

OBITUARY: Margaret Siriol Colley, truth-seeker, defender of Gareth Jones's legacy

PARSIPPANY, N.J. - Dr. Margaret Siriol Colley, a niece of the Welsh journalist Gareth Jones who fearlessly reported on the Ukrainian Famine of 1932-1933, died in England on November 20, after a three-year battle with cancer. She was 86.

Dr. Colley was a staunch defender of the legacy of her uncle, whose reports about the genocidal famine were ridiculed by the likes of Walter Duranty, The New York Times correspondent in Moscow who denied the Holodomor and famously reported: "There is no actual starvation or death from starvation, but there is widespread mortality from disease due to malnutrition."

Duranty accused the young Jones - who succeeded in traveling through the Ukrainian countryside unbeknownst to Soviet authorities - of falsifying the news from Ukraine. Jones's diaries from that trip reveal the true situation in Ukraine. One notation reads: "Everywhere I went... I heard the cry, 'There is no bread, we are dying.'"

Seven decades later, in 2003, Dr. Colley and her son Nigel Lisan Colley wrote a letter to the Pulitzer Prize Committee seeking the revocation of Duranty's Pulitzer for reporting from Russia: "...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 Collectivization, 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 ongoing famine."

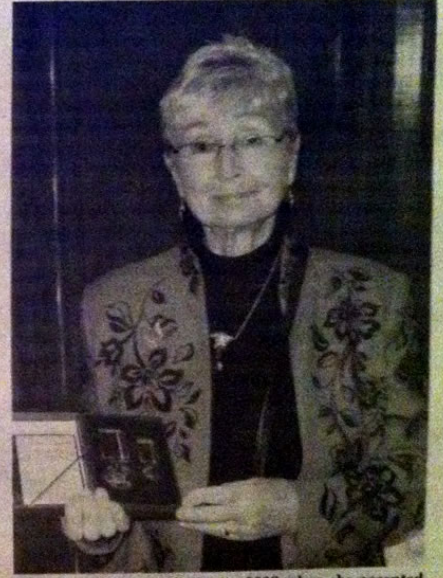
Jones was murdered in 1935 in Mongolia under mysterious circumstances, probably at the hands of Soviet agents. As Dr. Colley noted, "Gareth Jones's honest reporting on the Soviet Union probably had a direct bearing on his tragic death." He died on the eve of his 30th birthday.

Gareth Jones had been all but forgotten by the world, but in the early 1990s his niece, Dr. Colley, found an old leather suitcase containing his diaries, notebooks, letters and various papers. She worked for many years to share his story.

Writing in the National Review online, Andrew Stuttaford continues the narrative:

"What Siriol did in the years that followed her discovery of that suitcase was simply extraordinary. Aided by her no less indefatigable, no less tenacious son Nigel, and the tireless, selfless support of a Ukrainian American family (they had set up the meeting in that Hilton that day) too modest to be named, she worked relentlessly for the belated recognition of this brave, and extraordinarily prescient, journalist."

In 2006 a plaque honoring Jones was unveiled in the Old College at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, where he studied. Organized by the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Foundation, with the support of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Great Britain, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain, the Ukrainian American Civil Liberties Association, and other donors, the trilingual (Welsh, English, Ukrainian) bronze plaque is adorned with a bas



Dr. Margaret Siriol Colley in 2008 when she accepted Ukraine's Order of Merit on behalf of Gareth Jones (1905-1935).

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Margaret Colley...

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relief of Gareth Jones by Toronto sculptor Oleh Lesiuk.

After she retired from her general practice in medicine, Dr. Colley authored two books about Jones and his work. "A Manchukuo Incident" (2001), which relates the story of his politically motivated murder; and "More Than a Grain of Truth" (2005), a biography of Jones that highlights his many achievements during his short life, including his writings about the Famine-Genocide. She also lectured widely about Jones's pioneering journalistic work.

Dr. Colley was born on June 6, 1925, in London to a Welsh family. She lost her beloved Uncle Gareth when she was 10. During World War II she was evacuated to Canada, where she began her medical education at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. On her return she completed medical school at St. Andrew's University in Scotland, graduating in 1948. She practiced medicine for 45 years, nearly 35 of them as a general practitioner in Nottingham. Her husband, Dr. Nigel Colley, died in 1973, leaving her with four sons to bring up.

On the day of Dr. Margaret Colley's death, November 20, her son Nigel was in Washington, where he was to speak the next day at the National Press Club (see The Weekly, December 4). Mr. Colley noted that "this was to be the culmination of almost 15 years' incessant work to get belated and due recognition for her beloved uncle Gareth." Though invited to speak in Washington, Dr. Colley was unable, due to her ill health, to travel. Mr.

Colley kept his engagement and delivered his address, as his mother would have wanted.

He began his presentation with the words: "Today I would like to dedicate my presentation both to her life, lived full and with great integrity, and also to her diligence in bringing the story of Gareth Jones to the world, which many tried to suppress."

Condolences on Dr. Colley's passing came from around the globe, especially from Ukrainians who appreciated and supported her efforts to disseminate the truth about the death of her dear uncle and his remarkable journalistic oeuvre. She did much to raise public awareness of the Holodomor and its millions of victims, and she appeared at many Holodomor remembrance ceremonies in the United Kingdom and the United States.

Ihor Kharchenko, Ukraine's ambassador to the United Kingdom in 2002-2010, wrote: "Her book on the life and death of Gareth Jones, one of the first journalists to tell the truth about the Ukrainian tragedy of the Holodomor, is a proud personal belonging of mine received from her own hands. She will forever remain one of the devoted friends of the Ukrainian people, and I will forever cherish the knowledge of being a personal friend of this amazing personality."

Dr. Colley is survived by four sons, Graham, Richard, Nigel and Philip, as well as several grandchildren.

Funeral services were held on December 5 in Hastings, England. A memorial service is planned for early 2012 in Nottingham. Memorial donations may be made to the Gareth Jones Memorial Traveling Scholarship at the University of Wales.