

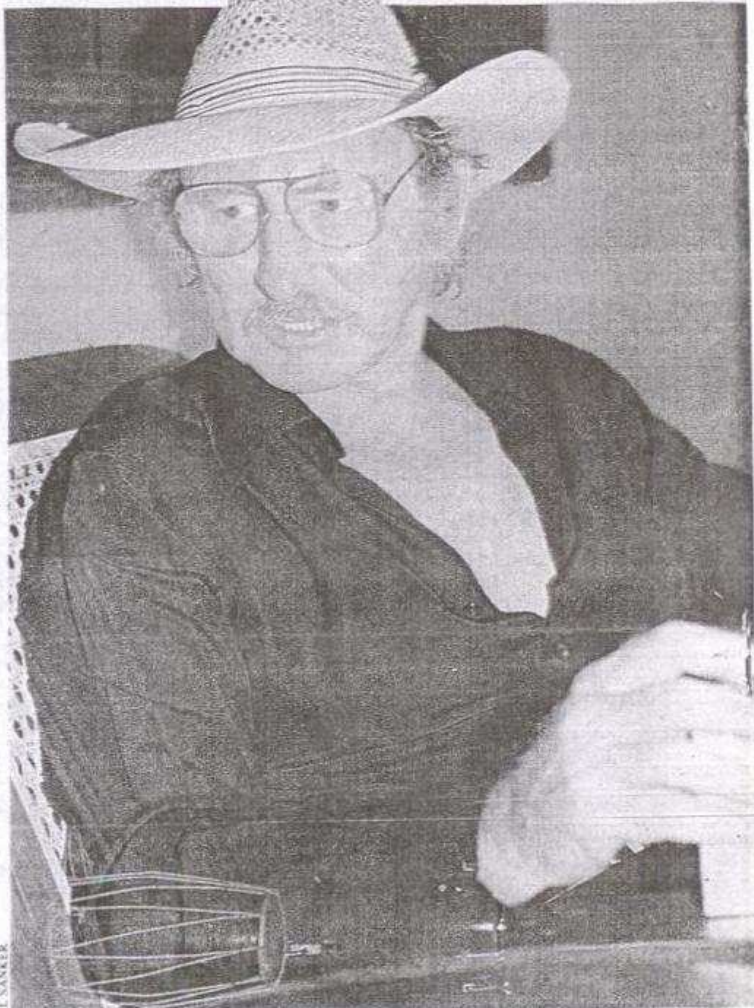
# You can smuggle anything

## Journalist Jim

The seizure of 15 tonnes of hashish worth Rs 250 crore, off New Jersey, from a vessel *Hetty Mitchell*, has focussed media attention on James Charles Howard, one-time freelance photo-journalist who has been in Cochin since 1982. *Hetty* had made an unscheduled halt at Cochin in March and since then the customs had kept a close watch on Jim. One of his own associates alleged that Jim is a key link in an international smuggling racket. The man, Brian Milgate, said that he was even pursued by hired assassins. People thought Brian was crazy. Today Brian is an honoured guest of US Drug Enforcement Authority. THE WEEK was closely following the tussle between Jim and Brian. The report below is the story of one man's effort to prove to the world that he was not mad.

**“YOU** can smuggle almost anything from any part of the world if you have this,” said the man tapping his forehead. To make it clear he repeated: “If you have the brains, you can get anything out, anywhere”.

The place: Bolghatty Palace Hotel in Cochin. The man: James Charles Howard, the famous photographer who had immortalised a few moments in history by his snapshots—like the Buddhist monk burning himself to death in Saigon in 1964, the coup in Iraq in 1962 and the killing of Kasim. He made a lot of money



Has he changed his line? James Charles Howard



# ing if you have the brains m behind \$250m drug syndicate?

too. For example he worked for 35 days in Congo making \$ 2,500 a day.

The weather-beaten man who sat sipping beer liked to talk of his adventures with the camera. There was an ugly scar on his temple. Even at 60, he looked tough and well-built. The black shirt he wore, the straw-hat, the dark sun-glasses and the cigar gave him a Bondish look.

THE WEEK correspondents were interviewing him after they found out that customs men were after him. Already, a Malayalam weekly had come out with a story on his journalistic feats. Could he have changed his line? In fact, he was reluctant at first to grant the interview, for he was "in no mood to talk". It was a Friday in April. "Come later, I will

give you a beautiful story." "On what", we asked him. "Customs harassment", he told us. "I am being harassed by the customs." Somehow he was persuaded to spare time then and there.

The answer quoted above on smuggling came when we asked him how he had managed to pass on the photographs taken from places like Idi Amin's Uganda. Brains, he said, it is all a question of brains.

**Q:** Could you explain some of your techniques?

**A:** Well, in Uganda, I used to paste two pictures of Idi Amin together and insert the negatives to be smuggled out in the space between them. Only the edges of the photographs would be pasted.

When the soldiers examined them they would think that I loved Amin so much that I wanted to see his face on either side of the picture. They used to grin and clear the pictures. Another method was to pack the negatives in cellophane paper and hide them in a hair cream bottle. Sometimes I used to request patients with fractured limbs to take the negatives out of a country inside a plaster cast.

**Q:** There is something remarkable about your career. You seem to have had an uncanny knack of being in the right place at the right time. Take the Iraq case for example. It is as if you knew that Kasim was going to be killed. You moved with the revolutionaries and even took a picture of Kasim's corpse being eaten away by ants—a privilege not granted to any other journalist. How did you manage all this?

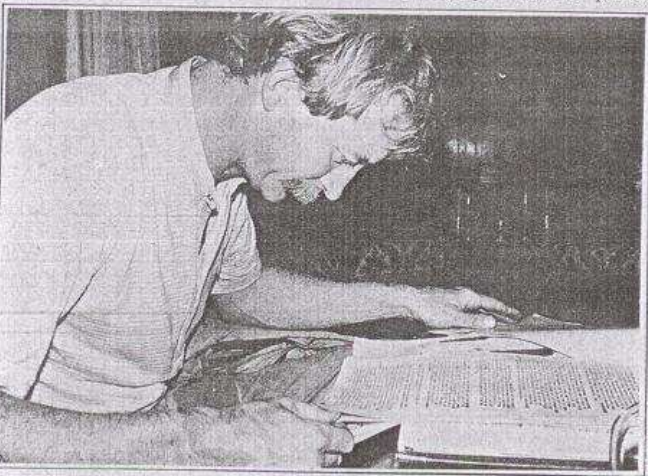
**A:** Being journalists you should not ask this question. Don't we have the hunch, the sixth sense to know that something is going to happen at a particular place? We journalists are like doctors. We study the situation in a country, study the symptoms and try to be there when things happen.

**Q:** Why were the rebels good to you? Why did they not arrest you?

**A:** They wanted to arrest me. I told them that it would help them to let the world know the good things they were doing for the country. So they cooperated with me.

**Q:** How did you manage to get into war-torn countries?

**A:** I used to smuggle myself in. I have gone on other people's passports. I have hidden myself in planes. Often it is illegal entry, but when the cause is good, one knows no fear. I have not known fear.



Proving that it is the others who are mad. Brian Milgate