



U.S. Committee for Ukrainian Holodomor-Genocide Awareness

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Walter Duranty and Ukraine's Holodomor

Historical Background

As early as 1928, Joseph Stalin established an economic five-year plan to turn the Soviet Union into an industrial powerhouse. He would turn his agricultural state into a controlled collectivized farm system. A prime target for collectivization would be Ukraine, the bread basket of Europe.

Ukrainian farmers resisted Stalin's new economic plan. To subjugate the farmers, Stalin implemented grain quotas that could not be met, and then punished them with starvation by confiscating all food from them and closing all borders. Ukrainians died from hunger at the rate of 28,000 per day during 1933. Stalin conveyed to Winston Churchill that perhaps as many as 10 million died in the Holodomor.

Walter Duranty

Walter Duranty, a British journalist, served as Moscow bureau chief for The New York Times during this time. At the emergence of Stalin's new five-year economic plan, he was granted an exclusive interview with Joseph Stalin. This greatly enhanced his reputation as a journalist. More interviews were to follow, and Duranty remained in Moscow for twelve years. He soon became the ears and foreign voice for Stalin. He started presenting Soviet propaganda as legitimate reporting. He repeatedly denied the mass starvation in his reports, although he confessed to William Strang, the British diplomat at the British Embassy in Moscow, that 10 million people may have died from the famine. His subservience to Stalin's regime brought him a nice apartment in Moscow with a servant and was the social center for foreigners visiting.

The Smoking Gun

In June of 1931, while travelling on vacation, Walter Duranty stopped at the U.S. Embassy in Berlin. He met with A.W. Kliefoth, an American consular official, who asked him about the conditions in Soviet Russia. Mr. Kliefoth recorded his conversation in a memorandum sent to the US State Department. Duranty stated that, "in agreement with The New York Times and the Soviet authorities, his official dispatches always reflect the official opinion of the Soviet regime and not his own." The conversation was recorded. It is currently referred to as the "Kliefoth

Memorandum.” With his statement, Duranty clearly admitted that he was an instrument of Stalin.

As Famine Rages, Walter Duranty Continues with False Reporting.

In Ukraine, as the Holodomor, raged on, Duranty continued to feed Stalin’s propaganda machine by suppressing the truth about the famine with multiple articles to The New York Times. On March 31, 1933 he wrote, “there is no actual starvation or deaths from starvation but there is widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition.” On August 24, 1933, Duranty wrote another article where he stated that “any report of a famine in Russia today is an exaggeration or malignant propaganda, since the projected harvest was even better than the previous year”.

World Affairs and Attitudes Towards the Holodomor

Although most western governments knew of the famine, they did not want to believe it, nor spread such devastating news, since their political leanings were toward a positive vision of Communism. The soon to be President Franklin D. Roosevelt accepted the distorted truth, as well, since he was concerned about the depression in the US. By buying grain from Russia and selling Stalin machinery, they both had something to gain. The truth at that time was something few wanted to hear. With war looming, the West, including the United States, was lusting for potential allies. Duranty’s information proved useful in establishing relations between the US and the U.S.S.R. and was a key factor in Roosevelt’s 1933 decision to grant official recognition to the Soviet Union. On September 15, 1934, the Soviet Union was invited to join the League of Nations.

News of the Famine Reaches Foreign Journalists

Malcolm Muggeridge, a British journalist from the Manchester Guardian, reported on Ukraine’s famine as “one of the most monstrous crimes in history.” Walter Duranty dismissed Muggeridge’s report as untrue, to which Muggeridge replied that Duranty was the biggest liar of any journalist he had ever met. Gareth Jones, a Welsh journalist after reading of rumors of a famine decided to find out for himself. He spent three weeks in early March of 1933 walking through Ukrainian villages, seeing horrific conditions, witnessing starving people. On his return to Berlin later in March of 1933 Jones wrote about what he saw and dispatched it to multiple newspapers, including the Manchester Guardian and the New York Evening Post. Walter Duranty responded with an article in The New York Times’s denigrating the truth that Jones wrote with his piece titled “Russians Hungry but Not Starving,” supporting again the Kremlin’s denial of the existence of a famine.

In April of 1933 Gareth Jones published a detailed appraisal of Stalin’s 5 year plan in the Financial Times, linking the famine as being a result of the forced collectivization of private farms. The New York Times, again published a strong rebuttal to Duranty’s position. Jones noted that Duranty relied heavily on the input of Russian representatives, and argued that they

should not be trusted or quoted. It was not long after, that Gareth Jones was permanently banned from the Soviet Union.

A Tragic Legacy of Truth

In August of 1935, Jones travelled to Inner Mongolia. While there, he was kidnapped. On August 17th, The New York Times reported that the Chinese authorities had found Gareth Jones' body. Most likely he was murdered by the Soviet NKVD. He was one day shy of his 30th birthday at the time of his death. He left behind his diaries recording the genocide-famine in Ukraine that went on display for the first time in November 2009 at the Wren Library of Trinity College in Cambridge, UK. Today, his journals have now been digitized for posterity by the Welsh Academic Press and are available for viewing and research.

Undeserved Pulitzer Prize and Revocation Effort

In May of 1932 Walter Duranty received a Pulitzer Prize for a series of reports about the Soviet Union, thirteen of which were published in June 1931.

In 1986, the renowned historian, Robert Conquest, published the first book about the Ukrainian-Genocide Famine, the Holodomor, **Harvest of Despair**. His reviewer, The New York Times editor and foreign correspondent to Moscow from 1977 to 1980, Craig R. Whitney, wrote that Duranty had "denied the existence of the famine until it was almost over, despite much evidence to the contrary that was published in his own paper at that time." Conquest regarded Duranty's Pulitzer Prize as undeserved.

In 1991 when Ukraine became independent from the Soviet Union and access to new Soviet archives became available, the truth and more details about the famine were revealed. Concern over Duranty's reporting on the famine in Soviet Ukraine led to a movement to strip him of the Pulitzer posthumously and symbolically. That same year, author, Sally J. Taylor wrote a new biography on Duranty called, **Stalin's Apologist**. In response to her biography, The New York Times, assigned Karl Meyer to write a piece about Duranty's work. He stated that it was, "some of the worst reporting to appear in this newspaper." He said that Walter Duranty bet his career on Stalin's rise and ignored his crimes. Although the paper's reputation was at stake, the Pulitzer Board decided to preserve the award.

In 2003 the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America began a new campaign for revocation. The New York Times, hired the late Professor Mark von Hagen, an expert in early-20th century Russian history at Columbia University to review Duranty's work. He found the work to be unbalanced and often giving voice to Stalinist propaganda. He was appalled that The New York Times had a reporter who parroted Stalinist justifications for what was going on during the Holodomor and stated, "For the sake of The New York Times, they should take away the prize." The New York Times publisher, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr. stated that Duranty's work, "should have been recognized for what it was by his editors and by his Pulitzer judges seven decades ago." Bill Keller, the executive editor was quoted as saying that Duranty's work was "pretty dreadful....it was a parroting of propaganda." He said that the paper had no objection if the Pulitzer Prize Board

wanted to revoke the award and that they related their position to the Pulitzer committee, however, they could not unilaterally revoke it.

The New York Times had on numerous occasions agreed that “the 1932 Pulitzer was not deserved”, as quoted in the Washington Post on October 23, 2003. However, on November 21, 2003, the Pulitzer Prize Board decided that they would not revoke Duranty’s award since “there was no clear and convincing evidence of deliberate deception.” They further quoted that “a Pulitzer Prize for reporting is awarded not for the author’s body of work or for the author’s character, but for the specific pieces entered in the competition”, therefore they focused on the 13 articles he had written in 1931. On that basis, they should have revoked the prize, the pieces were very badly written as critics pointed out.

In 2013 Ray Gamache, a former Professor of Journalism at King’s College in Wilkes-Barre, PA, published the first academic study of Gareth Jones, **Gareth Jones, Eyewitness to the Holodomor**, where Jones as an eyewitness reveals the horror of the Holodomor.

In 2017 Pulitzer Prize winning author Anne Applebaum published her book on the Holodomor, **The Red Famine**.

In November of 2018 another attempt by the U.S. Committee for Ukrainian Holodomor-Genocide Awareness to revoke the Pulitzer from Walter Duranty was with a letter signed by 36 distinguished Ukrainian-American spiritual, political and academic world leaders. It was sent to Dana Canedy, the Pulitzer Prize Board Administrator, requesting a meeting with her to discuss the revocation. After repeated telephone calls to Ms. Canedy, her assistant responded that their prior ruling of 2003 stands and no revocation would be forthcoming.

In July of 2020 Samuel Goldwyn Mayer released for world distribution the film “Mr. Jones,” a story of Gareth Jones and his search for the truth about Ukraine’s Famine. The film was directed by Agnieszka Holland, an Oscar winning Polish director, after being convinced by the film’s screenwriter, Andrea Chalupa that this story had to be told. “Mr. Jones” was chosen by The New York Times as its Critic’s Pick. Since the film’s release an outpouring of journalist reviews came out. They were not only laudatory of the film’s quality, but also full of outrage at the concealment of this tragedy for so many years. Many journalists concerned with truth in journalism found this film riveting As the National Review’s Kyle Smith so eloquently put it, “Duranty was the granddaddy of fake news”.

In September of 2020, a letter was sent to The New York Times, executive editor, Mr. Dean Baquet from the ***U.S. Committee for Ukrainian Holodomor-Genocide Awareness***, requesting a meeting. To date, a reply has not been received.

Currently, the ***U.S. Committee for Ukrainian Holodomor-Genocide Awareness*** has once again launched its campaign to rescind the Walter Duranty Pulitzer Prize. In response to the strong outcry of journalists to the film, “Mr. Jones,” the committee is vying for their support, as well as, targeting schools of journalism to use the Duranty story as part of their curriculum in their ethics classes.

The revocation effort of Walter Duranty's Pulitzer Prize will never cease. The indifference to the loss of human life and at such magnitude can never be ignored. In contrast and in the spirit of truth, Gareth Jones took the risk. He found the truth and wrote the truth. For exposing it, he risked his life. If anyone, Gareth Jones deserves the Pulitzer Prize for upholding the highest standard of truth in journalism.