

Dr Margaret Siriol Colley,  
Bramcote,  
Notts  
UK  
[pulitzer\\_revocation@colley.co.uk](mailto:pulitzer_revocation@colley.co.uk)

24<sup>th</sup> June 2003

To The Pulitzer Prize Committee,  
Columbia University,  
709 Journalism Building,  
2950 Broadway  
New York, NY, USA, 10027.

**An open letter to the committee deliberating on the revocation of the 1932 Pulitzer Prize for Correspondence from Walter Duranty.**

**Dear Sirs,**

**Re. Duranty & Gareth Richard Vaughan Jones (1905 -1935)**

This is a personal plea to revoke the 1932 Pulitzer Prize from the infamous journalist, Walter Duranty, who libelously damned the truthful reporting of my uncle, Gareth Jones.

On March 31<sup>st</sup> 1933, Gareth Jones, a young Welsh journalist, returning from an investigative tour of Soviet Ukraine, who then dared to publicly expose the severity of 1933 Soviet famine, was the prime recipient of Walter Duranty's villainous *New York Times* diatribe, '*Russians Hungry but not Starving*'. By vaunting his then esteemed journalistic reputation through the integrity of *The New York Times* to defame Gareth Jones, Duranty brutally portrayed Jones of being both a scaremonger and a liar. Duranty further stated, "There is no actual starvation or death from starvation, but there is widespread mortality from disease due to malnutrition".

Duranty's article was in immediate response Gareth Jones' press report from Berlin on March 29<sup>th</sup> 1933; and in attendance was Hubert. R. Knickerbocker (the 1931 Pulitzer Prize winner for his analysis and reporting of the Soviet Five-Year Plan), who firmly believed Jones' famine revelations, elucidated through his cable despatch of the same day to *The New York Evening Post*:

"...Because of his position, because of his reputation for reliability and impartiality and because he is the only first-hand observer who has visited the Russian countryside since it was officially closed to foreigners, is bound to receive widespread attention in official England as well as among the public of the country".

Gareth Jones had just returned from his third visit to the Soviet Union, and on this occasion had undertaken a 40-mile walk through villages in the countryside of Ukraine where he spoke to the peasants, and slept in their cottages.

Details of his Berlin press report were published in many American and British newspapers including *The Manchester Guardian*, in which Malcolm Muggeridge's three unsigned murderous-starvation articles (dated March 25<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> 1933) had just been printed. Unfortunately, at that time these reports went entirely unnoticed, as they stood without credence. Nevertheless, during April 1933, Jones wrote at least 20 famine-related articles that were published in several newspapers, including the Welsh *Western Mail* and *The Daily Express* of London. Later articles by Gareth Jones on the crisis were published in Britain and in the American press, including the *Boston Sunday Advertiser* and *The Washington Herald*. He then embarked on an extensive lecture tour entitled, *The Enigma of Bolshevik Russia*, in Britain and Ireland, and subsequently, in 1934, across the USA. It is therefore without doubt that he did more than any Western journalist to broadcast the plight of the peasants in the Soviet Union.

Eugene Lyons in his 1937 book, *Assignment in Utopia*, described how the foreign press corps in Moscow was assembled by the Soviet Press Censor, Oumansky, to conspire as to how they could repudiate Gareth Jones' Berlin report, especially since they were being inundated with enquiries from their home news desks about his revelations. Duranty then took it upon himself to deny there was a terrible famine situation in Russia, and, following this, his notorious article was published in *The New York Times* condemning Gareth Jones for falsifying the news. Lyons wrote, "Poor Gareth Jones must have been the most surprised human being alive when the facts he so painstakingly garnered from our mouths were snowed under by our denials."

Added to this insult of Jones by the foreign correspondents in Moscow, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Maxim Litvinov sent a special cable via their London Embassy to David Lloyd George banning Gareth Jones (who was a former adviser on foreign affairs to the ex-Prime Minister) from ever returning to the Soviet Union, and accusing him of espionage. This was an utter disappointment to Jones, as he had spent his whole academic career in Cambridge University studying the history and literature as well as the language of Russia, in which he was fluent. It had always been his particular wish to visit Ukraine where his mother had spent three years in her youth, employed as a tutor in the 1890s.

To return to Walter Duranty, *The New York Times* published Gareth Jones' letter of reply on May 13<sup>th</sup> 1933, in which he stood by his original statement:

"Everywhere I went in the Russian villages I heard the cry; "There is no bread, we are dying," and that there was famine in the Soviet Union, menacing the lives of millions of people.

...My evidence was based on conversations with peasants who had migrated into the towns from various parts of Russia. Peasants from the richest [most fertile] parts of Russia were coming into the towns for bread. Their story of the deaths in their villages from starvation, of the death of

the greater part of their cattle and horses and each conversation corroborated the previous one...I talked with hundreds of peasants who were not the “kulaks” - those mythical scapegoats for the hunger in Russia - but ordinary peasants. I talked with them alone in Russian and jotted down their conversations, which were an unanswerable indictment of Soviet agricultural policy. The peasants said emphatically that the famine was worse than in 1921 and that fellow-villagers were dying.”

He ended his letter stingingly: “May I in conclusion congratulate the Soviet Foreign Office on its skill in concealing the true situation in the U.S.S.R.? Moscow is not Russia, and the sight of well-fed people there tends to hide the real Russia.”

Meanwhile, in another letter, to the Editor of the Soviet-sympathetic *Manchester Guardian*, which was published on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 1933, he stated:

“I hope that fellow-Liberals who boil at any injustices in Germany or Italy or Poland will just express one word of sympathy with the millions of peasants who are the victims of persecution and famine in the Soviet Union.”

Gareth Jones truthful and independent reporting of the Soviet Union covered the last three years of Stalin’s Five-Year Plan. He knew the Soviet Union well, and had first visited the country in 1930. He wrote his first three articles in the *London Times* in October 1930, entitled the *Two Russias*, and in April 1931, wrote five more articles for *The Western Mail* (Cardiff) describing the predicament of the Soviet peasants. He visited the Soviet Union again in 1931 with Jack Heinz II, who wrote an anonymous book based on Gareth Jones’ diaries entitled *Experiences in Russia – 1931: A Diary* which describes in detail the suffering of the Soviet peasants in Russia and Ukraine. Gareth Jones later wrote a second series of articles in the *London Times* in October 1931, recalling his particular impressions of the terrible treatment of the kulaks. Further articles in anticipation of massive starvation during the coming winter were printed in *The Western Mail* (Cardiff) in October 1932 entitled “*Will There be Soup?*” Today, the fact that Jones was writing about the Soviet Union during these years has almost been completely forgotten.

Despite his treatment by the pro-Soviet propagandists the courageous Gareth Jones never wavered from his quest to expose the horrendous truth of the famine, despite the onslaught of his antagonists. From Berlin in late March 1933, he wrote a personal letter to his former employer, David Lloyd George stating: “The situation is so grave, so much worse than in 1921 that I am amazed at your admiration for Stalin.”

Gareth Jones’ honest reporting on the Soviet Union probably had a direct bearing on his tragic death two years later. In the spring of 1935, having interviewed eminent Japanese politicians and generals, who were influencing world events in the Far East, Gareth Jones went ‘In Search of News’<sup>1</sup> in the northern reaches of China with the express ambition of ‘seeing what the Japanese were up to’ in their newly colonised province of Manchukuo. Sadly, he never reached his ultimate destination, as he was captured by bandits, held for a ransom of 100,000 Mexican dollars, and then murdered after 16 days in captivity. These bandits had been controlled and coerced by the Japanese military, which was holding their families to ransom.

The Japanese were well aware that Gareth Jones would return to the Occident and expose to the world their ambitions of territorial expansion throughout the Far East in the same fearless manner as he previously uncovered the Soviet famine in 1933.

Due to his untimely death Gareth Jones appears to have been forgotten by so many today, except in Ukraine, where he is called the ‘Unsung Hero’.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the Pulitzer Prize should be revoked from Walter Duranty, not just for his falsification of Stalin’s ruthless execution of the Five-Year Plan of Collectivisation, but also for his complete disregard for journalistic integrity. Through abusing his position of authority as *The New York Times*’ reporter in the Soviet Union, he villainously and publicly denigrated the truthful articles of my uncle, and ashamedly did so, whilst being fully aware of the on-going famine.

Indeed, if you were seeking a means of restoring the international prestige of the Pulitzer Prize, then you ought to consider bestowing the award posthumously to Gareth Jones for his valiant and truthful international exposure of the Soviet genocide-famine of 1933, and in doing so help commemorate all the defenceless victims of Stalin’s inhumanity.

Yours faithfully,

**Dr. Margaret Siriol Colley (niece).**  
**Nigel Linsan Colley (great nephew).**

-----  
To discover the truthful reporting at the time of the First Five-Year Plan, many of Gareth Jones’ newspaper articles can be read on his commemorative website at: [www.colley.co.uk/garethjones/](http://www.colley.co.uk/garethjones/)

A detailed account surrounding his murder may be read the book written by his niece Dr. Margaret Siriol Colley entitled *Gareth Jones: A Manchukuo Incident*.

---

<sup>i</sup> *In Search of News*. 1936. A commemorative compendium of Gareth Jones’ articles republished by *The Western Mail*, Cardiff, with proceeds still being awarded annually through a travelling scholarship by The University of Wales.