

ANNOIA, BOREDUM, SELF-DOUBT any a foreign correspondent is the steady, low-level paranoia—

with boredom and self-doubt— one deliberately maintains while sized between strangers in the back of a vehicle and in slummy apartments in unfamiliar neighborhoods, with you, and more likely despise Having been in war zones, em- ployed with United States Army Spe- cial Forces and alone with a local fix- ture inside a Karachi madrasa linked to al-Qaeda, I can say that it is the most unsettling. It is the times you are served sweet tea and almonds, everybody acts so polite, when you are to be the most nervous. Was I supposed to trust this fixer? Should I have asked the other guy? What about the fixer outside waiting for me? When things go right, you think of yourself a coward for worrying so much. And things do go right until the second when they go wrong. Then it is too late to affect the outcome: your wariness becomes recklessness. Decisions like "should I get into this with these people?" are made on instinct: the unarticulated sum of past encounters. While your instinct im- proves with such experience, the very knowledge that this is true makes you more inclined to take risks. Where- in being embedded with the military means the loss of freedom in return for extraordinary access and good company, the experience of journalists like Pearl involves radical freedom, which is the epitome of absolute lone- ness.

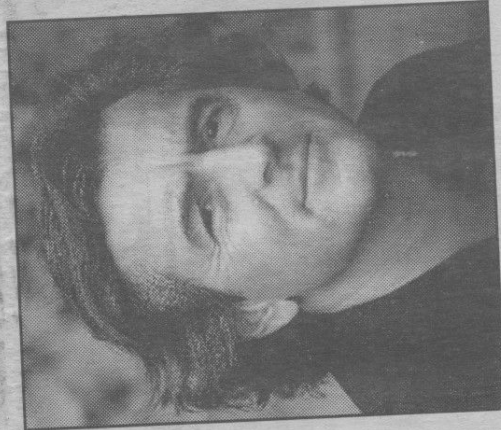
INCONCLUSIVE ADVICE

Mariane Pearl describes her late husband as "a believer in playing it safe." She quotes from a prescient memo he wrote to his bosses at *The Wall Street Journal* about the danger of journalists like himself being kid- napped. He consulted with two security experts about whether he should meet with the Muslim radicals who

President Bush (right) welcomes Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf to Camp David earlier this year.



Associated Press file photo
Daniel Pearl photographed by his captors.



Associated Press file photo



Associated Press file photo
Omar Ahmed Sheikh, father of Omar Saeed Sheikh, convicted in the Pearl slaying.

in broad daylight in civilian areas. Levy senses that Pearl reached his apothecary as a reporter while in captivity, when he probably never stopped en- gaging his jailers, absorbing vital in- sights about their lives and inten- tions that could not be had at a safer distance. The 19th-century Prussian philosopher of war Karl von Clause- witz, a product of the Romantic Age, knew that cultural and historical knowledge of the enemy was more im- portant than the elixirs of science and technology. In the cities of South Asia, suffused with the "stench of the apoc- alypse," as Levy puts it, Pearl was drink- ing up the sort of insights Clausewitz valued most.

Levy's novelistic description of Pearl's death (the translation is by James X. Mitchell) leaves one roiled with emotions. If it was obscene to show the video of the execution, why does one need to read such a meticu- lously imagined account of it, howev- er savvy it is in the atmospheric: the bleak neighborhood, empty soda cans, curved daggers of the executioners and the fumbling with the camcorder? Levy's exploration of Pearl's loneliness and indomitable spirit in the moments before he is killed lends gravity to the passage, though.

APPEALING TO CBS' WEAKNESS

The same cannot be said about rat- ings-hungry CBS, whose broadcast of part of the video had no redeeming fea- ture. Mariane Pearl tells Andrew Hay- ward, the president of CBS News, that her husband's murderers "appealed to your weakness, and you gave in."

The news media have altered the strategic landscape. It is questionable whether there would be an incentive for such an execution had there been little likelihood of the video being broadcast—just as the promise of in- cessant coverage inspires the perpet- uation of violence in both Iraq and Israel. But the news media also in- cluded Pearl, who sought knowledge for the sake of analysis rather than

As the battlefield of