

PART 3

CAPTURING THE NEWS

Chapter 14

Bandits

The press breaks the news of the capture.

South Wales Echo S
E
 & Evening Express
 ONE PENNY. MONDAY, JULY 29.

**CARDIFF JOURNALIST
 CAPTURED BY BANDITS**

**TROOPS RUSHED
 TO HIS RESCUE**

*Mr. Gareth Jones's Ordeal
 on World Tour*

£8,000 RANSOM DEMANDED



MR. GARETH JONES.

(From Reuter's Correspondent)
 PEIPING (Pekin), Monday.
 Mr. Gareth Jones, for two years on the staff of the "Western Mail" and "South Wales Echo," and now on a world tour, during which he is contributing articles to the "Western Mail," was captured by Chinese bandits near Paoshang, 83 miles north-east of Kalgan and not far from Kuyuan.
 Mr. Jones fell into the hands of the bandits with a German correspondent, Dr. Herber Mueller, who was travelling through China with him, when their train was attacked.
LLOYD GEORGE'S ASSISTANCE SOUGHT

South Wales Echo & Evening Express – 29th July 1935.

Monday July 29th 1935 - *South Wales Echo and Evening Express* (seventh edition):

Cardiff Journalist Captured by Bandits

Mr Jones fell into the hands of the bandits with a German correspondent, Dr Herbert Müller, who was travelling through China with him, when his train was attacked ... They were taken to the bandits' lair and 500 troops had been sent to endeavour to effect their rescue.

It is understood that a sum of £8,000 has been demanded as ransom money. Mr Jones' father, Major Edgar Jones, of Barry, is seeking the assistance of Mr Lloyd George, to whom a wire has been sent asking if he would make representations through diplomatic channels to the Chinese Ambassador.

Meanwhile British authorities have made representations to the local Chinese authorities to release Mr Jones and the British Embassy has sent a telegram to Captain Scott, Assistant Military Attaché in Peking, who has been travelling back from Mongolia (with the High Commissioner for Tibet, Sir Charles Bell), instructing him to remain in Kalgan to endeavour to secure Mr Jones' release. It is understood also, that the Japanese military authorities have expressed their willingness to free him and his German companion.

Mr Jones and Herr Müller were captured on their way back from Dolonor to Kalgan. They had chartered a motor-coach called the "Gobi Express" at Pankiang the headquarters of the Mongol Prince Wang, about 160 miles northeast of Kalgan, on June 22nd. Dolonor is about 150 miles northeast of Kalgan, so it would appear that Mr Jones and his companion were making a circuitous detour on their way back to this city. To reach Dolonor they would have had to travel through country unsettled by the recent withdrawal of General Sung Che-yuan's troops many of whom, following demobilisation at the request of the Japanese, had become bandits. Dr

Herbert Müller is a representative of *Deutsches Nachrichtenburo*, the German news agency. (Dr Müller's principal profession was dealing with curios. He spoke excellent Chinese and was apparently accustomed with dealing with the Chinese on money matters).

The following day the news hit the national newspapers and it was revealed that the men had been captured on their way back to Kalgan from Dolonor at a place called Pao Ch'ang. The Russian chauffeur who had been captured with them had been sent back with a ransom demand for the sum of £8,000 and 200 Mauser rifles. Apparently the bandits held up the vehicle at a range of 40 yards with rifles and a machine gun, two shots of which hit the engine. They then looted it and carried off the two passengers. The bandits were dressed in uniforms of the Peace Preservation Corps [local police].



Map of area in which Gareth was captured.

Tuesday 30th July - *South Wales Echo and Evening Express*
(late edition):

Welshman Lone Prisoner with Bandits

Mr Gareth Jones is still in the hands of Chinese bandits, but Dr Müller, his companion, has been released. The doctor, who arrived at Pao Ch'ang today, telephoned a brief message to Kalgan confirming the news ... The mystery of why Dr Müller was released alone and Mr Gareth Jones kept in captivity is not explained.

Unconfirmed reports stated that Dr Müller was set at liberty at the instance of Chang Chung-Chi, a member of the Peace Preservation group, an ex-bandit and a friend of the bandit leader who had captured the two men and that Dr Müller was to obtain the ransom from the British and German Embassies on this condition.

Wednesday 31st July – Reuters' correspondent:

It was revealed that Dr Müller was released on 10 day parole ... it was presumed that Gareth Jones was being kept hostage for his parole.

Thursday 1st August - the family received a telegram from Changkiakow (Kalgan):

“Well treated. Expect release soon. Love Gareth.”

Friday 2nd August - *The Daily Telegraph*:

On reaching Kalgan Dr Müller told his story to the Vice-Chairman of the government of Chahar Province. The latter telephoned the commander of the local militia, Chang Chung-Chi in Pao Ch'ang to keep in touch with the bandits and to endeavour to persuade them to release Mr Jones. As inducements the Chang Chung-chi offered to incorporate the bandits into the Chahar army and the Chahar government would pay the ransom money demanded. The bandits were believed to be over 200 strong. The commander of the militia

at Pao Ch'ang made contact with the bandits and declared that they had now reduced their ransom from £8,000 to £3,400.

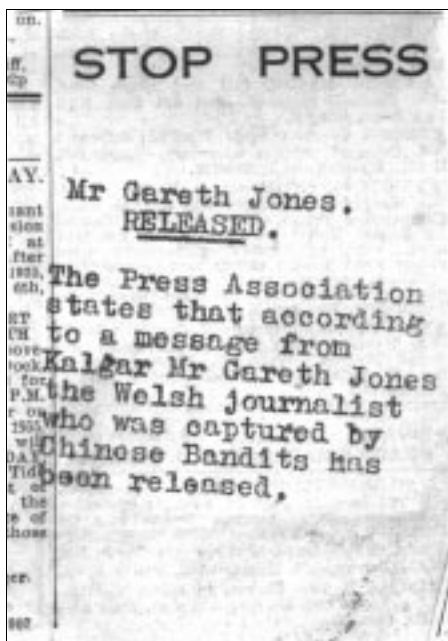
On his arrival in Peking Dr Müller stated that Mr Jones was in no personal danger and the government of Chahar Province would pay whatever ransom was necessary. He added that: "Gareth Jones was safe from bodily harm although once a rope was put round his neck and he was threatened with hanging. Although young and new to the country, he behaved splendidly and never lost his nerve".

Meanwhile Major Takahashi, the Japanese Attaché at Peking, gave orders instructing the Kwantung troops in Jehol and the Japanese military mission in Kalgan to co-operate with the Chinese in their efforts to secure Jones' release. These efforts included sending out Japanese search parties. Lieut. Millar, Assistant Military Attaché in Peking, left for Kalgan to join Capt. Scott, both of whom were expert linguists. It was stated that Jones had been warned not to attempt to go to Dolonor from Mongolia.

Friday 2nd August - a newspaper correspondent from the port of Dairen (Dalien), in the Japanese territory of Manchukuo reported in *The Western Mail and South Wales News* that authoritative sources considered:

Mr Gareth Jones is not being held purely for a ransom, but he is a victim of international complications. The British journalist was thought to be a secret agent with confidential material and had penetrated into secret territory. Chahar Province is a disturbed region on the Sino-Manchukuo frontier border in which the Japanese, Russians and Chinese are striving for predominance and his [Gareth's] presence as an independent observer is feared ... When all sides are assured that Mr Jones is not a secret agent, possessing confidential information, he will be released. The Japanese authorities explained to me that they secured a promise that Mr Jones would eventually be freed, though the ransom was not determined.

The week following the release of Dr Müller there was a period of uncertainty as to the whereabouts of Gareth and the family waited anxiously though still with some hope. Rumours of his release in one newspaper were immediately countered by another paper denying it. Reuters' reports were deemed to be accurate though many fictitious facts were printed as 'news' in the popular papers.



Incorrect stop press report from the Press Association printed in the South Wales Echo and Evening News.

Sunday 4th August – Reuters' Peking correspondent:

Torrential rains had held up the progress of the negotiations with the bandits, as travelling was very difficult, with the roads being streams of thick mud. However Jones' release was now expected at any time as the ransom money had reached Pao Ch'ang and that £800 [sic] had been paid to the men who originally captured the journalist. The money was sent by car from Kalgan yesterday with a protective escort of

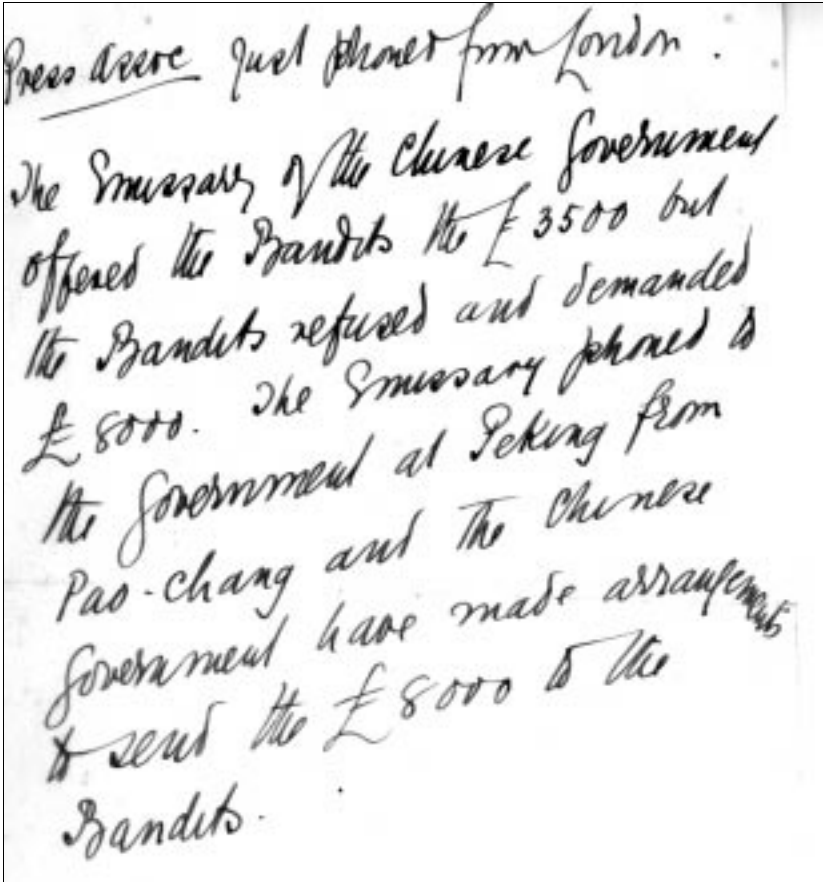
cavalry and those accompanying it had succeeded in making contact with the bandits.

Monday 5th August - Dr Müller's despatch to Berlin, (translated):

We approached a village called “The Great Tool House of the Family Ho” when Mr Jones noticed a man in Chinese uniform which did not astonish us and as we were indisputably in Chinese territory it was only to be expected that we would see members of the Chinese gendarmerie. Then in the houses, behind walls, on both sides of the road more men began shooting at us like savages. Bullets flew past my head and two went through the bonnet of the car. Finally after about 30 to 40 shots they stopped. They then apologised stating they thought it was a Japanese car and took me into a house for a cup of tea. I did not see that Mr Gareth Jones and the Russian driver had their arms bound and were taken into another house.

Whilst I was in conversation with the men, my servant arrived with the luggage from the car. At first I was assured that this was merely a formal examination, but at the sight of some silver dollars one of the men could not restrain himself and snatched the money. At this point they announced that they were bandits. Then Gareth Jones was brought into the small crowded room and threatened by the bandits with firearms. I now realised that I was a prisoner. Outside in the courtyard, my servant was given a list of demands to be fulfilled in 10 days at which time we would be released. I was bound and later heard how Gareth Jones had fared. He was taken into a Chinese house, made to climb on a bunk and the ends of his bonds were fastened to the timber rafters. A man came in with a noosed rope and Jones thought he was about to be murdered. “I felt no fear”, he said with justifiable pride. We were then led out and everything was removed from our pockets, even to our handkerchiefs. Of our clothing they left us shoes, stockings, shorts and khaki shirts. We were prepared for our journey so that from a distance we could not be distinguished as foreigners. From curious

peasants looking on, clothes were removed for us to wear and we were given dirty straw hats torn from no less dirty heads, which were rammed on our heads. At last the eventful journey on horseback began.



Press Assoc just phoned from London:
 The Emissary of the Chinese Government
 offered the Bandits the £3500 but
 the Bandits refused and demanded
 £8000. The Emissary phoned to
 the Government at Peking from
 Pao-chang and the Chinese
 Government have made arrangements
 to send the £8000 to the
 Bandits.

*Telephone message in Mrs Edgar Jones', Gareth's mother's
 handwriting.¹*

¹ Press Assoc. - Just phoned from London. The Emissary of the Chinese Government offered the £3500 but the bandits refused and demanded £8000. The Emissary phoned to the Government at Peking from Pao Ch'ang and the Chinese Government have made arrangements to send the £8000 to the bandits.

Saturday 10th August - Dr Müller's second despatch to Berlin (later reported by *The Star*):

The ride with the bandits through mountainous country, which the two prisoners soon found very painful as their hands were bound. Despite this Dr Müller recalled the joy of seeing beautiful meadows and ripening corn around them. "The district through which we passed yielded little food - a few hens and pigs in the villages, a few vegetables and a little bad flour." After the first excitement of the capture they were well treated and they decided to make friends with the bandits. They made jokes with their captors on the first night and showed them how to wind up the watches that they had confiscated and how the camera, compass and photometer worked. His account continued to say that on the second day they repaired the gang's machine gun. Ironically, they probably owed their lives to the fact that the machine gun had not worked properly when they were captured.

On the evening of the second day, a man arrived saying he had been sent by the Chinese authorities to affect their release and on the next morning the bandits allowed Dr Müller to go with the promise that he would return with the ransom: "I bid Gareth a short but moving farewell and then I mounted my horse and a peasant followed to shield me in case I was shot from behind. A few hours later I reached Pao Ch'ang and I renounced my suspicions that my guides were bandits of another gang."

Saturday 10th August - *The Western Mail and South Wales News* (quoting Dr Müller):

When we were captured, the bandits were surprising harsh with Jones as he cried: "Do not touch me, I am British!" The bandits thereupon bound and gagged him. Later, however, Jones charmed his captors by singing songs in German, English and Welsh in the evenings; which he (Müller) claimed saved Jones' life. The bandits were particularly impressed when he sang the 'David of the White Rock' (Dafydd y Garreg Wen) in Welsh. Repeatedly they begged

him to sing more and while their pickets watched the surrounding country the valley resounded with the Welshman's hymns.

His personality so impressed the bandits that they abandoned their harshness. One evening when there was only one chicken for 30 men, the bandits cooked the bird and laid it before Jones – whom they described as the singing Welshman while they ate cornmeal porridge. From this he was certain that no harm would come to Jones. They said: “We are poor and our only chance of riches is to obtain ransom for you foreign devils”. They told them of the cruel destiny that had led them into the path of banditry, a path that they could not quit without endangering their relatives in Manchuria.

They should not think ill of them and should believe that they were not only good men at heart, but good Chinese as well. Dr Müller added that the bandits were avoiding contact with the Japanese patrols. Jones was forced to ride 50 miles a day. He was wearing shorts and his knees were badly cut by the saddle.

Nevertheless he was very cheerful, regarding the experience as stimulating.

Monday 12th August – Cable from Reuters' Peking correspondent:

It appears that the original gang of bandits that held Mr Jones have handed him over to another gang who have raised the ransom demanded to 100,000 dollars and are holding him somewhere near the Chahar-Jehol border. The authorities are now doing their best to start negotiations with the fresh gang.

Tuesday 13th August – Reuters' report:

Mr Gareth Jones had been taken across the border into Jehol (now part of Manchukuo and therefore under Manchukuo and Japanese control by his captors).

Tuesday 13th August - The Daily Telegraph:

Mystery of Gareth Jones Deepens. - Reported Safe, But Still Untraced

The Chinese assert that they are unable to communicate with the bandits, because they are in a demilitarised zone, where Chinese police are forbidden. The Japanese take refuge in the statement that Mr Jones is outside their zone of authority. The Chinese authorities assert that they paid £1,000 as a preliminary ransom whereupon the bandits demanded an additional £9,000 and 500 pistols ... Major Takahashi, the Military Attaché is leaving by plane tomorrow morning. He has advised the Chahar authorities to pay the £10,000 rather than experience difficulties with the British Government.

Wednesday 14th August – The Western Mail & South Wales

News:

Japanese “Ultimatum” to Chinese Commander

CHANGKIAKOW [Kalgan]. A further attempt to secure the liberation of Mr Gareth Jones, the British journalist, kidnapped by Chinese bandits in the Chahar Province 16 days ago was made at this outpost today. Major Takahashi, Japanese Attaché in Peking, and Col. Matsui, Chief of the Japanese Military Mission, met Chang Chu-chang, commander of the Chahar Peace Corps, and said in effect: “We advise you in the strongest terms to find Jones by putting up the ransom.” When Chang Chu-chang replied, “We have already made an exhaustive search,” Major Takahashi said: “Now look in the right place.”

The significance of this Japanese ultimatum was thoroughly understood. The bandits holding Jones wore Peace Corps uniforms. Therefore, either directly or indirectly, Chang Chu-chang’s organization must know where Jones is. The Japanese authorities are confident that Jones will soon be delivered at Kalgan.

Chapter 15

The Tragic End

On the eve of his thirtieth birthday.



Extract from Evening News, London, Friday, August 16th, 1935.

Friday 16th August – London *Evening Standard* (telegram sent to Berlin by Dr Müller):

Gareth Jones is no more. His body, pierced by three bullets, is lying in Pao Ch'ang. Details of his death are so far not obtainable. One thing is certain, that my dear comrade met death with the same fearlessness with which he stood up to his captors and to threats of death and imprisonment.

Early on the morning of Friday 16th August 1935, the telephone rang in Gareth's home at Eryl, Barry. His father, Major Edgar Jones, answered the call from a Press Association reporter who told him that, according to a telegram from *The Daily Telegraph* special correspondent, his son had died.

Friday 16th August – *Glasgow Times* (from Reuters):

He [Major Jones] was almost too overcome to speak. “Oh! How terrible”, he whispered after a long pause. “Thank you for letting me know.” Then he went with heavy step to break the news to his wife. Mrs Edgar Jones, who was stunned by the blow, was comforted by her two daughters, all of whom had waited so anxiously over the past few weeks. Major Jones later told a reporter: “It is a terrible business. We were hoping against hope until the end”.

An unfortunate misunderstanding between two Chinese magistrates during a critical period may have had something to do with the tragedy. While one of them was conducting the negotiations for handing over the ransom, the bandits moved into the jurisdiction of his neighbour. The neighbour had not been warned of the negotiations and had sent troops to intercept the band. This it was felt may have destroyed the bandit's belief in the sincerity of the negotiations and may explain why the bandits never got the ransom money that had been sent.

Saturday 17th August - *Daily Mail*:

From information obtained locally, the militia believed that Mr Jones was shot by the bandits last Monday – eve of his thirtieth birthday.

Saturday 17th August – *Sheffield Independent*:

On the Wednesday 7th August, the Chahar Provincial Government had sent a messenger to maintain contact with the bandits, but he himself had been taken prisoner. From that moment there was no news. The Chinese authorities were moved to action and decided to send out troops in pursuit and

it was they who found the British journalist's body, today [Friday]. Though the ransom money had been offered in full, the bandits seemed curiously obdurate and had begun moving by rapid stages towards the Chahar-Jehol frontier.

Emissaries from the Chahar Government reported that the bandits refused to accept the ransom offered ... The Chinese and British authorities confessed themselves baffled and when the bandits were inside the Jehol border in Manchukuo, it was hoped that the Japanese authorities would have been able to secure Gareth's release.¹

Saturday 17th August – *The Daily Telegraph*:

Verification of the reports are intensely difficult here [Kalgan], owing to the international situation. The Japanese authorities discount the report of the death of Mr Jones, and though unaware of the facts, said that the bandits who were holding him were last seen southeast of Kuyuan, many miles from the Pao Ch'ang district. Moreover, the Japanese asserted that the bandit chief had every reason to preserve Mr Jones in safety.

In Peking, despite the absence of identification, it is regretfully concluded that the body which was found is that of Mr Jones.

Monday 19th August - *The Daily Telegraph* (sub-headline from their special correspondent):

News held up for four days

I was the first to receive confirmation of Mr Jones' death. Although the Chahar authorities knew of it four days ago, they withheld the news from Lieut. Millar; the British Attaché here, until I had enlisted the help of Mr Hashimoto, the Japanese Consul. The British Authorities are greatly angered by this procrastination, for at the time Lieut. Millar was

¹ Also reported in: the *London Evening News*, August 16th, *Manchester Guardian*, August 17th.

urgently demanding permission to go into the bandit area. Lieut. Millar who was secretly smuggled out of Kalgan and managed to reach Pao Ch'ang at dawn.

Saturday 17th August – *Greenock Telegraph*:

And so ends tragically an anxious fortnight in the course of which varying reports concerning Mr Jones' whereabouts and safety came to hand.