

James Mace Memorial Panel.

I am honoured to have been invited by Prof. Federigo Argentieri to speak on the James Mace Memorial Panel about my uncle, Gareth Jones' three visits to Ukraine in 1930, 1931 and 1933 where he was witness to the devastating famine resulting in the death of 5 to 10 million persons the brought about by Stalin's ruthless determination to carry out his Five-Year Plan of industrialisation and collectivisation. The number who died of starvation will never be known.

More Than Grain of Truth

Gareth Richard Vaughan Jones

1905- 1935

By

Margaret Siriol Colley

I am delighted to make my pilgrimage to Donetsk, to the city founded in 1868/9 by John Hughes (1815-1889) a fellow countryman from Wales. It is one that I have wanted to make for many years.

Gareth's mother and my grandmother, Annie Gwen Jones spent three happy and memorable years in Hughesovka with the family of Arthur Hughes, teaching his daughters, the grandchildren of John Hughes. Her reminiscences were to instil in Gareth a desire to return to the town of his mother's youthful experiences and she has left her descendants the legacy of her memories.

Gareth's Early Career

1922-1923, 1925-1926. University of Wales, Aberystwyth College.
Gareth received First Class honours in French

1923-1925. Université de Strasbourg.
Diplome Superior des Études Française

1926-1929. Trinity College, Cambridge University.
First Class honours in French, German and Russian which he spoke fluently.

1930-1931. Foreign Affairs Adviser to David Lloyd George. Former Prime Minister of Great Britain in World War One.

Gareth was fortunate have been appointed in 1930 to the staff of The Right Hon. David Lloyd George, former British Prime Minister in World War One as the world was in the throes of economic depression and it was difficult at that time to find employment.. In the summer of 1930 whilst in the employ of Lloyd George, Gareth was able to make his first visit and his pilgrimage to Ukraine.

En route to Hughesovka, Gareth sent a postcard of Joseph Stalin to his mother. While in the country, his letters to his family were guarded in their details of his exploits, merely describing how well received he had been by the Communists.

But on reaching Germany the tone of Gareth's letter home was quite different:

Near the Station for Saxony,
12.30 p.m. Wednesday,
August. 26 , 1930.

Hurray! It is wonderful to be in Germany again, absolutely wonderful. Russia is in a very bad state; rotten, no food, only bread; oppression, injustice, misery among the workers and 90% discontented. I saw some very bad things, which made me mad to think that people like XXX [deleted¹] go there and come back, after having been led round by the nose and had enough to eat, and say that Russia is a paradise. In the South there is talk of a new revolution, but it will never come off, because the Army and the O.G.P.U. (Soviet Police) are too strong. The winter is going to be one of great suffering there and there is starvation. The government is the most brutal in the world. The peasants hate the Communists. This year thousands and thousands of the best men in Russia have been sent to Siberia and the prison island of Solovki. People are now speaking openly against the Government. In the Donetz Basin conditions are unbearable. Thousands are leaving. I shall never forget the night I spent in a railway station on the way to Hughesovka. One reason why I left Hughesovka so quickly was that all I could get to eat was a roll of bread - and that is all I had up to seven o'clock. Many Russians are too weak to work. I am terribly sorry for them. They cannot strike or they are shot or sent to Siberia. There are heaps of enemies of the Communist within the country.

Never-the-less great strides have been made in many industries and there is a good chance that when the Five-Years Plan is over Russia may become prosperous. But before that there will be great suffering, many riots and many deaths.

The Communists are doing excellent work in education, hygiene and against alcohol. Butter is 16/- a pound in Moscow; prices are terrific, boots etc. cannot be had. There is nothing in the shops. The Communists were remarkably kind to me and gave me an excellent time.

Last Sunday I flew from Rostov to Moscow as their guest. You will get this letter probably before my Sunday letter. Germany is a fine place. I am

looking forward so much to seeing the Haferkorns and getting your letters there, because I have had very little news. Thank goodness I am not a Consul in Russia - not even in Taganrog!ⁱⁱ

Just had a fine lunch. When I come back I shall appreciate Auntie Winnie's dinner more than ever.ⁱⁱⁱ

Following this letter Gareth wrote three articles entitled *The Two Russia*, published in the *London Times* and a further 5 articles later in the *Cardiff Western Mail*.^{iv} *The Times* articles were illustrated and the caption on one was "We cannot get enough food and many are too weak to work."

On his return from the Soviet Union Gareth was introduced to Ivy Lee, Publicity Adviser to the Rockefellers, Chryslers and other organisations, who appointed him to the firm, Ivy Lee and Associates based in Wall Street, New York. Gareth joined the company in April, 1931. In May, a month after his arrival in America he was invited to accompany Jack Heinz II, to the Soviet Union for a six weeks' visit. Heinz II was the grandson of the elder Jack Heinz, famous for his logo '57 varieties' which included such products as baked beans and tomato ketchup. .

The two young men travelled the length and breadth of the Soviet Union and spent the last part of their visit in Ukraine. On his return home Jack Heinz published anonymously, a small book taken from Gareth's diaries entitled, *Experiences in Russia-1931. A Diary*.

Gareth wrote the foreword to this book:

With a knowledge of Russia and the Russian language, it was possible to get off the beaten path, to talk with grimy workers and rough peasants, as well as such leaders as Lenin's widow and Karl Radek. We visited vast engineering projects and factories, slept on the bug-infested floors of peasants' huts, shared black bread and cabbage soup with the villagers - in short, got into direct touch with the Russian people in their struggle for existence and were thus able to test their reactions to the Soviet Government's dramatic moves.

It was an experience of tremendous interest and value as a study of a land in the grip of a proletarian revolution.

Following their visit to the Dnieperstroy Dam Gareth visited a German Kolkhoz, where one of the men, a Mennonite, told him:

They sent the kulaks away from here and it was terrible. We heard in a letter that ninety children died on the way - ninety children from this district. We are all afraid of being sent away as kulaks for political reasons. We had a letter from one, saying they were cutting wood in Siberia. Life was hard and there was not enough to eat. It was forced labour! They sent all the grain away from our village and left only 1,000 pounds. I heard that in a village thirty versts away they came to seize the grain, and the peasants killed three militiamen. They

wanted to have enough grain for themselves instead of starving. The Communists then shot sixteen peasants.

Gareth spoke in Russian to a doctor's wife:

The peasants have been sent away in thousands to starve. Being exiled just because they worked hard throughout their lives. Its terrible how they have treated them; they have not given them anything; no bread cards even. They sent a lot to Tashkent, where I was, and just left them on the square. The exiles did not know what to do. Very many starved to death.^v

Gareth wrote a further three articles which were published in the *London Times* entitled the 'Real Russia.' Gareth bought a number of Soviet propaganda posters one which he gave to David Lloyd George. These we are still fortunate to possess.

Gareth remained until the spring of 1932 with Ivy Lee, but the economic situation, the Depression in the USA, was so desperate that he returned to the employ of David Lloyd George where unbeknown to many he assisted him in writing his War Memoirs.

By the autumn 1932, academics and journalists who had been visitors to the Soviet Union during the summer were returning to Britain with news of the famine in Ukraine.

On September 13, 1932 he conveyed the news to Ivy Lee who was sympathetic to the Communist cause.

I had a long talk with Bruce Hopper [an American expert on the Soviet Union] The Soviet Government is facing the worst crisis since 1921. There will be millions facing starvation this winter. There is at the present moment a famine in the Ukraine. Collective farms have been a complete failure, and there is now a migration from the farms.

October 5th Gareth discussed the situation with Prof. Jules Menken (London School of Economics), a well known economist.

He [Menken] was appalled with the prospects: what he had seen was the complete failure of Marxism. He dreaded this winter, when he thought millions would die of hunger. What struck him was the unfairness and the inequality. He had seen hungry people one moment, and the next moment he had lunched with Soviet Commissars in the Kremlin with the best caviar, fish, game, and the most luxurious wines. The harvest is a failure; there is shelter lacking for 1,000,000 head of cattle; potato plans have broken down; in July only 40% of the grain-collecting plan was carried out. The peasants are refusing to give up the grain. Menken says there is already famine in the Ukraine.

In November Gareth lunched with one of the summer visitors to the Soviet Union, Kingsley Martin, the editor of the left wing journal, *New Statesman*, with Dr Thomas Jones, a confidant and secretary of four prime ministers and with the Minister of Agriculture, Walter Eliot. The British government were well aware of the famine and curious to have more information.

In January 1933, Gareth left the employ of David Lloyd George, but before he joined the staff of the *Western Mail* he visited Germany and the Soviet Union. On January 30, 1933 he was present in Germany, the day Adolf Hitler was made Chancellor of Germany by President Hindenburg. On February 23, 1933 Gareth was one of first of two foreign journalists to be privileged to fly with the Fuehrer. On 28th of February Gareth made his classic statement in the *Western Mail*: 'If this aeroplane should crash the whole history of Europe would be changed. For a few feet away sits Adolf Hitler, Chancellor of Germany and leader of the most volcanic nationalist awakening which the world has seen.'

By March 5, 1933 Gareth was in Moscow preparing for his journey to Ukraine. A ban had been implemented on February 23rd denying journalists permission to travel to Ukraine. Despite this Gareth made plans to visit the country. During his time in the USSR his letters home were non-committal in order avoid the censor. On March 26, 1933 he was in the home of a friend in Danzig from where he conveyed in a letter to his parent, the shocking news:

The Russian situation is absolutely terrible, famine almost everywhere, and millions are dying of starvation. I tramped for several days through villages in the [sic] Ukraine, and there was no bread, many children had swollen stomachs, nearly all the horses and cows had died and the people themselves were dying. The terror has increased tremendously and the G.P.U. has almost full control. It was a disgrace to arrest the six engineers, two of whom I know.

Before his foray into the Soviet countryside, Gareth had been warned by William Strang,^{vi} the First Secretary at the Moscow Embassy, against making an investigative visit into the villages of Ukraine and the embassy staff told him, "The peasants are starving, and will steal anything they can get hold of".^{vii} Disregarding this warning he piled his rucksack with many loaves of white bread, with butter, cheese, meat and chocolate and boarded a train from the outskirts of Moscow. Gareth alighted from the train near the border with Ukraine and he wrote in newspaper article:

I get out of the train, which rattles on to Kharkov, leaving me alone in the snow.^{viii}

My tramp through the villages was about to begin. My feet crunched through the snow as I made my way to a group of huts. A white expanse stretched for many miles. My first encounter was ominous, for the words I heard in the countryside were the same as those I had heard from peasant-beggars. A woman with bowed head walking along the railway track turned me, and said:

‘There is no bread. We have not had bread for over two months, and many are dying here.’

I was to hear these same words in the same tone from hundreds peasants in that region, the Central Black Earth district, which was once one of the most fertile of all Russia. There was another sentence which was repeated to me time and time again: ‘Vse pukhli.’ ‘All are swollen.’

One old peasant stopped me and pointed sadly to the fields. ‘In the old times’, he bewailed, ‘that was one pure mass of gold. Now it is all weeds. The old Ukrainian [repeating the diary entry] went on moaning, ‘In the old times we had horses and cows and pigs and chickens. Now we are dying of hunger. In the old days we fed the world. Now they have taken all we had away from us and we have nothing. In the old days I should have bade you welcome, and given you as my guest chickens and eggs and milk and fine, white bread. Now we have no bread in the house. They are killing us.’

In one of the peasant’s cottages in which I stayed we slept nine in the room. It was pitiful to see that two out of the three children had swollen stomachs. All there was to eat in the hut was a very dirty watery soup, with a slice or two of potato, which all the family and in the family I included myself ate from a common bowl with wooden spoons.

Fear of death loomed over the cottage, for they had not enough potatoes to last until the next crop. When I shared my white bread and butter and cheese one of the peasant women said, ‘Now I have eaten such wonderful things I can die happy.’ I set forth again further towards the south, and heard the villagers say, ‘We are waiting for death.’

Many also said, ‘It is terrible here and many are dying, but further south it is much worse. Go down to the Poltava region, and you will see hundreds of empty cottages. In a village of three hundred huts, only about a hundred will have people living, in them, for the others will have died or have fled, but mainly died.’ Before long I set foot in the city of Kharkov, the capital of the Ukraine.

Gareth returned to Germany intent on revealing to the world the news of the devastating famine brought upon by Stalin’s ruthless determination to carry out his Five-Year Plan. He must have appreciated that he would be criticised for his shocking, but truthful articles, but it would appear that he did not realise that he would be humiliated and damned by journalist colleagues.

In Berlin Gareth gave a press release which was published by H.R.Knickerbocker on March 29,1933 in the *New York Evening Post*:

“Everywhere was the cry, “There is no bread; we are dying.” This cry came to me from every part of Russia. In a train a Communist denied to me that there was a famine. I flung into the spittoon a crust of bread I had been eating from my own supply. The peasant, my fellow-passenger, fished it out and

ravenously ate it. I threw orange peel into the spittoon. The peasant again grabbed and devoured it. The Communist subsided.”

Two days later Walter Duranty on March 31, 1933 replied in *New York Times* though he had not seen the article itself:

Since I talked with Mr. Jones I have made exhaustive inquiries about this alleged famine situation. . . . There is serious food shortage throughout the country with occasional cases of well-managed state or collective farms. The big cities and the army are adequately supplied with food. There is no actual starvation or death from starvation, but there is widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition. . . .

But - to put it brutally - you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs,”

Gareth responded to Walter Duranty and a reply from ‘Mr. Jones’ to Walter Duranty’s article of March 31st was published in the *New York Times* on May 13, 1933 in which Gareth, in a letter to the newspaper said he stood by his statement that the Soviet Union was suffering from a severe famine. The censors had turned the journalists into masters of euphemism and understatement and hence they gave “famine” the polite name of “food shortage” and “starving to death” was softened to read as “widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition”.

Countering Walter Duranty’s rebuttal in the *New York Times*, Gareth congratulated the Soviet Foreign Office on its skill in concealing the truth in the USSR.

While in Moscow Gareth had interviewed Maxim Litvinov, the Foreign Affairs Commissar and details of the interview were sent to David Lloyd George.^{ix} In a communication to the former Prime Minister from Litvinov, Gareth was accused of espionage. He was also banned from re-entering Russia, and was a marked man in the black files of the O.G.P.U.

In 1934, Malcolm Muggeridge published his book, *Winter In Moscow*. In the chapter ‘‘Ash blond Incorruptible’, Gareth is characterised by Muggeridge as Mr. Wilfred Pye. He repeated the passage from Gareth’s press release about the peasant in the train diving for orange peel in the spittoon.

In 1937 Eugene Lyons published his book, *Assignment in Utopia*, and according to Lyons the coterie of Foreign Correspondents in Moscow were ordered, in so many words, by the Soviet Foreign press officer, Umansky to call Gareth a liar. Had they not complied, these journalists would have been prevented from reporting the Moscow Show trial in April 1933 of the British engineers, known as the Metrovik Affair.

A further humiliation was the fact that Gareth was ostracised by his influential and so-called friends in London and he appears to have little contact again with David Lloyd George. Gareth had written to Lloyd George from Berlin, on March 27, 1933: "The situation [in the Soviet Union] is so much worse than in 1921 that I am amazed at your admiration for Stalin."^x

On his return to Britain Gareth wrote over 20 articles published in *The Western Mail*, the *Daily Express* and the *Financial News*, but none were published about the famine in the *London Times*, despite the paper devoted many columns to the trial of the British engineers accused of espionage in Moscow. After April 20th no articles were published by Gareth about the Soviet Union in Britain, his last being in *The Western Mail*^{xi}. Nor for a further year, did he write any on Germany apart for one when Germany left the League of Nations. Gareth was a loose cannon and likely to be an embarrassment to the British Government. Instead his so-called friends were queuing up to meet Hitler.

At the end of March 1933 the British Ambassador Ovey was withdrawn from his position in Moscow, an antagonist to the Soviet Regime. The British Government was clearly aware of the famine in the U.S.S.R. William Strang, the First Secretary at the British Embassy continued to enlighten the British Foreign Office about the agricultural crisis in the dispatches sent in the diplomatic bag and in telegrams. These were to fall on deaf ears in London and the British Government choose to keep silent about the tragic situation. Sir Robert Vansittart, permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and Sir Laurence Collier, Head of the Foreign Office, Northern Department advocated better relations with the Soviets^{xii} to counteract the fear of the rise of militarism in Nazi Germany. It must also be remembered that on March 27, 1933 Japan left the League of Nations a further area of concern.

During the thirties there was a powerful and influential social group with the coined name of the Cliveden set. They met for weekend visits at the home of the hostess, Lady Astor at Cliveden. Her husband was Waldorf Astor who owned the *Observer* newspaper. His brother, John Astor owned the *Times*. Its editor was Geoffrey Dawson, renowned as an appeaser in the period of the Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's Government. Bernard Shaw, with whom Lady Astor had been with to the Soviet Union in 1931, was an inner member of the circle as were other well-known appeasers of the decade. The wealthy Press Barons colluded with the government.

George Orwell wrote in his appendix, 'The Freedom of the Press' in *Animal Farm*.^{xiii}

The sinister fact about literary censorship in England is that it is largely voluntary. The British press is extremely centralised, and wealthy men, who have every motive to be dishonest on certain important topics, own most of it.

Though many of those, who knew Gareth, decried his exposure of the famine, he felt vindicated following a visit to his friends, the Haferkorns, in Danzig. There, he

met a diplomat who privately corroborated Gareth's Soviet observations and he informed his parents on Sunday May 28, 1933: ^{xiv}

... The German Consul in Kharkoff and his wife thought that my Russian articles gave a wonderful picture, but that it was really much worse than I described it. Since March it has got so much worse that it is horrible to be in Kharkoff. So many die, ill and beggars. They are dying off in the villages, he said, and the spring sowing campaign is catastrophic. The peasants have been eating the seed. To talk of a bumper crop, as Molotoff did, was a tragic farce, and he only said that to keep their spirits up, but nobody believed Molotoff. Many villages are empty. The fate of the German colonists is terrible, in some villages 25% have died off and there will be more dying off until August. In August, he said there would be an epidemic of deaths because hungry peasants would suddenly eat so much as to kill themselves.

In 1935 Gareth unable to return to the Soviet Union wished to investigate the situation in the Far East and to explore the intentions of the Japanese in their desire to expand territorially in Inner Mongolia and Manchukuo. He was captured by bandits, held for ransom for £8,000 and after 16 days in captivity killed by them. It was undoubtedly a politically motivated murder.

His friend, Paul Scheffer Editor-in-Chief, Berliner Tageblatt in a Front Page Editorial on 16th August 1935 wrote his obituary with an indirect reference to the *New York Times* and to Walter Duranty who was an amputee:

The number of journalists with his {Gareth Jones} initiative and style is nowadays, throughout the world, quickly falling, and for this reason the tragic death of this splendid man is a particularly big loss. The **International Press** is abandoning its **colours** - in some countries more quickly than in others - but it is a fact. Instead of independent minds inspired by genuine feeling, there appear more and more men of routine, **crippled journalists** of widely **different stamp** who **shoot from behind safe cover**, and thereby sacrifice their consciences.

His ashes were brought back from China and buried in his beloved Wales. The headstone was that of a Celtic cross with the inscription:

YMA
Y GORWEDD LLWCH
GARETH JONES
MAB ANNWYL EDGAR A GWEN JONES
IEITHYDD TEITHIWR CARWR HEDDWCH
A LALLWYDD YM MONGOLIA AWST 12 1935
YN 30 MLWYDD OED
HE SOUGHT PEACE AND PURSUED IT.

Here lie the ashes of Gareth Jones, the dear son of Edgar and Gwen Jones,

linguist, traveller, lover of peace, killed in Mongolia August 12 1935, aged 30
years.

He sought peace and pursued it.

ⁱ The deleted name is unknown.

ⁱⁱ This is a reference to a family joke when as a small child Gareth with top hat and walking stick and called himself the Governor of Tegenrog.

ⁱⁱⁱ Private Letter from Gareth. Archives of the National Library of Wales.

^{iv} From a Correspondent, (Gareth Jones), *The London Times Leader*, The Two Russias, no. 1, Rulers and Ruled, October 13, 1930, p. 13.

Ibid., No 2. Fanaticism & Disillusion, October 14, 1930, p.15.

Ibid., no. 3, Strength of the Communists, October 16, 1930, p.15.

Gareth Jones, 'Russia's Future: Stupendous Plan of Communist's', *The Cardiff Western Mail*, April 8, 1931, p.5.

Ibid., 'Force's Behind Stalin's Dictatorship' April 9, 1931., p.14.

Ibid., 'Russian Workers Disillusioned', April 10, 1931, p.5.

^{iv} Ibid., 'Mixture of Successes and Failures', April 11, 1931, p.12.

^v Gareth's diary , Private collection.

^{vi} *Foreign Office and the Famine*, p.215 and Gareth's diary when he had an appointment to see Strang on March 6, 1933

^{vii} 'Soviet Confiscate Part of Workers Wages', *Daily Express*, April 5, 1933, p 8.

^{viii} 'Soviet Confiscate Part of Workers Wages', *Daily Express*, April 5, 1933, p 8.

^{ix} House of Lords Archives.

^x Ibid.

^{xi} Ibid., Ibid., 'O.G.P.U.'s Blow to Soviet Union' . P.12.

^{xii} *The Foreign Office and the Famine* .p. xiv.

^{xiii} George Orwell, *Animal Farm*, Penguin Books, 1951, p.99.

^{xiv} Private Letter from Gareth. Archives of the National Library of Wales.