

Grandnephew of Gareth Jones shares new findings about Holodomor

by Yaro Bihun

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WASHINGTON - He never lived to see his 30th birthday. That was the price Gareth Jones paid for his reporting about the Soviet Union in 1932-1933 which revealed to the world that millions of people were being starved to death in its breadbasket, Ukraine, as the result of Stalin's disastrous economic policies.

The young Welsh journalist, unlike his Western colleagues, would not bow to official censorship threats and keep silent about what he was witnessing - which was as we know it today, the Holodomor, or "murder by starvation," which took the lives of up to 10 million people. Indeed, he clandestinely pursued the story and paid the ultimate price.

Gareth Jones' story was presented here on November 21 at the National Press Club and the headquarters of the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation by his grandnephew Nigel Colley, who along with his mother, Margaret Siriol Colley, have been gathering and publishing additional substantiating evidence about those tragic events that Jones left behind in his letters and diaries they uncovered 20 years ago.

On a sad note, his presentation, titled "Gareth Jones: A Man Who Knew Too Much," was dedicated at the last minute to his mother's memory. She died on the previous day in Wales.

Using her uncle's diaries and letters, Dr. Siriol Colley, with her son's assistance, had published two books about Jones' Holodomor reporting and other fact-finding endeavors - "More Than a Grain of Truth: The Biography of Gareth Richard Vaughan Jones" and "Manchukuo Incident" - and were working on a third book. In addition, Colley said that the BBC was close to finishing a documentary about his work.

During his presentation at the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation, which was co-sponsored by the Ukrainian American Coordinating Council, Mr. Colley noted that not all of our free Western media, including some of its pillars, refuse to bow under pressure to curb their reporting. He cited the recent revelation that CNN bargained with Iraq's Saddam Hussein to suppress negative news about his regime. And he described in detail Jones' conflict with The New York Times' Moscow Pulitzer Prize-winning correspondent Walter Duranty over reporting about the Famine.

In between performing his duties as foreign affairs advisor to Britain's former Prime Minister David Lloyd George, Jones privately visited the Soviet Union three times between 1930 and 1933 and wrote newspaper articles for a number of newspapers, among them the Times of London, about the ever-worsening conditions resulting from Stalin's Five-Year Plan.

From his diary entries and letters (Mr. Colley noted that Jones would religiously



Writer Nigel Colley discusses the work of his great-uncle Gareth Jones, the Welsh journalist who exposed Stalin's Holodomor in Ukraine to the world, during a presentation November 21 at the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation in Washington.

write a letter home to his family every Sunday), we learn that he was convinced that there was a famine in Ukraine and that he had to see it first-hand and report on it, so that the Soviets couldn't continue to deny its existence.

When Jones arrived in Moscow on his last trip there in March of 1933 he started questioning Moscow-based diplomats and journalists about the real situation there. After five days, quietly and without official permission, he got on a train for Ukraine, "with a rucksack full of loaves of white bread, cheese, meat and chocolate which he bought in the foreign currency stores."

And, Colley said, to really learn what life was like for the ordinary Soviet citizen, he traveled third-class. And there, as Jones recorded in his diary, he witnessed starving people begging for food. Jones was fluent in English, French, German, Russian and Welsh.

Since journalists were officially forbidden to travel outside of the Moscow area, Mr. Colley said, Jones had to leave the train and sneak across the border into Ukraine on foot. Walking along the railroad line, he stopped at the villages along the way, met and spoke with the villagers, and slept with them in their dwellings.

And as he wrote in his diary: "Everyone I

talked to, happened to walk past, they all had the same story: There's no bread. We haven't had bread for two months. A lot are dying."

Jones learned that in the south 20 percent of the population had died of hunger and in some areas up to 50 percent. "They're murdering us," was what he heard. While in Kharkiv, he saw long bread lines. At one line, he recalled, an official shouted that there was no bread, and there would not be any that day. The people stayed in the line anyway.

Upon his return to Berlin, Gareth Jones felt compelled to reveal the tragedy he had witnessed and called a press conference there on March 29, 1933. Because of his relationship with Lloyd George, his allegations were given credence, and stories about the Famine appeared the following day in many newspapers, including The New York Evening Post.

Within 24 hours, however, Mr. Colley said, he was denigrated by Duranty in his New York Times report, which was headlined "Russians Hungry, But Not Starving." Duranty, a 1932 Pulitzer Prize winner, was a leading and highest paid Moscow correspondent, known as an expert on the

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Berlin, March 27, 1933.

Dear Mr. Lloyd George,

I have just arrived from Russia, where I found the situation disastrous. The five year plan has been a complete disaster in that it has destroyed the Russian peasantry and has brought famine to every part of the country. I stumped alone for several days through a part of the Ukraine, sleeping in peasants' huts. I spoke with a large number of workers, among whom unemployment is rapidly

The introductory part of Gareth Jones' March 27, 1933, letter to former British Prime Minister David Lloyd George after the journalist's last visit to the Soviet Union and his secret side trip to Ukraine describing the famine conditions there.

Grandnephew...

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Soviet Union. In his article Duranty denied that there was a famine or death from starvation in the Soviet Union. There was, as he put it, "widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition."

In response, Jones wrote a letter to The New York Times, restating his first-hand observations and rebuking Duranty and other Moscow-based foreign correspondents for bowing to Soviet censors and their threats. "Masters of euphemism" was how he characterized them.

As a result, Mr. Colley said, Jones was banned from reporting from the USSR, while Duranty received Soviet journalism's grand prize – an interview with Joseph Stalin.

Afterwards, in 1935, at the request of publisher William Randolph Hearst, Jones let the Hearst papers republish three of his earlier anti-Soviet articles. The consequence of that decision was fatal, Mr. Colley said. While traveling later that year to the Far East in a car provided gratis by a German company with NKVD connections, he was kidnapped by Chinese bandits in Inner Mongolia. A German journalist traveling with him – later identified as an associate of the Soviet secret police – was released unharmed after two days. Jones was murdered – shot three times – on August 12, 1935, one day before his 30th birthday.

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For more first-hand information about Gareth Jones, including the texts of his diaries and letters, go to www.garethjones.org.