighting and dying almost anonymously. The fabled French resistance leader, Colonel Monclar (the pseudonym he used in those days and which he still retains, although he is now a general), sat for Groth's pencil, and he talked for the benefit of Groth's typewriter. Monclar and his men had become famous for their use of the bayonet. He was not at all backward in criticizing the tactics of the military high brass, which followed the tactical design of keeping to the valleys.

"The army that holds the high ground can always dominate the valleys. There is only one way to fight guerrillas and that is to go into the hills after them and not advance until all of them are wiped out. We are an army on wheels. Our tanks and heavy equipment tie us to the roads."

Groth didn't spend all of his time in the combat areas. He went where the men went on leave, and he investigated the Geisha houses of Tokyo and he ate a snake dinner in Hong Kong and danced with the "singsong" girls of the brothels and lost most of his money in a fan-tan house in Shanghai, and he smoked his first pipe of opium—holding it in his left hand so he could sketch with his right. This is the stuff out of which "Studio: Asia" is made. The color, the smells, the patience, the evil and the mystery of the Orient are all here in word and drawing. This is a completely fascinating book without a dull word or line to mar any one of its 208 pages. It's much too fine a book to borrow—this is one you'll want to own.

Viewpoints

IN Korea, I found that every U. N. soldier to whom I talked had his own motive for fighting the Communists. Canadians, Australians and Dutch used words like "adventure" and "sport." American G.I.'s evaded answering why they were here. One private tossed it right back at me with a terse "You tell me, Mac!" Despite their cynicism, however . . . they wisecracked their way out of their own wretchedness, describing themselves as "perfect Life covers."—"Studio: Asia."

REMEMBER THE NEEDIEST!