

Gareth Jones: Reviled and Forgotten

*How different interests shaped the perception of the Ukrainian
Famine of 1932-1933 in the West*

MA Thesis in History: Political Culture and National Identities

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Introduction

On Thursday 10 March 1933, a young Welsh journalist named Gareth Jones disappeared from a night train in Soviet Ukraine. The train, which had left from Moscow the previous day, was bound for Kharkiv, where the Soviet Press Department had arranged for Jones to visit a newly built tractor factory. However, Jones would never complete this train journey. Some seventy kilometers before reaching its final destination, Jones silently left the hard benches of the third class, disembarked from the train and vanished into the night. For three days and two nights Jones walked alone through the frozen, famine stricken Ukrainian countryside, sharing his food with starving peasants, listening to their stories and collecting his thoughts and impressions in his little black notebook. Jones passed through more than twenty villages and collective farms, before quietly leaving the Soviet Union, making his way to Berlin.

In Berlin, Jones, outraged with the human suffering he had encountered, gave a press conference about the conditions in the Soviet Union. His testimony was quickly picked up by news agencies around the world, and appeared in the press that same evening. The headlines left nothing to the imagination: “Famine Grips Russia”¹, “Millions Starving In Russia”² and “Russia In Grip Of Famine: Death and Despair Stalk The Land”³ were amongst the dozen of articles that appeared in newspapers worldwide. Upon his return to England, Jones wrote a series of twenty-one front-page articles for an array of British and American newspapers expressing his concern about the crisis in Ukraine and advocating for a famine relief mission to aid the starving peasants. Initially, the articles gained a certain degree of international attention in the press. However, as the novelty of Jones’ stories diminished, his narrative was pushed to the background and the articles never achieved the effect Jones was advocating for. Moreover, his work served as a catalyst, igniting fierce rebuttals from Moscow, both in the press and on diplomatic level. Walter Duranty, one of the most famous correspondents of his time, then stationed in Moscow for the *New York Times*, promptly published the article “Russians Hungry, But Not Starving” in which he called Jones’ findings “a big scare story”.⁴ Gareth Jones was thus branded a liar and an instigator, accused of spreading – what would today be called – ‘fake news’.

In the discourse surrounding the famine in Ukraine, Duranty, whose articles about the

¹ H. R. Knickerbocker, “Famine Grips Russia, Millions Dying. Idle on Rise, Says Briton” *The New York Evening Post*, 29 March 1933.

² “Millions Starving In Russia. There is no bread, We are Dying.” *The Daily Express*, 30 March 1933.

³ “Russia in Grip of Famine. Death and Despair Stalk the Land . Evidence at First Hand. “There Is No Bread: We Are Dying””, *The Morning Post*, 30 March 1933.

⁴ Walter Duranty, “Russians Hungry But Not Starving” *The New York Times*, 31 March 1933.

Soviet Union had won him a Pulitzer prize in 1932 and made him a well-respected authority on the country, came out victorious. “Russians Hungry But Not Starving” became the generally accepted status quo in the West for years to come, and before long Gareth Jones’ articles would be forgotten, his existence a distant memory.

This thesis will be centered around the question of why Gareth Jones’ articles exposing the Ukrainian famine in 1933 had so little impact amongst the British and American public. There was no public outrage, no large-scale famine relief actions as had been the case in the past, and not a sound from the British and American governments on the matter could be heard. The silence surrounding the famine was deafening, and the few voices that were trying to attract attention to it – Jones was not alone in his efforts – were ignored. Why were people so willing to look away? Can this silence be attributed to a feat of Soviet Propaganda? Was Walter Duranty’s authority on the Soviet Union simply more credible than the reporting of twenty-seven years old Jones?

These questions become even more poignant when compared to the current image of the famine. The message that Gareth Jones intended to spread in the West, has nowadays become a generally accepted reality, and Duranty’s account in turn has been rejected. The *New York Times* has publicly distanced itself from Duranty’s views, acknowledging that his reports were a biased underestimation of the crisis in Ukraine, that took Soviet propaganda at face value.⁵ Additionally, the Pulitzer prize board has been repeatedly called on by various international organizations to revoke Duranty’s 1932 prize. Twice now, the board has declined to do so, most recently in 2003 on grounds that “no clear and convincing evidence of deliberate deception” could be found.⁶ However, calls to posthumously strip Duranty from his Pulitzer prize continue to be heard to this day. It thus appears that over the years the tables have turned; Jones is rehabilitated and Duranty denounced. This makes the whole episode surrounding Jones’ denigration even more remarkable, and the questions outlined above more pressing: why was the situation in 1933 so different?

⁵ “New York Times Statement About 1932 Pulitzer Prize Awarded to Walter Duranty” Accessed 1 April 2019: <https://www.nytc.com/company/prizes-awards/new-york-times-statement-about-1932-pulitzer-prize-awarded-to-walter-duranty/>

⁶ “Statement On Walter Duranty’s 1932 Prize” Accessed 1 April 2019: <https://www.pulitzer.org/news/statement-walter-duranty>

Historiography of the Holodomor

What Jones had witnessed in the Ukrainian countryside in 1933, was something he was never supposed to see. The famine that would kill millions of people was not caused by bad weather or a poor harvest, but by a series of policies drawn up by the Soviet government. The decision to force peasants to give up their land and join the collective farms, the eviction of the wealthier *kulak* peasants, the drive to complete Stalin's Five-Year-Plan and the accompanying chaos that swept over the Soviet countryside, amounted to an unprecedented famine. Though historians have not reached definitive conclusions on the demographic losses of the Great Famine of 1932-1933, or Holodomor as it is known in Ukrainian historiography (derived from the Ukrainian *moryti holodom*, "to kill by starvation"), conservative attempts estimate that at least five million people perished that year.⁷ Official Soviet policy during the famine and for many years to follow, was a complete denial that the famine had ever happened, and the Soviet government went out of its way to cover up the fact that millions of people had died.

They were quite successful in their efforts, for almost fifty years the famine only continued to exist in the memories of survivors and Ukrainian émigrés. Speaking out about what happened in 1932-1933, became a political act; the Soviet cover-up of the famine had worked so well that hard evidence to support the stories of survivors had become lost or inaccessible. This meant that the emotive testimonies of famine victims seemed at the very least highly exaggerated, unreliable and biased. Against the backdrop of the Cold War the stories were seen as too political, and were dismissed by Western historians as tales of 'Cold Warriors' wishing to discredit the Soviet regime.⁸

In the 1980's the Great Famine finally reappeared on the radar of historians, though only a handful of scholars – most notably Robert Conquest,⁹ James Mace,¹⁰ Roman Serbyn¹¹ and Marco Carynnyk¹² – were active in the field. Without access to archival resources which would account for hard evidence, very few historians were willing to risk their credibility in making statements about the origins and intentions of the Soviet regime in the famine, and discourse on the Holodomor remained within the margins of scholarly discussion. Robert

⁷ Olga Andriewsky, "Towards a Decentred History: The Study of the Holodomor and Ukrainian Historiography" *East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, Vol 2, No. 1 (2015), 27.

⁸ Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine, Stalins War on Ukraine* (Milton Keynes: Allen Lane, 2017) 338.

⁹ Robert Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

¹⁰ James Mace, "The Politics of Famine: American Government and Press Response to the Ukrainian Famine 1932-1933" *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 8:1 (1988).

¹¹ Roman Serbyn, ed. *Famine in Ukraine 1932-1933* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1986).

¹² Marco Carynnyk, ed. *The Foreign Office and the Famine* (Kingston Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1988).

Conquest's 1986 publication *Harvest of Sorrow* constitutes the first work about the famine to receive widespread academic attention. The purpose of the book, as Conquest states in the introduction was to "register in the public consciousness of the West a knowledge of and feeling for major events, involving millions of people and millions of deaths which took place within living memory".¹³ *Harvest of Sorrow* was a pivotal work, placing the famine within the context of Soviet policies that were in part meant to subdue and control rebellious territories. It argued that the cause of the famine not only lay in economic concerns, but nationalist concerns as well, and was the first work to refer to the crisis of 1932-1933 as a 'Terror-Famine'. Reviews praised its thorough research and expressed shock over how little was known about such an enormous tragedy. However, in light of the rising tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union in the Cold War, Conquest's work was met with skepticism. The famine was still a politicized issue, and *Harvest of Sorrow* was seen on the political spectrum as conservative, right-wing, indulging in polarizing 'evil empire' discourse.

The current academic debate surrounding the Great Famine is no longer centered around convincing the public whether or not the famine merits scholarly interest, but tends to focus on the question of intent. Two different interpretations of the famine dominate the field of research. The first interpretation builds upon the argument outlined by Conquest, maintaining that the famine was the result of Stalin's deliberate policies aimed at eliminating the Ukrainian nationalist threat. The second interpretation, though in no case dismissive of the nationalist argument, sees the famine as a result of a broad set of circumstances, rejecting the notion that a famine was the conscious goal of the Soviet government. One of the key works in this interpretation in Holodomor studies is the publication of Robert Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931-1933*.¹⁴ Davies and Wheatcroft argue based on extensive archival research that the chaos of rapid industrialization lies at the base of the famine. Wrongheaded policies caused the death of millions of peasants, but this was an unexpected and undesirable consequence and not the explicit intention of the Communist Party.¹⁵

The debate around intent is also what makes the discussion about the famine to this day an extremely political and controversial debate, as it forms the core of the question whether or not the Holodomor was an act of genocide. This narrative was first articulated by Dr. Raphael Lemkin, originator of the term genocide. Calling the famine in 1953 in an

¹³ Robert Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 5.

¹⁴ Robert Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931-1933* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 441.

unpublished article “perhaps the classic example of Soviet genocide”, Lemkin distinguishes a systematic four-pronged attack to ensure the destruction of the Ukrainian nation and “national spirit”: (1) destruction of the Ukrainian intelligentsia; (2) destruction of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church; (3) destruction of the peasantry through starvation, dekulakization, collectivization and excessive grain procurements; (4) deportation of Ukrainian people from their native lands and replacement with ethnic Russians.¹⁶ Lemkin concludes “This is not simply a case of mass murder. It is a case of genocide, of destruction, not of individuals only, but of a culture and a nation”.¹⁷ Of course, this interpretation of the famine is still contested in academic debate, something that the conclusions of Davies and Wheatcroft bear witness of. The sensitivity of the Holodomor and the genocide question have also extended into international politics; as of today fourteen countries have officially recognized the Holodomor as genocide, and the lobby for official recognition continues to exist. Additionally, the current political situation in Ukraine that has emerged following the Euromaidan protests in 2014, complicates academic and political debate even more, as statements about intent are once more indicative of political motives.¹⁸ A complete survey of the controversy and sensitivity that are associated with the academic debate of the Holodomor, is far beyond the scope of this work. Nor does it wish to comment on the genocide question, given the sensitivity and political nature of the issue. Moreover, it bears little to no relevance to the case of Gareth Jones.

Instead of looking at the Soviet government and the question of its intentions, this thesis will turn to the gaze of the West. The record of the West in the Ukrainian famine is something that has already been researched to a certain extent. Robert Conquest dedicates a small chapter to the matter in *Harvest of Sorrow*, James Mace has written a number of articles on the response of the American government,¹⁹ and Marco Carynnyk has written extensively on the record of the British Foreign Office in reaction to the famine.²⁰ Anne Applebaum’s latest contribution to the academic debate, *Red Famine: Stalin’s War on Ukraine*,²¹

¹⁶ Transcript of Raphael Lemkin, “Soviet Genocide in Ukraine”, *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, 7 (2009) 123-130.

¹⁷ Ibid. 130.

¹⁸ For an interesting and more in-depth discussion on the political sensitivities of the subject see: Anne Applebaum, “The Ukrainian Question Reconsidered” in *Red Famine, Stalins War on Ukraine* (Milton Keynes: Allen Lane, 2017) and Olga Andriewsky, “Towards a Decentred History: The Study of the Holodomor and Ukrainian Historiography” *East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, Vol 2, No. 1 (2015).

¹⁹ James Mace, “The Politics of Famine: American Government and Press Response to the Ukrainian Famine 1932-1933” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 8:1 (1988).

²⁰ Marco Carynnyk, “Making News Fit To Print”, in *Famine in Ukraine 1932-1933*, ed. Roman Serbyn and Bohdan Krawchenko, (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1986).

²¹ Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine, Stalins War on Ukraine* (Milton Keynes: Allen Lane, 2017).

summarizes this previously conducted research together with new insights. Applebaum suggests that the lack of response from the West to the famine in Ukraine was the result of a large-scale cover-up operation that functioned on two different levels. Firstly, the cover-up was a Soviet domestic strategy. Through censorship and propaganda, the Soviet government attempted to contain all knowledge of the famine, and tried to prevent any information from leaking to the West. However, when information did make its way into the Western press, Applebaum argues, Western governments actively looked away. Seen against the background of a global Depression and the advancing threat of fascism, a famine in the Soviet Union was not exactly a priority to the Western governments.

The case of Gareth Jones provides an interesting angle to further investigate this argument. Though Applebaum's narrative certainly does not discredit Jones' role in trying to expose the famine, it is worthwhile to re-examine the idea of a multi-leveled cover-up operation, taking the work of Gareth Jones as a starting point. Examining the case of Gareth Jones reveals the specific mechanisms that contributed to silencing the truth, and show an individual caught between different global interests. Furthermore it demonstrates how in a time when communism was *en vogue*, selective perception of news that was unfavorable could shape public opinion. Jones' true accounts were discarded and Duranty's more favorable message became a reality.

For almost sixty years it appeared as though the name Gareth Jones had been effectively erased from history. In part due to his short life – Jones was murdered by Chinese bandits in 1935 whilst researching a new journalistic scoop in Inner Mongolia – but mostly due to the success of the cover-up of the Ukrainian famine. In the early 1990's Jones' personal archive, having been left in a suitcase at his parents' home in Wales, was rediscovered by his relatives. Understanding the historic value of his work, the archive, containing all his written work, travel diaries, correspondence and personal artifacts, was gifted to the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth and made available for research purposes. Ever since the materials became available, scholarly interest on Gareth Jones has increased significantly. Within the number of publications on Jones, the work of journalism historian Ray Gamache cannot be overlooked. His publication *Gareth Jones: Eyewitness to the Holodomor*²² is one of the most complete and in-depth works on Jones available, and is thus an extremely valuable source of information for this thesis.

Additionally, parts of Jones' archive, containing scans and transcriptions of his

²² Ray Gamache, *Gareth Jones Eyewitness to the Holodomor* (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press, 2016).

articles, diaries and letters have been published online at garethjones.org, comprised in a large database moderated by his great-nephew Nigel Linsan Colley. This database will form the base of the primary source material used in this thesis. Colley has made a large number of supplementing source material available as well, including articles by Walter Duranty, Malcolm Muggeridge and Eugene Lyons, all valuable to this project. Supporting these primary source materials are the memoirs which were later published by some of those involved in the cover-up, as well as a number of internal documents circulated within the British Foreign Office, which give an accurate impression of how much governments could know about the famine. All combined, it is expected that these primary and secondary sources will account for an answer to the main research questions relating to the impact of Jones' work.

Methodology and Structure of Thesis

Hoping to contribute to existing research on the subject of Gareth Jones on an academic level, this thesis will, as has been outlined above, examine the impact – or lack of impact – Jones' message had on the Western public. Existing research on Jones tends to focus on the authenticity of his claims, in line with a traditional approach in historical scholarship of source criticism. This previously conducted research is of course invaluable to this thesis, as establishing the authenticity of Jones' articles is the first step towards an answer to the main research question. However, this thesis looks to expand on this research and extend its traditional academic approaches with a combined methodology of source criticism paired with textual analysis. This combined research methodology is suggested by historian Jan Ifversen in "Text, Discourse, Concept: Approaches to Textual Analysis"²³ as a tool to examine how historical texts or sources create meaning. The meaning of a text, as Ifversen argues, determines to a large extent the effect, or social consequence that it produces. Thus, when looking at the effect of Jones' claims, an approach consisting of source criticism alone would not suffice. As a means of analysis, source criticism is not concerned with the effects of a text, as its main priority is to examine the validity and authenticity of historical claims and sources, comparing it to what we know now. The addition of textual analysis allows for a more thorough examination of the social consequences connected to Gareth Jones' articles.

Ifversen's theory is also used by Ray Gamache in *Gareth Jones: Eyewitness to the Holodomor*, which examines through textual analysis how the articles of Gareth Jones

²³ Jan Ifversen, "Text, Discourse, Concept: Approaches to Textual Analysis" *Kontur*, nr 7 (2003), 60.

produce meaning. By analyzing Jones' articles, diaries, notes and correspondence, Gamache delineates Jones' development as a journalist and posits how Jones' reporting on the Holodomor constitutes one of the most compelling pieces of modern journalism. Building upon Gamache's research, this thesis seeks to take his findings one step further, by looking at the outcome of this compelling piece of journalism in the form of its effect in the West.

To analyze meaning and effect, Ifversen's theory explains that texts operate on three different levels – (1) text, (2) supratext and (3) context – which are all influenced by and respond to each other. Briefly explained, texts form single semantic units which are framed by a larger discourse or genre: supratext. The text and supratext are influenced by the context: this is the historical situation, the past context that exists outside of the linguistic level. However, to fully analyze the effect of Jones' articles, Ifversen's theory can be supplemented with a fourth level: (4) perception, which examines how a text is received by its intended audience, a factor that is in turn subject to the influence of supratext and context. In the case of Gareth Jones, the perception of his articles by the public forms the key to understanding its effect.

When Ifversen's theory, together with the supplement proposed above, is applied to this particular thesis, text (1) constitutes the primary sources; in this case Jones' articles exposing the famine in Ukraine. The supratext (2) is the overarching journalistic discourse on the Soviet Union in the 1930's where Jones' articles ended up. This consists of the small circle of Jones' colleagues who were working as Western correspondents in Moscow, whose work to a large extent influenced public knowledge of the Soviet Union. The context (3) then indicates how the historical situation of the time influenced what was happening in the overarching discourse. Perception (4) will look at the intended audience: how were the articles received by the Anglo-American public and governments? When looking at how these levels interact, the effect, or lack thereof, that was produced by Jones' articles can hopefully be explained.

To examine this lack of effect, the following analysis will consist of three chapters. Chapter one will outline the message that Jones so desperately wished to convey. It provides a biographical background, drawing from Gamache's extensive research and Jones' own work. It seeks to look into the question of who Jones was, retracing his steps to investigate how Jones ended up in Ukraine in the spring of 1933. To understand Jones' message, it is critical to examine how accurate his assessment of the situation in the Soviet Union was. In doing so, this chapter will draw upon relevant secondary source material in order to contextualize Jones' work, detailing the events and decisions that led millions of peasants to the brink of

starvation.

As the severity of the crisis in Ukraine became the core of Gareth Jones' reporting, it is important to look at Western discourse, or supertext, surrounding the Soviet Union in the 1930's. Chapter two will further examine this framework. Jones' work landed within a discourse mostly created by Western correspondents stationed in Moscow, reporting on the Soviet Union. These journalists were strictly controlled by the Soviet press department, and heavily subject to censorship which influenced their capability and willingness to cover the famine. However, some journalists did *not* shy away from publicly exposing the famine conditions in the Soviet Union. Where do Jones and his message fall within this spectrum of journalists? Lastly, this chapter will investigate how Jones' message landed amongst the public. Following the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the subsequent recession, communism was more popular than ever, which was highly influential on the perception of news about the Soviet Union in the West. Supported by Paul Hollander's sociological study of Western communist sympathizers, *Political Pilgrims*,²⁴ this chapter argues that the public was not willing to accept any negative reporting on the Soviet Union, contributing in silencing Jones' narrative.

The final chapter will focus on the political context to which the famine was subject. Following the argument made by Anne Applebaum as outlined above, this chapter will examine the strategies by which the Soviet government attempted to contain the news of the famine within its borders. Furthermore, it will look at how political and economic interests of both the British and American government shaped their perception of news of the famine. Both governments – as sources will show – must have been aware of the real situation but refused to acknowledge the famine or take action.

In combining all the different relevant aspects, this work seeks to answer the particular research questions related to the case of Gareth Jones. The fact that Jones has been rehabilitated since the rediscovery of his work in the late 1980's can be considered a triumph. Jones' articles exposing the famine in Ukraine account for perhaps the closest reflection of the truth as is objectively possible. However, the rediscovery and re-examination of his articles alone do not sufficiently exhibit the significance of his rehabilitation. When looking at what happened to Jones and his work in the first place, and understanding what factors are at play in hiding the truth, the relevance of his work – in academic debate as well as current contexts – becomes even more apparent.

²⁴ Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba 1928–1979*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981)

Chapter 1: Famine Grips Russia

1.1 Gareth Jones – “An Earnest and Meticulous Little Man”

Gareth Jones was born on 13 August 1905 in the town of Barry on the Welsh coast. From an early age he was introduced to the Russian language and culture through the stories of his mother Annie Gwen Jones. In 1889, Annie Gwen had travelled to Russia to serve as a governess and tutor to the grandchildren of steel tycoon John Hughes, founder of the village Hughesovka (or Yuzovka, modern day Donetsk) in Ukraine. She spent three years in the Ukrainian countryside, until she was forced to return to Wales due to an outbreak of cholera in 1892. She collected her impressions of her years in Hughesovka in a series of unpublished personal essays, which would spark her sons interest in Russia and instilled him with a strong desire to visit the country and retrace his mother’s footsteps.²⁵

After completing his secondary education in Barry at the school where his father held a position as head master, Gareth Jones was granted a scholarship to attend the University College of Wales in Aberystwyth in 1922, where he would start his studies in modern languages – Russian in particular. During his university studies in 1924, Jones partook in an excursion to Vilnius, Lithuania which would be his first encounter with eastern Europe. In Vilnius he met with a number of students who had been severely impacted by the Russian Revolution of 1917. They described to Jones the terror of the Bolsheviks, how estates were confiscated and how some of their friends were executed as the Bolsheviks rose to power, stories which must have impacted Jones’ view on the Bolsheviks to a certain extent.²⁶

In his years in Aberystwyth, Jones proved a brilliant student filled with curiosity and in 1926 he graduated with honors, continuing his studies at Trinity College in Cambridge in the French, German and Russian language. In the summer of 1926 Jones returned to the Baltics, this time to Riga, to improve his Russian. The living conditions in Riga shocked Jones. In a letter to his parents in Wales he writes:

There are lots of dirty wooden houses and ramshackle buildings... Everything in the streets seems uncared for; no proper gutters... I have never seen so many disabled, deformed, ragged dirty people.²⁷

Despite the initial shock, Jones stayed in Riga for the summer, and continued learning Russian. Through reading Bolshevik newspapers like *Pravda* and *Izvestia* Jones improved his Russian language skills formidably, and in the process developed an astute understanding of

²⁵ Nigel Colley, “Gareth Richard Vaughan Jones 1905 -1935 Short Biography” Gareth Jones, Hero of Ukraine, accessed 10 December 2018: <https://www.garethjones.org/overview/mainoverview.htm>

²⁶ Ray Gamache, *Gareth Jones Eyewitness to the Holodomor* (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press, 2016) 25.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 25.

daily life and the political situation in the Soviet Union.²⁸ These visits to the bordering countries of the Soviet Union in 1924 and 1926, together with the stories told by his mother of the pre-revolutionary era, were formative experiences for Jones' view on Russia. The stories of the Lithuanian students and living conditions in Riga influenced Jones' perception of Bolshevism. Throughout his later career, the personal tragedies caused by the Soviet regime and the observable struggles of daily life would become major themes in his writings.

The summer improving his Russian in Riga paid off; in 1929 Gareth Jones graduated from Trinity College with First-Class Honors in German and Russian. By that time he was fluent in both German and Russian, as well as French.²⁹ Following his graduation, Jones landed a month's trial at *The Times* in London, where he thought his language skills and understanding of world affairs would secure him a stable income. However, as the trial period ended, Jones was not hired as a full-time employee. He lacked the required journalistic experience for the job, even though he showed great potential.³⁰

In the end this rejection at *The Times* proved a blessing in disguise for Jones as he was immediately offered a doctorate position at Trinity College in Cambridge. Jones, who was pressed for money at this point in his career, reluctantly accepted. Although his parents were ecstatic with this opportunity, Jones was inherently concerned that an academic career would not offer him the sense of adventure he was yearning for. In a letter to his parents he writes:

I should consider myself a flabby little coward if I ever gave up the chance of a good and interesting career for the mere thought of safety. I have no respect for any man whose acceptance or judgment of a post depends on the answer to the question: Will it give me a pension? ... I have come to the conclusion that the only life I can live with interest and which I can really be of use is one connected with men and women of today; not with the writers of two centuries ago.³¹

However, luck struck again for Jones, as a few days after accepting the offer from Trinity College he was introduced to former Prime Minister David Lloyd George for a job interview. For this introduction Jones was asked to prepare notes on the current political situation in Germany. Impressed with Jones' work, Lloyd George offered him a position as Foreign Affairs advisor in London which involved preparing notes and briefings Lloyd George could use in debates, articles, and speeches as well as some travel abroad.³²

By the time he made his offer to Jones, Lloyd George no longer held any real power in

²⁸ Ray Gamache, *Gareth Jones Eyewitness to the Holodomor* (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press, 2016) 25.

²⁹ Nigel Colley, "Gareth Richard Vaughan Jones 1905 -1935 Short Biography" Gareth Jones, Hero of Ukraine, accessed 10 December 2018: <https://www.garethjones.org/overview/mainoverview.htm>

³⁰ Ray Gamache, *Gareth Jones Eyewitness to the Holodomor* (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press, 2016) 28.

³¹ *Ibid.* 39.

³² *Ibid.* 29.

the British government. He was forced to resign from his position as Prime Minister in 1922 following an incident, which had – in the eyes of his critics – almost led Britain to the verge of an unnecessary war with Turkey. After the incident Lloyd George remained highly visible in British politics and returned to parliament to head the Liberal Party, but with only 40 seats in Parliament, he was no longer the political heavyweight he had once been.³³

For Jones this decrease in Lloyd George’s political influence did not seem to be of great concern. He figured the experience of working for the former Prime Minister would be invaluable for his own career, and despite the initial objections from his family, he gladly accepted the offer, starting his new position in January 1930. Jones writes about this new job to his family: “It is funny to think so, but I would have an influence on Foreign Affairs through Lloyd George,”³⁴ an almost prophetic remark in light of what was to come on the following years.

As Foreign Affairs advisor Jones exhibited the same curiosity as he did in his studies, and immediately started work on a briefing for Lloyd George on the developments of Stalin’s first Five-Year-Plan, which had been officially put to action in the spring of 1929. In the briefing Jones emphasized how the life standard in the Soviet Union was being reduced in order to buy exports, which in turn had led to a great suffering amongst the population. His research for the briefing was the first time that Jones extensively investigated food shortages in the Soviet Union, and as the years went by, it would continue to be a recurring theme in his work. As his research for the briefing progressed, Jones increasingly focused on how the Communist Party had come to dominate peasant life, and how collectivization, especially in Ukraine, had led to food shortages and overall repression of the cultural and national identity of the peasants. However, as Jones finished his briefing, Lloyd George decided at the very last moment to not use Jones’ work, and asked Jones to conduct research on two high ranking German army officials instead. Jones reluctantly obliged, yet he continued researching the consequences of the Five-Year-Plan as well.

In August 1930, Jones planned his first trip to the Soviet Union. Travel was no longer restricted as diplomatic relations between Great Britain and the Soviet Union had been restored at the beginning of the year. It is not altogether clear why Jones decided to visit Russia specifically at that time. Some sources state that his visit was on behalf of Lloyd

³³ Robert N. W. Blake, “David Lloyd George”, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed 12 December 2018: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/David-Lloyd-George#ref4259>

³⁴ Ray Gamache, *Gareth Jones Eyewitness to the Holodomor* (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press, 2016) 29.

George,³⁵ another implies that it almost was a pilgrimage for Jones, visiting the country his mother had told so many stories about.³⁶

Jones spent approximately three weeks in the Soviet Union, and despite the ambiguity of his motives for travelling, his itinerary shows that he made a brief visit to Hughesovka, where his mother used to live. Jones sent several postcards to his parents back in Wales, all very vague or deliberately complimentary of Soviet accomplishments, which shows that Jones was well aware that his letters and travels were being monitored by the OGPU, the Soviet secret police.³⁷ Once back in Germany Jones writes a lengthy letter to his parents, reporting what he really saw in Russia:

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 [crossed out]³⁸ 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. [...] 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. [...] In the Donetz Basin conditions are unbearable. Thousands are leaving. [...] One reason why I left Hughesovska so quickly was that all I could get to eat was a roll of bread –and that is all I had up to 7 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. Nevertheless great strides have been made in many industries and there is a good chance that when the Five-Year Plan is over Russia may become prosperous. But before that there will be great suffering, many riots and many deaths.³⁹

Upon his return to England, and after consulting with Lloyd George, Jones elaborates on this letter with a series of newspaper articles describing what he found on his first visit to Russia. Most significant of these articles are three pieces Jones anonymously published in *The Times* entitled “The Two Russia’s”. In these articles Jones recounts the encounters he had on his travels and connects the conditions, lack of foodstuffs and general discontent he found to the political situation in the Soviet Union, particularly the Five-Year-Plan. Jones was forced to publish anonymously, as publishing a message that was so clearly critical of the Soviet Union under his real name would risk him being denied entry to Russia in the future. The message in

³⁵ Nigel Colley, “The Gareth Jones Diaries -Witnessing the Holodomor Firsthand”, garethjones.org, accessed 2 December 2018: https://www.garethjones.org/urbana_web_files/frame.htm

³⁶ Ray Gamache, *Gareth Jones Eyewitness to the Holodomor* (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press, 2016) 33.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 35.

³⁸ The name mentioned in the letter was later crossed out by Jones’ mother for reasons unknown. It is believed that it either says G.B. Shaw or The Webbs, all well-known Soviet sympathizers at the time.

³⁹ Gareth Jones, letter dated 26 August 1930. Accessed 12 December 2018: https://www.garethjones.org/soviet_articles/gareth_1930.htm

the articles is however significantly less harsh than in the letter to his parents. The words “starvation” or “starve” are never mentioned and Jones starts his articles with a disclaimer:

In estimating the importance of the opinion expressed by Russians the character and position of the speakers should be taken into consideration on the presumption that a miner escaping from the Donetz Basin, where there has been a serious breakdown in food supplies, is far more likely to exaggerate the gravity of the situation than a well-paid specialist working in the electrical industry, which is making great progress. The following estimate of the state of affairs in Russia has been made on these methods during a recent visit to the Soviet Union, and the conversations quoted in the following articles were written down at the earliest possible moment after the Russian had left the writer’s presence.⁴⁰

A statement which underlines Jones was aware that the conditions he came across upon his travels were not representative of the Soviet Union as a whole, and merely represent the opinions of individuals. Moreover, Jones never presents the opinions mentioned in the articles as his own. Through recounting anecdotes and quoting ordinary people, Jones presents himself as an impartial onlooker.

In 1931, almost a year after the publication of these articles, Jones was offered employment by Dr. Ivy Lee in New York to assist him in researching and preparing a book about the Soviet Union. Lee, vice-president of the American League of Nations Union at the time and Public Relations adviser to organizations such as the Rockefeller Institute, the Chrysler Foundation and Standard Oil, intended to write this book in order promote better trade relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. Jones’ role in this undertaking would largely consist of researching the policies of Lenin, following the Soviet press and the developments in oil trade.⁴¹

While working for Lee, Jones was introduced to Jack Heinz II, another client of Lee and heir to the ketchup imperium. Heinz had wanted to visit the Soviet Union for some time, and Lee suggested that Jones accompany him, as Jones spoke the language and would allow Heinz to form a more complete image of the country.⁴² In the summer of 1931, Jones and Heinz travelled through the Soviet Union for one month. During this time they were able to meet – through Jones’ connection with Lloyd George – with highly influential Soviet officials like Lenins widow Nadezhda Krupskaya and Karl Radek, as well as some well-known western reporters stationed in Moscow at the time like Maurice Hindus, Eugene Lyons,

⁴⁰ From our Correspondent (Gareth Jones), “The Two Russia’s – 1. Rulers and the Ruled” *The London Times* 13 October, 1930.

⁴¹ Ray Gamache, *Gareth Jones Eyewitness to the Holodomor* (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press, 2016) 60.

⁴² *Ibid.* 64.

Walter Duranty and Louis Fischer.⁴³ Eugene Lyons recounted this meeting with Jones in later memoirs *Assignment in Utopia* (1937), describing him as “an earnest and meticulous little man, Gareth Jones was the sort who carries a note-book and unashamedly records your words as you talk”.⁴⁴ After some time spent in Moscow and St. Petersburg, Heinz and Jones went on, touring the countryside and visiting *sovkhozy* and *kolkhozy*, talking to ordinary people, ultimately ending their trip in Ukraine.

In October 1931, after returning from Russia, Jones wrote another series of anonymous articles for *The Times* entitled “The Real Russia”, which was presented as a follow-up to the articles Jones published in 1930. Heinz in turn, wrote a book on what he and Jones had seen in Russia: *Experiences in Russia 1931 – A Diary* which he published anonymously as well and only circulated in private spheres.⁴⁵ This work was largely based on the extensive diary Jones had kept during the month long trip – which Lyons would later refer to in his memoirs. Jones wrote the preface for the book – signed with his own name – in which he underlined how the Five-Year-Plan, collectivization and dekulakization had dramatically changed the Russian countryside. However, Jones specifically stated that the book was not meant to reach any conclusions about the workings of socialism, asserting in the foreword that the reader should form their own conclusions.⁴⁶

The three articles constituting the “Real Russia” series in *The Times*, exhibit a change in tone from Jones’ 1930 articles. Although Jones utilizes the same methods for his articles as he did in 1930, his wording is less cautious, and the words “starve” and “starvation” are explicitly used to describe the situation of the peasants in Southern Russia and Soviet Ukraine, although they are again presented as coming from the mouths of local peasants. This might indicate that the situation that Jones experienced on his trip in 1931 may have been worse than in 1930, but a definitive explanation for this change remains unknown.

After the publication of “The Real Russia” in *The Times* Jones’ career seemed to soar. He was asked for a series of lectures on his experiences in the Soviet Union, and was interviewed by the *Buffalo Evening News* on the matter. However, conditions in the United States were also worsening, and in April 1932, Jones was informed by Dr. Ivy Lee that due to the economic circumstances caused by the ongoing economic crisis, Jones’ wages could no

⁴³ Ray Gamache, *Gareth Jones Eyewitness to the Holodomor* (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press, 2016) 71.

⁴⁴ Eugene Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1937) 575.

⁴⁵ Nigel Colley, “Gareth Richard Vaughan Jones 1905 -1935 overview 1932” Gareth Jones, Hero of Ukraine, accessed 15 December 2018: <https://www.garethjones.org/overview/mainoverview.htm>

⁴⁶ H.J. Heinz, *Experiences in Russia 1931 – A Diary* (Pittsburgh: Alton Press Inc, 1932) 1.

longer be paid.⁴⁷ As his contract in New York was terminated, Jones returned to Great Britain, resuming employment with Lloyd George, whom he assisted in writing his war memoirs in 1932.

Throughout this period, news of the crisis in the Southern parts of Russia and Ukraine began seeping through in the West.⁴⁸ Jones, who closely followed the developments and had heard the stories of starvation first-hand on his trip with Heinz, immediately reacted to the increasing amount of rumours concerning a widespread famine with two articles in *The Western Mail* titled “Will there be Soup?” dating from 15 and 17 October 1932. Both articles were this time published under Jones’ real name, and were in effect a retelling of his travels in the Soviet Union of 1931. In the articles Jones presents himself as an impartial traveller, who was able through his knowledge of the language, to learn “from the mouths of the peasants themselves why there is not enough soup”,⁴⁹ relating these stories back to the more recent reports that appeared in *Izvestia* together with expert opinions on the matter.

The news of the food crisis in Ukraine, and Jones’ articles in particular, caused some public debate; the editors of *The Western Mail* received a number of letters on the matter, but more importantly it prompted the first counter-articles Jones would endure from the foreign correspondents stationed in Moscow. On November 24, 1932, Walter Duranty wrote an article in the *New York Times* entitled “The Crisis in the Socialisation of Agriculture” in which he stated that “[...] Five-Year Plan, has run against an unexpected obstacle—the great and growing food shortage in town and country alike” but also stated that “There is no famine or actual starvation, nor is there likely to be”.⁵⁰

Following these articles, and nearing the end of his employment with Lloyd George, Jones was faced with a number of decisions regarding his career. Was he to find a position that rendered him sufficient income but would make him – in his own words – “a flabby little coward”, or would he completely disregard his own safety and investigate the situation in Ukraine for himself? Jones, who had spent so many years studying the Soviet Union with great curiosity, instilled with a strong moral compass and a great urge for adventure, chose the latter. And in January 1933, after his visa for another visit to the Soviet Union was cleared, Jones embarked on a great trip to through continental Europe and the Soviet Union in search for the truth.

⁴⁷ Ray Gamache, *Gareth Jones Eyewitness to the Holodomor* (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press, 2016) 100.

⁴⁸ Nigel Colley, “Gareth Richard Vaughan Jones 1905 -1935” Gareth Jones, Hero of Ukraine, accessed 20 December 2018: <https://www.garethjones.org/overview/overview1932.htm>

⁴⁹ Gareth Jones, “Will There Be Soup? – Russia Dreads the Coming Winter” *The Western Mail*, 15 October, 1932.

⁵⁰ Walter Duranty, “The Crisis in the Socialisation of Agriculture”, *The New York Times*, 24 November, 1932.

1.2 Holodomor – Hunger As a Weapon

Jones' observations regarding the increasing hunger crisis in Ukraine and Southern Russia he had made on his previous journeys, were only the early warning signs of the famine. By spring 1932 conditions had worsened significantly, and the peasants on the Ukrainian countryside were beginning to starve. As Jones had already noted in the years leading up to the years 1932-33, this was not a tragedy that was caused by natural circumstances. It was the direct result of the Soviet Union's disastrous policy of collectivization and class liquidation of the *kulaks* – the wealthier peasants, which caused an agricultural chaos and led the countryside to the brink of starvation. In his articles, Jones refers often to Stalin's Five-Year-Plan as being the cause of the famine in Ukraine and the Kuban region. Was he correct in his observations and how do they compare to current historiographical explanations?

Ukraine's status in relation to Russia had always been complicated. Before the February Revolution in 1917, Ukraine – then known as Malorossiya, or 'Little Russia' – was a part of the Russian Empire. It was considered a valuable region with its natural resources and fertile ground, and thus was of great importance to both the Tsarist government and the later Soviet government. The Ukrainians inhabiting this region had a strong sense of national identity, that was distinctly different from the Russian. This proved problematic for Imperial Russia, and restrictions on the use of Ukrainian language and cultural practices were imposed and the general Russification of Ukraine was actively encouraged.⁵¹ Nevertheless, a strong Ukrainian national movement flourished in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and following the Communist revolutions of 1917, the Ukrainian nationalists saw an opportunity to briefly establish an independent socialist state. However, Ukraine's independence was short-lived. Following a series of military coups, during which power in Ukraine changed hands numerous times, it once more became a part of Russia in 1920 – which had by then become the Soviet Union.

Lenin's reaction to the Ukrainian national movement and strive for independence was overtly hostile. After the revolution and during the subsequent civil war (1918-1921), the new Soviet policy of War Communism came into effect. War Communism served as an immediate effort to transform Russia, including Ukraine, from a capitalist nation into a socialist society and create a new social order.⁵² These new circumstances dictated extreme measures on different levels, and for Ukraine, War Communism primarily meant the policy of

⁵¹ Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine, Stalins War on Ukraine* (Milton Keynes: Allen Lane, 2017) 8.

⁵² Robert Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 48.

prodrazvyorstka – mandatory grain requisitions from peasants to feed the starving population in the cities – and a Bolshevik crackdown on the Ukrainian national movement. Ukrainian newspapers, schools and theatres were banned, and Ukrainian intellectuals who were associated with the Ukrainian national cause were arrested.⁵³ However, the attempts by the Bolsheviks to crush the Ukrainian national movement and pull Ukraine into the Russian sphere of power did not succeed, as they were met with fierce resistance from the Ukrainian peasantry.

The events of 1918-1921 had an enormous disrupting effect on the Soviet countryside both socially and economically. During the civil war, all sides of the conflict – Bolsheviks, Whites, Anarchists – had provisioned themselves and their armies through seizing food from peasants, giving them barely anything in exchange. This led to a drastic decline in agricultural production, reducing the grain crop production by 57% between 1913 and 1921.⁵⁴

Prodrazvyorstka proved disastrous, as it did not take the peasants' needs into account. The grain requisitions took so much grain off the peasants, that it left them without resources to sustain themselves and their families, and made it impossible to sow for next harvest. By 1921 famine hit the Russian countryside. It hit hardest in the Volga region, but the situation in Ukraine had also become dismal, and millions perished. The situation had become so severe, that by July 1921 the Soviet government appealed for international aid. Under president Hoover, the ARA, the American Relief Administration, sent millions of dollars in financial aid to the Soviet Union, and managed to feed over 12 million starving Russians.⁵⁵

By the end of 1921, the Bolshevik government was forced to abandon the policy of War Communism and opt for a strategic retreat. Lenin introduced the NEP – New Economic Policy, in effect from 1921 until 1928 – allowing free market to operate to a certain degree to foster the Soviet economy, which had suffered greatly under War Communism. More importantly, under NEP Soviet officials introduced Ukrainization, a policy which constituted major concessions to Ukrainian nationalists intended to win back the support of the Ukrainian peasants.⁵⁶ For almost a decade, from 1923 to 1932, the restrictions on Ukrainian language and culture were lifted. It was a carefully calculated decision: the Soviets did not want to lose Ukraine again, and by indulging the Ukrainians and allowing a small degree of autonomy, Soviet rule was thought to seem less foreign and would become more accepted by the

⁵³ Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine, Stalins War on Ukraine* (Milton Keynes: Allen Lane, 2017) 33.

⁵⁴ Robert Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 55.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 56.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 69.

Ukrainian peasantry.⁵⁷

However, as Stalin ascended to power, Lenin's lenient measures of NEP and Ukrainization were reversed. NEP offered Ukrainian peasants some relief in the form of individual farming and rural market economy. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks had always intended to bring free market and capitalism to an end.⁵⁸ The first attempt to achieve this ended in disaster and widespread famine, and the Communist Party was forced to accommodate its rule to the conditions in the countryside. The summer harvest of 1927 presented an opportunity to reconsider the ideological concessions that had to be made during NEP. The 1927 war scare – a groundless, almost hysterical alarm about the imminent military intervention by western capitalist powers – led, together with a dramatic fall in grain prices, to an unexpectedly low level of grain procurement. Peasants were once again unwilling to sell their grain to the state and started hoarding the harvest, echoing the conditions leading up to the famine in 1921. Stalin's reaction to this perceived grain crisis was extremely harsh.

In Stalin's view, the *kulaks* – wealthy farmers – were trying to sabotage the state grain procurements by holding back their grain, and he argued that failure to deliver grain procurements should be treated as a political crime.⁵⁹ In practice this meant that peasants were coerced and intimidated up to the point of surrendering their harvest. Procurement brigades set up road blocks in villages to prevent illegal trade, searched properties and arrested anyone who was branded a hoarder. Not only was their grain requisitioned, but also horses, threshing machines and other property vital to production were confiscated.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin was busy conjuring up a solution to the crisis in line with Soviet ideology. After the revolution of 1917, all private estates of aristocrats and monasteries were divided up amongst hundreds of thousands of poor peasants, creating an enormous amount of small, unproductive farms. This proved the crux of the problem: kulaks who managed to hold on to bigger properties were vastly more productive than their poor neighbours. However, a successful rich farmer, accumulating more land and more wealth was ideologically incompatible with communism, and would be unimaginable within a socialist state. At the same time Stalin understood that persecuting the kulaks alone would not lead to higher grain production either. The only ideologically sound solution lay in collectivization. In order to meet the grain quota, the Soviet Union needed large-scale collective farms owned by the state, so that peasants could pool their resources and produce on a grander scale. To

⁵⁷ Robert Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 71.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 115.

⁵⁹ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 38.

achieve this, peasants had to give up their privately owned land and join the collective in order to rapidly modernize Soviet agriculture.

The idea of collectivization tied in with Stalin's plans for the entire Soviet industry; in 1928 the Soviet government approved the first Five-Year-Plan, an ambitious economic programme designed to annually increase Soviet industrial output by twenty percent. Stalin believed that the fertile lands of Ukraine, if used as efficiently as possible, could feed all new industrial workers of Russia *and* produce enough to bolster the Soviet Union's export market, which would strengthen its global economic position. The drive for collectivization and industrialization quickly became Stalin's signature policies, and he became deeply invested in their success, both politically and personally.⁶⁰

As the plans for collectivization gained more momentum in the late 1920's, Lenin's policy of Ukrainization was halted. From Stalin's viewpoint, the Ukrainian national aspirations were counter-revolutionary and bourgeois. Ukrainization had backfired: the policy had been created by the Bolsheviks in order to placate the nationalists, to convince them that Soviet Ukraine in reality was a Ukrainian state, while at the same time drawing them into Soviet power structures. But in practice Ukrainization did the opposite, instead of placating the nationalists it encouraged them to demand even more change, eventually leading them to question the central power of the government in Moscow altogether.⁶¹ In 1927 Stalin attempted to dismantle the Ukrainian nationalist movement for the first time. The Ukrainian Communist Party was purged, the committee members were arrested and replaced with more pro-Soviet minded members. Many of the Ukrainian intelligentsia were arrested or actively opposed by the Bolsheviks, and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church was targeted as well, as it was rumoured that the Church secretly encouraged peasants to stay faithful to the Ukrainian cause.⁶²

Over time, the resistance to Soviet grain procurement in Ukraine and the Ukrainian national movement became interlinked in Stalin's eyes. At first glance these two hindering factors to the Soviet government seem quite separate from each other. However, Stalin linked the Ukrainian national question to the peasant question, stating that "the peasantry constitutes the main army of the national movement, [...] there is no powerful national movement without the peasant army".⁶³ Collectivization could – again – offer a solution, only this time for the problem of Ukraine's "peasant army". As peasants joined the collective farms, they

⁶⁰ Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine, Stalins War on Ukraine* (Milton Keynes: Allen Lane, 2017) 90.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 92.

⁶² *Ibid.* 100.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 104.

would lose their attachment to place and national identity, as Mikhail Kalinin pointed out: “The best way to eliminate a nationality is a massive factory with thousands of workers [...] which like a millstone grinds up all nationalities and forges a new nationality. This nationality is the universal proletariat”.⁶⁴

In the final months of 1929 the plans of collectivization that had been looming over the Soviet peasantry for years, finally sprang into action. Communist party officials and *Komsomols* – members of the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League – descended on the countryside from the cities across the Soviet Union in order to collectivize the villages and force the backward peasantry forwards into the twentieth century. In the first weeks of 1930, collectivization proceeded with a dazzling speed, and the most complete programme of collectivization was carried out in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Communist party promised Moscow to collectivize the entire country in only one year, and local party activists looking to impress their superiors, promised complete collectivization in nine to twelve weeks.⁶⁵

Initially, collectivization was supposed to be a voluntary affair. Communist activists were supposed to win over peasants in village meetings with logical arguments outlining the advantages of communal farming. Persuasion, however, quickly took the form of coercion, threatening peasants with deportation to the icy Russian prison camps and using force – often deadly – if they did not comply.⁶⁶ One by one the Ukrainian peasants signed their farms over and joined the collective, handing over the rights to their lands and livestock, becoming dependent on the leaders of the collective for employment, pay and food.

In order to coerce the peasants into joining the collective, Soviet officials utilized another strategy that proved even more convincing, and moreover, offered a solution to Stalin’s second problem with the countryside: the liquidation of kulaks as a class. Collectivization and dekulakization, as it became known in bureaucratic terms, were both aspects of the same policy, though the fate of the kulak was vastly different than that of the collectivized peasant.⁶⁷

The Marxist reading of history that the Bolsheviks adhered to, presented history as a struggle of classes where the poorer classes made revolutions against the richer in order to move history forward, finally reaching a state of communism. Eliminating the kulaks was thus viewed by the Communist party in terms of a historical necessity. To do so, it was vital that a second revolution swept the countryside, and that the peasantry was divided into two separate

⁶⁴ Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine, Stalins War on Ukraine* (Milton Keynes: Allen Lane, 2017) 104.

⁶⁵ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010) 28.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 28.

⁶⁷ Robert Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 117.

economic classes: the rich kulaks and the poor peasants. But who was a kulak and who was a poor peasant? The notion of wealthy and poor peasants was quite relative in the Ukrainian countryside and the term kulak was vague and ill-defined. In some villages it could mean a man who owned two pigs instead of one, in other villages it meant someone who had made enemies among the inhabitants.⁶⁸ The Ukrainian Council of Peoples Commissars issued a decree in 1929 identifying kulak farms as “a farm that regularly hired labour; a farm that contained a mill, tannery, brick factory or other small ‘industrial’ plant; a farm that rented buildings or agricultural implements on a regular basis. And a farm whose owners or managers involved themselves in trade, usury, or any other activity producing ‘unearned income’”.⁶⁹ Overtime, the definition evolved again, now class identification was no longer determined by economic circumstances, but by the attitude one presented toward collectivization. All opposing the collective were condemned as kulaks.

Once branded as a kulak, one was robbed of all possessions and isolated from other family members. Some kulaks were allowed to stay in their villages but were given the most inaccessible land, some joined the *kolkhoz*, some fled finding employment in the coalmining industry, but the overwhelming amount of kulaks were exiled to Siberia, northern Russia, Central Asia and other regions of the Soviet Union. If they managed to survive the train journey there, they lived in isolation as ‘special exiles’ and were forbidden to leave their settlements.⁷⁰ Robert Conquest summarizes the Communist Party’s rationale for what happened to the kulaks fittingly: “Not one of them was guilty of anything; but they belonged to a class that was guilty of everything”.⁷¹

In just a few months in the winter of 1929-30, a second revolution was carried out in the countryside. The new social order that was supposed to emerge in the countryside was accompanied by chaos, and was met with sharp resistance from the Ukrainian peasantry. Soviet documents from 1930 record 13,794 ‘incidents of terror’ and 13,754 ‘mass protests’ most of which took place in Ukraine.⁷² In addition to these domestic challenges, Stalin was also faced with threats from abroad, which led him to take quick measures.⁷³ In an article published 2 March 1930 in *Pravda* titled “Dizzy with Success”, Stalin announced the temporary suspension of collectivization. Just as Lenin chose tactical retreat in 1921, Stalin’s withdrawal from collectivization was strategic as well. It allowed time to regroup and find

⁶⁸ Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine, Stalins War on Ukraine* (Milton Keynes: Allen Lane, 2017) 124.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 125.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 132.

⁷¹ Robert Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 143.

⁷² Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine, Stalins War on Ukraine* (Milton Keynes: Allen Lane, 2017) 152.

⁷³ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010) 32.

more effective means to take control of the peasantry. And by 1931, collectivization proceeded like never before, the deportations of kulaks resumed, and peasants could no longer see any alternative than to join the collective.

As Stalin triumphed in his massive collectivization effort in 1931, the victory could not be extended into the economic side of the picture. Despite the uproar of collectivization, the 1930 harvest had been exceptional. Unknowingly, the Bolsheviks had chosen the right time to start collectivization. In the months of January and February, when collectivization first kicked off, winter wheat had already been sown. And despite the chaos of deportations and collectivization, crops grew splendidly due to the unusually good weather. The resulting summer harvest of 1930 set a standard for the coming year that could never be met, as the procurements of 1930 formed the baseline for the 1931 grain quota. Moscow expected far more from the Ukrainian peasants than they could possibly give.

Although the harvest of 1930 had been plentiful, food shortages that were already present on the Ukrainian countryside became permanent. 1929 had been a year of bad harvest, and with the amount of grain that was requisitioned from the land, food shortages were rife. The notable increase in harvest in 1930 led the Soviet government to believe that collectivization was a success, and it made the crucial decision to increase grain exports, as well as the export of other foodstuffs. Much needed nutrients now left the Soviet Union in droves: 4.8 million tons of grain were exported in 1930 and an even higher number of 5.8 million tons in 1931.⁷⁴ However, the harvest of 1931 was nowhere near as good as that of the year before. The reasons were substantial: weather had been bad, pests spoiled the crops, animal- and manpower were limited because livestock had been sold or slaughtered and the most successful kulak farmers had been deported. Moreover, collectivization had disrupted sowing and reaping, leading to a fall in production yield, and finally, peasants who joined the collective had no incentive to work very hard, as the harvest would be taken away by the state.⁷⁵ The *kolkhozy* could not meet their targets. On 5 December 1931 Stalin ordered that collective farms who had not met the grain quota must surrender their seed grain. Perhaps Stalin believed that they were hiding parts of the harvest, or that this measure would motivate them to work harder and produce more, but by this time many of the farms had nothing left to give and nothing left to sow. Mass starvation was imminent.⁷⁶

Desperate peasants resorted to stealing food and refused to hand over what little grain

⁷⁴ Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine, Stalins War on Ukraine* (Milton Keynes: Allen Lane, 2017) 167.

⁷⁵ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 73.

⁷⁶ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010) 34.

they had left, hiding it everywhere they could. In the summer of 1932 the Kremlin sent the procurement brigades that had requisitioned grain at gunpoint under War Communism and again during the famine of 1921, back to the countryside to retrieve the harvest and keep the insurgent peasants in check. However, the problem with grain procurements in the countryside did not lay in deceit by the peasants, they were dying from starvation. Collectivization had failed, requisition targets were too high, and food could not be seized where there was none. Famine was raging.⁷⁷

Stalin interpreted the disaster in Soviet Ukraine as a personal attack; the fact that the Ukrainian peasants were not working and not producing grain was in his eyes a political protest against collectivization.⁷⁸ The peasants weren't starving because of collectivization, they were on hunger strike, effectively staging the famine in Ukraine. To Stalin the resistance to collectivization in Ukraine was due to the strong nationalist sentiment and it had to be crushed. As Robert Conquest explains: "Stalin seems to have realized that only a mass terror throughout the body of the nation – that is, the peasantry – could really reduce the country into submission".⁷⁹ In other words, if the peasants used hunger as a weapon to thwart Soviet authority, starvation, deemed Stalin, was a logical answer.

As the Ukrainian peasants were starving, Stalin implemented a series of policies that constituted the "terror famine" as Conquest dubbed it, or the Holodomor as it is known today. If conditions before had led the Ukrainian peasants to the brink of starvation, these policies would push them over.

On 18 November 1932 it was decreed that peasants in Ukraine were required to return the grain advances they had earned by meeting their quota, this meant that the few farms that had good harvests, had to hand in their surplus including seed grain. On 20 November a new meat tax was introduced. Peasants who could not meet the grain quota were forced to pay extra tax penalty in the form of meat. Livestock that had been a last reserve against starvation had to be handed over to the state. Even after the penalty was paid the original grain quota still had to be fulfilled. On 28 November the term 'Blacklist' (*cherna doshka*) was introduced. Blacklisting meant that collective farms, villages and whole districts who could not meet their quota would be subjected to a series of punishments and sanctions. Blacklisted villages could not purchase any manufactured or industrial goods and were prohibited from trading grain and meat products of any kind. 'Counterrevolutionary elements' were purged and deported from

⁷⁷ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010) 40.

⁷⁸ Olga Andriewsky, "Towards a Decentred History: The Study of the Holodomor and Ukrainian Historiography" *East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, Vol 2, No. 1 (2015), 33.

⁷⁹ Robert Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 219.

the villages, and financial sanctions followed which in some cases meant a complete confiscation of all money. Cut off from food, any form of supplies and unable to grow crops, hundreds of thousands of villagers – not only peasants – perished.⁸⁰ On 5 December 1932, it was decreed that Ukrainian Party officials (still associated with the Ukrainian national movement at that point) had to take part in collecting grain from the peasants. Anyone who failed to do so was seen as a traitor of the state, and would – in the best case – be deported to the Gulag. On 21 December Stalin ordered the complete requisition of the annual grain quota for Ukraine to be reached by January 1933. By that time there was no grain left to give without suffering horrible consequences, but the targets had to be met, grain seed included. This would mean a death sentence for about three million people.⁸¹ As more and more people succumbed to hunger after the target was miraculously met in late January 1933, requisitions continued. Any grain that was somehow left, was to be confiscated. Collective farms were left with nothing to sow for the autumn of 1933, and the consequences would be terrible. Meanwhile the Soviet government exported three million tons of cheap grain to the west.⁸²

Amidst the frenetic search parties for grain, the Ukrainian borders were sealed shut so that peasants could not flee, and cities were closed off so that peasants could not beg for food on the streets. Long distance railway tickets were banned for peasants, and if anyone who managed to flee was caught by Soviet police, they were sent back to their home village. Ukraine had become a hermetically sealed stronghold.

Remarkably, Gareth Jones managed to slip through the cracks of this stronghold quite easily. In January of 1933, in the middle of the implementation of Stalin's cruel policies, he was granted his visa to visit the Soviet Union. At this point Jones was fully aware of the famine in Ukraine, and had started making plans to secretly visit the country himself. But what he experienced as soon as he set foot in the unusually silent countryside that had once been hailed as the breadbasket of Europe, shocked him so deeply that he would take it upon himself to alert the world of how Ukraine was suffering.

⁸⁰ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010) 43.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 44.

⁸² *Ibid.* 45.

1.3 The Message – “We Are Waiting For Death”

1933 was a year of extremes for Gareth Jones. Before officially leaving his function as advisor to David Lloyd George, Jones embarked on a journey through Europe and the Soviet Union. By then he was 27 years old and wanted to see for himself how the tense situation on the continent was developing.⁸³ In late January Jones arrived in Germany, and spent 30 January – the day Adolf Hitler was made Chancellor – in Berlin. Two weeks later, just days before the burning of the Reichstag, Jones would experience his first journalistic scoop: on 23 February he was the first foreign journalist to be invited to join Hitler and his Nazi-entourage to fly from Berlin to Frankfurt in Hitler’s airplane ‘Richthofen’. Jones, who had written numerous newspaper articles about the political situation in Germany besides his works on the Soviet Union, published three articles on his experience of the flight with Hitler in *The Western Mail*, prophetically ending his last piece with the question “The Europe of 1933 has seen the birth of the Hitler dictatorship in Germany. What will it see in the Soviet Union?”⁸⁴ On 3 March 1933, Jones boarded a train in Berlin headed for Moscow to find out for himself.

Jones arrived in Moscow on Sunday 6 March, and after spending a few days there, he purchased a ticket for the overnight train to Kharkiv on 10 March. This is when Jones’ plan set into action. For his trip to the Soviet Union he was granted a special visa, different from the journalistic visas the Moscow correspondents worked under. Jones’ connection to Lloyd George made him of utmost importance to the Soviet propaganda machine, and the Soviet ambassador in to Great Britain Ivan Maisky, personally lobbied for Jones’ visit, writing in a letter dated 25 January to Soviet Foreign Press director Umansky:

By the way, on the subject of Gareth Jones. He has his visa but will be in Moscow no sooner than 3–4 March since he is provisionally spending a month in Germany too, from where he is supposed to send Lloyd George various materials for analyzing the present situation there. Lloyd George is sending him to the USSR for the same purpose. Evidently, Lloyd George wants through him to get a feel on the ground for how seriously [to believe] the conversations and writings, now flooding Europe, about the critical situation in the USSR. I urge you to take Jones under your special care, give him sufficient attention, and put him in touch with those people and institutions whose assistance he will need. The impressions Jones forms will to a significant degree determine Lloyd George’s attitude toward the USSR.⁸⁵

⁸³ Nigel Colley, “Gareth Richard Vaughan Jones 1905 -1935 overview 1933” Gareth Jones, Hero of Ukraine, accessed 5 January 2019: <https://www.garethjones.org/overview/overview1933.htm>

⁸⁴ Gareth Jones, “Primitive Worship of Hitler” *The Western Mail*, 2 March 1933.

⁸⁵ Theresa Cherfas, “Reporting Stalin’s Famine: Jones and Muggeridge: A Case Study in Forgetting and Rediscovery” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 14:4 (Autumn 2013) 789.

Jones was well aware of his special status, and made full use of the advantages that came with it. However, it is worth noting that Jones paid for the entire journey himself, not receiving any financial aid in his endeavors whatsoever. In a letter to his parents at the beginning of his trip through Europe he writes:

I am paying all expenses for this journey myself. I remain a member of L. G.'s [Lloyd George's] staff—*entre nous* at a nominal salary—until end of March; but it is worth everything to me to go to Germany as his secretary—it gives me a wonderful entrée ... before long I'll be in Southampton and then on board. It will be warm and comfortable on board and they are giving me an especially good state room because I'm L. G.'s secretary.⁸⁶

In the Soviet Union, travelling as Lloyd George's secretary granted Jones with a diplomatic passport, a special visa, access to the right people and – most importantly – allowed him to travel through the famine stricken region. This was a special privilege as on 23 February 1933 a ban against travel was decreed, which prevented journalists from travelling freely in the Soviet Union without escort.⁸⁷ With his special status, Jones was able to arrange an alibi for his plan to visit Ukraine in the form of a meeting with the German consul in Kharkiv and a guided tour in a tractor factory nearby. The Soviet Foreign Press department was more than happy to oblige. Jones arranged his train ticket, and was instructed to check in with the foreign press department's contact in Kharkiv, S.I. Brodovsky upon his arrival.

However, Jones never intended to reach Kharkiv by train. He loaded his rucksack with as many provisions as he could find, boarded the slow train bound for Kharkiv and disembarked some seventy kilometers before reaching his intended destination. Presumably leaving the train in the small town of Belgorod, Jones made the final leg of his journey on foot, spending the night with local peasants, sharing his food with them, listening to their stories and meticulously recording them in his diary. In all villages that Jones passed, he witnessed the same misery: families without food, children with swollen bellies and unemployed men without bread cards unable to save their family from starvation. Everywhere sounded the same cry: "We have no bread, they are killing us. People are dying of hunger".⁸⁸

When Jones finally reached Kharkiv he acted as if nothing out of the ordinary happened, did not mention a word of the three days that he had been missing and no one

⁸⁶ Theresa Chermas, "Reporting Stalin's Famine: Jones and Muggeridge: A Case Study in Forgetting and Rediscovery" *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 14:4 (Autumn 2013) 788.

⁸⁷ Ray Gamache, *Gareth Jones Eyewitness to the Holodomor* (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press, 2016) 130.

⁸⁸ Gareth Jones, Diary 1 1933, File 6, [garethjones.org](https://www.garethjones.org). Accessed 10 January 2019: <https://www.garethjones.org/diaries/1933-PDFs/GJ-D1-P80-P96.pdf> 14-17.

seemed to notice. He completed his itinerary, visited the German consul and the tractor factory and made his way back to Moscow, writing his parents on 19 March:

I am continuing to have an exceedingly interesting time. On my return from Kharkoff, I went to see our Ambassador (Sir Esmond Ovey) and had a talk with him. In the evening I dined with the German Ambassador, von Dirksen, an excellent dinner and excellent company. [...] My conversations have been exceedingly instructive & I have been received with the utmost kindness. The Foreign Office (“Narkomindel”) has spared no trouble to make my a visit a success.⁸⁹

With his correspondence to Wales, Jones deliberately meant to throw off the Soviet censors. He kept his trip through the famine stricken countryside of Ukraine a secret until he left the Soviet Union again on 24 March. When he reached Berlin again on the 27th, Jones immediately reported back to Lloyd George with a letter recounting what he saw in Ukraine. His tone changed dramatically:

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 brought famine to every part of the country. I tramped 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 growing. [...] About the German situation, I am not so alarmed and believe that the English newspapers have lost their heads.⁹⁰

Two days later on 29 March 1933, Gareth Jones decided to make his story public, and share what he witnessed on his journey in a press conference for colleague journalists in Berlin. This press conference directly challenged all denials coming from the Kremlin rebutting the rumours of famine that had been spreading in the west.⁹¹ Aided by the first-hand accounts written up in his diary, Jones exposed the grim reality of what was happening in Ukraine. The story was published that same evening in *The New York Evening Post* by H.R. Knickerbocker, and the headline was sure to ruffle some Soviet feathers: “Famine Grips Russia, Millions Dying. Idle on Rise, Says Briton”. *The Chicago Daily News* picked up the story as well, and that same day it was published under the headline “Russian Famine Now as Great as Starvation of 1921, Says Secretary of Lloyd George”, written by E.A. Mowrer.

The articles by Knickerbocker and Mowrer were the first to appear out of a total of eight articles that broke the news of the famine in the United States, Great Britain and Germany on 29 and 30 March 1933. All articles that appeared were based on the information

⁸⁹ Gareth Jones, Letter dated 19 March 1933 [garethjones.org](https://www.garethjones.org/soviet_articles/Gareth_Jones_1933_correspondence.pdf). Accessed 7 January 2019 https://www.garethjones.org/soviet_articles/Gareth_Jones_1933_correspondence.pdf 9.

⁹⁰ Gareth Jones, Letter dated 27 March 1933 [garethjones.org](https://www.garethjones.org/soviet_articles/Gareth_Jones_1933_correspondence.pdf). Accessed 7 January 2019 https://www.garethjones.org/soviet_articles/Gareth_Jones_1933_correspondence.pdf 14.

⁹¹ Ray Gamache, *Gareth Jones Eyewitness to the Holodomor* (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press, 2016) 142.

that Jones had shared in his press conference, and the news of the famine that hit the Ukrainian countryside now went global. Knickerbocker illustrates the severity of the situation with quotes from Jones' experiences:

“In the train a Communist denied to me that there was a famine. I flung a crust of bread which I had been eating from my own supply into a spittoon. A peasant fellow-passenger fished it out and ravenously ate it. I threw an orange peel into the spittoon and the peasant again grabbed it and devoured it. The Communist subsided. I stayed overnight in a village where there used to be 200 oxen and where there now are six. The peasants were eating the cattle fodder and had only a month's supply left. They told me that many had already died of hunger. Two soldiers came to arrest a thief. They warned me against travel by night as there were too many 'starving' desperate men.

“‘We are waiting for death’ was my welcome, but see, we still, have our cattle fodder. Go farther south. There they have nothing. Many houses are empty of people already dead,’ they cried.”⁹²

Knickerbocker then continues his article attributing the famine to the policy of collectivization, calling it “the worst catastrophe since the famine of 1921” with millions dying of hunger. He concludes the article with the prediction that the report “is bound to receive widespread attention in official England as well as among the public of the country”.⁹³

On 31 March Gareth Jones took the pen to himself and released the first of a total of twenty-one articles entitled “Famine Rules Russia”, published in *The London Evening Standard*. The articles written by Jones were spread over four different newspapers and appeared over the course of three weeks. Comparably to the tone set in the articles by Knickerbocker and Mowrer, Jones puts a strong emphasis on the human suffering Soviet policy had caused. He writes:

If it is grave now and if millions are dying in the villages, as they are, for I did not visit a single village where many had not died, what will it be like in a month's time? The potatoes left are being counted one by one, but in so many homes the potatoes have long run out. The beet, once used as cattle fodder may run out in many huts before the new food comes in June, July and August, and many have not even beet. The situation is graver than in 1921, as all peasants stated emphatically. In that year there was famine in several great regions but in most parts the peasants could live. It was a localised famine, which had many millions of victims, especially along the Volga. But today the famine is everywhere, in the formerly rich Ukraine, in Russia, in Central Asia, in North Caucasia - everywhere. [...]

⁹² H. R. Knickerbocker, “Famine Grips Russia, Millions Dying. Idle on Rise, Says Briton” *The New York Evening Post*, 29 March 1933.

⁹³ Ibid.

The Five-Year Plan has built many fine factories. But it is bread that makes factory wheels go round, and the Five-Year Plan has destroyed the bread-supplier of Russia.⁹⁴

The message Jones meant to send into the world was simple: a catastrophic famine was killing millions in the Soviet Union and the Stalinist regime was responsible. By giving a voice to the victims suffering in this tragedy, Jones created a sense of immediacy, hoping to heighten the impact of the message amongst his readers.⁹⁵ Jones saw his mission of exposing the famine as morally imperative, he felt a strong ethical obligation to tell readers exactly what was happening, hoping that his reports would induce a sense of moral outrage, extending into public pressure for political action.⁹⁶

As the story of the famine reached the west, it rapidly travelled east as well. The Soviet officials who just a month ago were happy to accommodate Jones, were now less than pleased. As all articles were published under Jones' own name, Jones must have realized that in exposing the famine he would suffer the consequences of his actions. By breaching the official itinerary on his trip and leaving the train to Kharkiv – thus breaching confidentiality – Jones became a marked man and would never be granted another visa to enter the Soviet Union. Moreover, the official Soviet propaganda machine sprang into action. On the same day Jones' account of the famine appeared in *The London Evening Standard*, an article by Walter Duranty countering Jones' claims was published in the *New York Times*. Jones' urgent message, meant to wake up the world to the truth, would soon be silenced with a blanket of reassuring reports coming from Moscow.

⁹⁴ Gareth Jones, "Famine Rules Russia" *The London Evening Standard*, 31 March 1933.

⁹⁵ Ray Gamache, *Gareth Jones Eyewitness to the Holodomor* (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press, 2016) 161.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 167.

Chapter 2: Voices

2.1 The Moscow Press Corps – “Working Under a Sword of Damocles”

As much as Gareth Jones’ message of famine in Ukraine was meant to alert the world of the suffering, it inadvertently became part of the international discourse on the Soviet Union as well. The 1930’s were a time of monumental change around the world. As Stalin was building up the Soviet Union with a complete disregard for human life, the West experienced a dramatic economic crisis. In the economic chaos and the misery that ensued in society, many looked at the Soviet Union with admiration and amazement, wondering if this was the example to follow in the future. Foreign journalists based in Moscow contributed to this image in the West with their positive reporting of the successes of the world’s youngest nation. How did Gareth Jones fit into this spectrum of voices and opinions on the Soviet Union? And more importantly, how was his message of famine – anything but positive – received?

Allowing foreign journalists into the country had not always been a given in the Soviet Union. After the October Revolution and subsequent civil war, the new communist government had barred all foreign journalists from entering the Soviet Union, as the prying eyes of the ‘bourgeois’ press were believed to be intelligence agents of the capitalist Western powers. During the civil war, the Bolsheviks had seen how Western correspondents responded to events in a very anti-Soviet manner, reporting in favor of the White armies and supporting the Allied intervention against the Bolsheviks in 1918. As a result, the Bolsheviks viewed foreign reporters with suspicion and hostility, branding them enemies of the revolution, spies who were to be denied any information about developments in the new socialist country.⁹⁷

With no correspondents on scene to cover the momentous changes going on in Russia, foreign news outlets and wire services were forced to rely on rumors and gossip that managed to seep through the hermetically sealed Soviet borders. News agents started to send their correspondents covering the Soviet Union to Riga, to pick up on the news as soon as possible, and by the end of the 1910’s the city was transformed into a major listening post for developments in the newly established Soviet Union. However, the correspondents were unable to verify the information that reached them, and their reporting became so sensationalist, confused and anti-Soviet, that it was impossible to tell what was really going on in Russia. The independent study *A Test of the News* by Walter Lippmann and Charles Merz published in 1920, found that the *New York Times* news coverage of the Russian

⁹⁷ Whitman Bassow, *The Moscow Correspondents*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1988) 34.

Revolution between 1917 and 1919 was wildly inaccurate, misleading and untrustworthy. Even though the *New York Times* – one of the most prominent and well-respected newspapers at the time – proclaimed “to give the news impartially, without fear or favour regardless of any party, sect or interest involved”, it had falsely reported the fall of the Bolshevik government ninety-one times over a span of two years. Lippmann and Merz concluded that “the news about Russia is a case of seeing not what was, but what men wanted to see,”⁹⁸ deeming the reports coming from Riga about as useful as “that of an astrologer or alchemist”, and a danger to public opinion on Russia.⁹⁹ One of these “astrologers” responsible for the dispatches that appeared in the *New York Times* was Walter Duranty. Duranty admits in his memoirs that during his time in Riga, he was forced to rely on the testimonies of the Soviet Union’s “bitterest enemies”, and that reports on Russia coming from Riga were not always a reflection of the truth.¹⁰⁰

However, times for the reporters based in Riga were changing as the Bolshevik government applied for international aid during the famine of 1921. One of the conditions of Hoover’s American Relief Administration to send help to the starving countryside of Russia, was that American correspondents must be permitted to enter the Soviet Union and travel freely to report on the distribution of food.¹⁰¹ The Soviet government had no other option than to accept, and in the summer of 1921 a handful of foreign correspondents, including Walter Duranty, arrived in Moscow. As promised, they were allowed to travel freely, but as they wrote their stories they encountered another obstacle in their reporting: the Soviet Press Department. Before dispatching their stories to the newspaper editors, all correspondents had to submit their reports to the Narkomindel – the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Affairs – for official approval, any unfavorable or negative stories would be eliminated.¹⁰² Furthermore, the official information given out by the press department and other Soviet officials was unreliable as well, creating “fogs of lies and rumour” as Walter Duranty recalls.¹⁰³ Reading between the lines of official information became second nature for many correspondents, and the limits of acceptable reporting were a point of constant negotiation between reporter and censor.

By 1930 the reporters stationed in Moscow had established a framework for their operations in the Soviet Union. Press bureaus were opened, translators and secretaries were

⁹⁸ Walter Lippmann, Charles Merz, “A Test Of The News” *New Republic*, August 1920. 3.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 42.

¹⁰⁰ Walter Duranty, *I Write As I Please*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1935) 102.

¹⁰¹ Whitman Bassow, *The Moscow Correspondents*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1988) 37.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* 51.

¹⁰³ Walter Duranty, *I Write As I Please*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1935) 214.

appointed to the correspondents – indispensable assistants, as a special knowledge of Russia or the Russian language were not required for the position of correspondent – and the reporters were equipped with cars and private chauffeurs. The foreign journalists lived a privileged life in Moscow that was quite different to that of the Soviet citizens. Imported food and liquor bought from special government-run shops were plentiful, and living conditions were good; most correspondents owned lavish houses in the center of Moscow, or lived in large apartments owned by their news agencies. Working conditions remained challenging however, as censorship was still a daily struggle and official information unreliable. Much of what reporters actually were allowed to dispatch, relied on what was personally agreed on between them and the censor. Bargaining face-to-face with the censor was a crucial element of the job. In *The Moscow Correspondents* Whitman Bassow considers Russia in the 1930's "a correspondents nightmare – or a dream assignment, depending on the individual's frustration threshold. There was much to be reported, but much could not even be seen, and even if seen, would not pass through the heavy hand of the censor".¹⁰⁴ William Henry Chamberlin, reporter for the *Christian Science Monitor* in Moscow, recalled after his return from Russia in 1935 that any foreign correspondent in the Soviet Union refusing to step away from factual reporting and adopt a more flattering tone in his articles "works under a Sword of Damocles – the threat of expulsion from the country or the refusal of permission to reenter it, which of course amount to the same thing".¹⁰⁵ In other words, if factual reporting had managed to evade the censors in the first place, the correspondent risked losing his post in Moscow, which in turn meant losing his livelihood. Under these circumstances correspondents were very unlikely to report on the events in Ukraine. Gareth Jones was in a very different position. He had come to the Soviet Union not as a reporter, but presented himself within a political context, which meant that he was not subject to the rules of the Narkomindel and that unfavorable reporting would not (directly) cost him his income.

Of all foreign correspondents Walter Duranty served in Moscow the longest, and during his twelve year tenure he became an internationally recognized authority on the Soviet Union. Duranty had no connections to the ideological left, and presented himself as a politically impartial observant of the Soviet experiment, wishing to inform the public of what was really going on in Russia, stating in one of his articles that "your correspondent has no brief for or against [Stalinism], nor any purpose save to try to tell the truth".¹⁰⁶ This series of

¹⁰⁴ Whitman Bassow, *The Moscow Correspondents*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1988) 65.

¹⁰⁵ William Henry Chamberlin, "Soviet Taboos", *Foreign Affairs* 13, no. 3 (April 1935) 431.

¹⁰⁶ Walter Duranty, "Stalinism Smashes Foes In Marx's Name", *The New York Times*. 24 June 1931.

articles that Duranty wrote on the successes of collectivization – published in the *New York Times* in 1931 – earned him the prestigious Pulitzer prize in 1932 and made him one of the most influential journalists of his time.¹⁰⁷ The jury had nothing but praise for Duranty’s articles, stating that:

Mr. Duranty’s dispatches show profundity and intimate comprehension of conditions in Russia and of the causes of those conditions. They are marked by scholarship, profundity, impartiality, sound judgment and exceptional clarity and are excellent examples of the best type of foreign correspondence.¹⁰⁸

Duranty’s supposed impartiality and increase in credibility that came with his Pulitzer prize, made him incredibly useful to the Soviet government. In Duranty the government found a channel to broadcast a more ‘nuanced’ view on Soviet society, and even though his articles were praised for their impartiality, Duranty was still subject to what the censor allowed him to report. For Duranty however, the prize was the crowning piece of his work; it showed how far his reporting had come since the Riga days, finally winning the approval of the American audience.¹⁰⁹

As the famine unfolded in Ukraine, the screws of Soviet censorship on foreign correspondents were tightened. In February 1933 all travel within the Soviet Union was restricted, and censors only sparsely allowed the use of euphemistic words like “food deficit”, “food shortages” and “malnutrition” regarding the situation in Ukraine.¹¹⁰ However, as Soviet officials tried their best to conceal the famine, almost all foreign journalists stationed in Moscow were aware of the tragedy that was killing millions in the Soviet countryside. Even Walter Duranty knew, although he never mentioned it in any of his articles. After privately expressing his concern about the situation at the British Embassy in Moscow in late 1932, Soviet officials resorted to intimidation and visited Duranty at his home, which made him very nervous. British diplomat William Strang reported back to the British Foreign Office that Duranty had been “waking up to the truth for some time” but that he had chosen to “not hitherto let the great American public into the secret”.¹¹¹ Strang vividly described the episode:

Duranty was visited by emissaries from governing circles here (not from the Censorship Department of the Peoples Commissariat for Foreign Affairs but from higher spheres) who reproached him with unfaithfulness. How could he, who had been so fair for ten years, choose this moment to stab them in the back, when critical

¹⁰⁷ Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine, Stalins War on Ukraine* (Milton Keynes: Allen Lane, 2017) 316.

¹⁰⁸ James William Crowl, *Angels in Stalins Paradise*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1982) 143.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ William Henry Chamberlin, “Soviet Taboos”, *Foreign Affairs* 13, no. 3 (April 1935) 433.

¹¹¹ William Strang, “Situation in Soviet Union: Soviet Attitude towards Foreign Press” in *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, ed. Marco Carynnyk et al. (Kingston Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1988) 209.

negotiations were taking place and when the prospects of recognition by the U.S.A. was brightening? What did he mean by it, and did he not realize that the consequences for himself might be serious. Let him take this warning.¹¹²

Duranty's reluctance to share the 'secret' and write about the famine, may also have had secondary motives: reporting negatively on the effects of collectivization would have discredited his previous prize-winning articles and would tarnish his reputation. By the time Jones met with Duranty in Moscow on March 19 1933, Duranty seems to have made up his mind. Jones writes of the meeting in his diary: "Moscow, 19 March. Met with Litvinoff [Maksim Litvinov, Soviet minister of Foreign Affairs] and Duranty. I don't trust Duranty. He still believes in collectivization".¹¹³ And Duranty was not the only one who kept silent. Chamberlin wrote of his experience in Moscow: "To anyone who lived in Russia in 1933 and who kept his eyes and ears open, the historicity of the famine is simply not open to question," yet, Chamberlin continues, "Officially there was no famine. For the controlled Soviet press and for the censor who kept a watchful eye on foreign press messages it simply did not exist".¹¹⁴ Eugene Lyons, correspondent in Moscow for *United Press*, recalls that in spite of the travel ban and the lack of eyewitness accounts coming from the famine stricken areas, "not even a deaf-and-dumb reporter hermetically sealed in a hotel room could have escaped knowledge of the essential facts".¹¹⁵ Everyone knew, yet few dared mention it.

Nevertheless, despite the overwhelming silence on behalf of the Moscow foreign press corps, something started to stir within the framework of foreign journalists. Most reporters had come to Russia with an inherently positive view of socialism, intent on reporting on the pivotal change happening in Russia, a new era in world history. However, as they came face to face with the realities of what this meant to the ordinary Soviet citizen on individual level, their enthusiasm subsided. While most journalists chose to remain silent for now in order to safeguard their income, only taking an apologetic stance in their memoirs which were published long after they had left Moscow, some chose to speak out. Where Chamberlin and Lyons point to the all-seeing censors as the reason for their silence, other journalists – including Gareth Jones – prove that the power of the censors was not absolute, and that it was indeed possible to bypass them.

¹¹² William Strang, "Situation in Soviet Union: Soviet Attitude towards Foreign Press" in *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, ed. Marco Carynnyk et al. (Kingston Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1988) 209.

¹¹³ Gareth Jones, Diary 2 1933, [garethjones.org](https://www.garethjones.org), File 3, accessed 20 January 2019: <https://www.garethjones.org/diaries/1933-PDFs/GJ-D2-P33-P49.pdf> 15.

¹¹⁴ William Henry Chamberlin, "Soviet Taboos", *Foreign Affairs* 13, no. 3 (April 1935) 433.

¹¹⁵ Eugene Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1937) 572.

2.2 Exposing The Truth – “Our Children Were Eating Grass”

Even though all Moscow based correspondents knew of the famine, eye witness accounts were scarce. Of all foreign journalists stationed in Moscow only a handful reporters defied the Soviet government and took it upon themselves to expose the effects of Stalin’s lightning collectivization. Rhea Clyman, a Canadian freelance journalist, was the first reporter to witness the start of the Holodomor in September 1932. In an attempt to inform her readers of how fifteen years of communism had treated the ordinary Soviet citizen, she packed up a car with provisions, supplies and gasoline and embarked on a four week long road trip through the southwestern parts of the Soviet Union. Starting from Moscow, passing through Ukraine, the Don Cossack Republic and ultimately ending in the Caucasus. As Clyman passed through the Ukrainian villages, she encountered the grim reality of collectivization:

The villages were strangely forlorn and deserted. I could not understand at first. The houses were empty, the doors flung wide open, the roofs were caving in. I felt that we were following in the wake of some hungry horde that was sweeping on ahead of us and laying all these homes bare. In one village I thought I heard a dog barking. I wanted to go back and look, but there was something in the stoical abandon of these homes that terrified the intuition of a stranger. When we had passed ten, fifteen of these villages I began to understand. These were the homes of those thousands of expropriated peasants—the kulaks—I had seen working in the mines and cutting timber in the North. We sped on and on, raising a thick cloud of dust in front and behind, but still those empty houses staring out with unseeing eyes raced on ahead of us.¹¹⁶

Clyman stopped in another village, attempting to buy some extra provisions from the peasants, but she was quickly informed that her money was useless here. The food was long gone, and the children of the village had been reduced to eating grass in order to survive:

The woman explained that in this village no one had any eggs or milk to sell; the cows and chickens had been slaughtered long ago. They were all starving in the spring.

[...]

“We are good, hard-working peasants, loyal Soviet citizens, but the village Soviet has taken our land from us. We are in the collective farm, but we do not get any grain. Everything, land, cows and horses, have been taken from us, and we have nothing to eat. Our children were eating grass in the spring...”

I must have looked unbelieving at this, for a tall, gaunt woman started to take the children’s clothes off. She undressed them one by one, prodded their sagging bellies,

¹¹⁶ Rhea Clyman, “Children Lived on Grass / Only Food in Farm Area / Grain Taken From Them Mile After Mile of Deserted Villages in Ukrain[e] Farm Area Tells Story of Soviet Invasion” *The Toronto Evening Telegram*, 16 May 1933.

pointed to their spindly legs, ran her hand up and down their tortured, mis-shapen, twisted little bodies to make me understand that this was real famine. I shut my eyes, I could not bear to look at all this horror. “Yes,” the woman insisted, and the boy repeated, “they were down on all fours like animals, eating grass. There was nothing else for them.”¹¹⁷

After this shocking discovery Clyman vowed to herself to share the peasants’ desperate message with the world, and expose the suffering that was caused by Stalin’s collectivization. However, on 27 September Clyman was arrested by the GPU in Tbilisi on the final leg of her journey, and forcibly removed from the country on charges of publishing defamatory articles about the Soviet Union. A claim that was based on her previous articles describing conditions in Soviet prison camps in Karelia.¹¹⁸ Upon her return in Canada in the Autumn of 1932, she wrote a series of twenty two articles based on her experiences in Ukraine for *The Toronto Evening Telegram* entitled “Famine-Land”. Curiously enough, the paper decided to delay publication of Clymans stories until May 1933, weeks after Jones had broken the news of the famine internationally. And despite Clymans compelling account of events, her articles had little international impact.

It remains unclear whether Jones had any knowledge of what happened to Rhea Clyman and her stories of the famine. She is never mentioned in any of his articles, diaries and notes. Nevertheless, there was another journalist that Jones did have extensive meetings and correspondence with regarding the famine conditions in Ukraine. Malcolm Muggeridge, reporter for the *Manchester Guardian*, had travelled to Ukraine and the North Caucasus in late January 1933 by himself – just days before the travel ban for foreign journalists went into effect – following an anonymous tip about the starving peasants. The conditions Muggeridge encountered in Ukraine shocked him as much as they had shocked Rhea Clyman. Muggeridge writes of the episode:

“Hunger” was the word I heard most. Peasants begged a lift on the train from one station to another sometimes their bodies swollen up—a disagreeable sight—from lack of food. There were fewer signs of military terrorism than in the North Caucasus, though I saw another party of, presumably, kulaks being marched away under an armed guard at Dniepropetrovsk; the little towns and villages seemed just numb and the people in too desperate a condition even actively to resent what had happened.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Rhea Clyman, “Children Lived on Grass / Only Food in Farm Area / Grain Taken From Them Mile After Mile of Deserted Villages in Ukrain[e] Farm Area Tells Story of Soviet Invasion” *The Toronto Evening Telegram*, 16 May 1933.

¹¹⁸ Jars Balan, Lecture for UJE, 17 April 2017.

¹¹⁹ From a Correspondent in Russia (Malcolm Muggeridge), “The Soviet And The Peasantry: An Observer's Notes II. Hunger In The Ukraine” *Manchester Guardian*, 27 March 1933.

Muggeridge, like so many of the foreign journalists in Moscow, was once an avid supporter of the Bolsheviks. He and his wife Kitty Webb, niece of the well-known Soviet sympathizers Sidney and Beatrice Webb, had come to Moscow in September 1932 to “help build socialism”,¹²⁰ but quickly grew disillusioned after seeing what this meant in practice, and Muggeridge’s reporting grew increasingly critical of Soviet policy. Upon his return from the countryside, Muggeridge wrote three damning articles on his experiences in Ukraine, but was duly aware that they would not be approved by the censor and decided to hold on to the stories until an opportunity arose to smuggle them out of the country.

The day after Jones’ arrival in Moscow, the two journalists met each other for the first time, speaking freely about the famine that was sweeping over the Soviet countryside. Muggeridge provided Jones with ample information about his foray into Ukraine of which Jones writes in his diary: “Muggeridge: Collapse of Bolshevism. Returned from villages – terrible – dying. No seed for sowing! Practically no winter sowing [underlined in blue pencil] Outlook for rest [of the] year disastrous. End of party absolutely inevitable”.¹²¹ And as Jones prepared for his walking tour, Muggeridge found a way to smuggle his three articles out of the Soviet Union via the diplomatic bag of the British consul, evading the censor.

However, as the articles arrived at the editorial office of the *Manchester Guardian*, their publication was again delayed, as was the case with Rhea Clyman. Muggeridge’s story was only published – anonymously, as naming Muggeridge as the author would put him at risk – two days before Jones made his message known to the world on 29 March, inconspicuously placed in middle of the newspaper, attracting very little attention. Moreover, as Muggeridge states in a letter to Jones, the articles were “villainously cut”, and heavily edited by the *Manchester Guardian*.¹²² The cases of Clyman and Muggeridge prove that it was possible to circumvent the censor and bring the news of what was really happening in the Soviet Union to Western newspapers. The Western news agencies however, provided another obstacle in international reporting of the famine.

It appears that dispatches containing news about the famine were not received with high interest by news agencies, or that they felt a sense of urgency in publishing these articles. Jones’ articles were the first accounts that were published immediately in prominent newspapers around the world, and the first to attract attention. In his years working for Lloyd

¹²⁰ Theresa Cherfas, “Reporting Stalin’s Famine: Jones and Muggeridge: A Case Study in Forgetting and Rediscovery” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 14:4 (Autumn 2013) 785.

¹²¹ Gareth Jones, Diary 1 1933, [garethjones.org](https://www.garethjones.org), File 2, accessed 21 January 2019: <https://www.garethjones.org/diaries/1933-PDFs/GJ-D1-P16-P31.pdf> 6.

¹²² Malcolm Muggeridge, Letter dated 27 April 1933, accessed 31 January 2019: https://www.garethjones.org/soviet_articles/malcolm_muggeridge_correspondence_april_1933.htm

George and with his previously published articles about the Soviet Union, Gareth Jones had become an established name in British journalism. He had proven that he had an astute understanding of the international political situation in the 1930's, which meant that newspapers were eager to publish his articles.¹²³ Nevertheless, the fact that both Muggeridge's and Clyman's reports were left untouched on the desks of their editors for weeks, even months, only to appear in the papers heavily edited, suggests that the news value of the famine was not very high.

In 1921, the news of the famine in Southern Russia was received with shock and horror in the West. Action was immediately taken: on international level the ARA offered relief, private initiatives had raised funds to feed the starving peasants as well, and newspapers covered developments in Russia extensively. However, circumstances had changed in the 1930's. In 1929 the Great Depression hit international markets, and in Western Europe the fascist ideologies of Hitler and Mussolini gained more momentum. Western intellectuals began to question the capitalist status quo and turned their gaze east toward the Soviet Union, hoping to find an ideological example to follow. Early news of the famine was received with disbelief and outright hostility, which made news outlets hesitant to publish accounts on the famine.¹²⁴ The fact that millions were dying of hunger as a result of deliberate policies by the Soviet government, was incompatible with the image of the Soviet Union that Western audiences had, and they were not willing to adjust their views.

¹²³ Theresa Cherfas, "Reporting Stalin's Famine: Jones and Muggeridge: A Case Study in Forgetting and Rediscovery" *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 14:4 (Autumn 2013) 781.

¹²⁴ James William Crowl, *Angels in Stalins Paradise*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1982) 141.

2.3 Political Pilgrims – “Growing Pains”

The 1930's saw the first wave of political estrangement among Western societies and intellectuals in the twentieth century. The Wall Street Crash of 1929 heralded the end of ‘the roaring twenties’ and gave way to a new era of widespread economic, social and political problems. Gareth Jones, living in New York at the time of the recession, witnessed the events resulting from the crash first-hand, reporting in 1932: “Disillusionment! That is the dominant note in America today, disillusionment among the businessmen, disillusionment among the workers, disillusionment among the unemployed”.¹²⁵ Disillusionment is indeed the word that captures Western sentiments in the 1930's. The economically prosperous years leading up to the Depression appeared nothing more than a house of cards, and when it all came tumbling down, many were rudely awoken from the slumber of capitalism, causing an upsurge of social and political critique.

These critiques were especially heard from the side of Western intellectuals. It is worth noting that the general predisposition of intellectuals toward the status quo of their society may have differed from that of most people. However, in researching this period of time, the voices of Western intellectuals overpower the political debate. Generally more concerned with the direction society took in the early twentieth century, the voices of intellectuals were published more in newspapers and books than the opinion of ‘the common man’, thus having a larger impact and influence on public opinion.

During the economic boom of the 1920's many intellectuals had held predominantly apolitical views, more concerned with what in the 1960's became called ‘self-expression’ than with the trivial ideas of politics and business.¹²⁶ Business was going well, money was changing hands, and life – in general – was good; prosperous times had made many believe that the social order they lived in was natural and unchangeable.¹²⁷ The Great Depression changed this view dramatically. As poverty became more visible and tangible in the form of soaring unemployment, homelessness, hunger marches, and suicides related to debt, the unwavering faith in capitalism that defined the 1920's came to a halt. Many believed that the Great Depression was no accident, but the only logical outcome of an inherently flawed system. Granville Hicks, an American novelist and literary critic, strikingly articulates how the Depression influenced his political views:

¹²⁵ Gareth Jones, “Land of Tragedy And Disillusion”, *The Western Mail*, 30 March 1932.

¹²⁶ Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) 76.

¹²⁷ Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1955) 24.

How easy it was to drift in 1927, 1928, and 1929! Though the social order still seemed viciously inefficient and indecently corrupt, there was, I consoled myself, nothing that I could do about it. I was very much occupied with personal problems and tasks of literary criticism, and I managed to forget about the world in which I lived... Then came the crash!... The depression wiped out the illusion of security, as I saw my friends and even relatives lose their jobs and witnessed every time I went on the street the spectacle of the unemployed. I no longer tried to conceal from myself the fact that the system was rotten...¹²⁸

As capitalism was seemingly disintegrating, it left many with a disenchanting view of society, and Western intellectuals went looking for an alternative.

For many intellectuals of the 1930's the answer lay in Marxism. The Marxist worldview provided a comprehensible explanation for what was happening in the world, making sense of the economic crisis and all phenomena related to it. More and more Western intellectuals came to reject the capitalist values society was built on, and became attracted not only to the idea of Marxism, but also to its professional executors in the Soviet Union. During the revolutionary years in Russia following 1917 and extending into the 1920's, Marxism was not received with great interest in Western society and was subject to wide criticism. And though developments in Russia were followed closely, the revolution was viewed with suspicion and hostility. Confidence in the capitalist status quo was high and, as was mentioned earlier in this chapter, there was relatively little reliable knowledge available about the socialist experiment that was going on in the Soviet Union. Moreover, with the policy of NEP in place until 1928, it seemed the revolution had failed and that a return to capitalism was inevitable. When the stock market collapsed in 1929, attitudes toward the Soviet Union changed dramatically and the hostility of the 1920's was replaced with open-mindedness and general enthusiasm.¹²⁹

It was the economic crisis that opened the floodgates for social criticism and caused general political alienation among Western society, but the rise of fascism in Europe caused even more fundamental objections to the social system. As the menace of Nazism grew over Europe, the economically struggling and politically unstable British and French governments did relatively little to prevent fascist ideology from spreading. The hesitant approach of both governments stood in sharp contrast to the Soviet Union, which succeeded in projecting a powerful image of being the only opponent of fascism. As the former mighty capitalist forces failed to act and were seemingly coming to an end, many believed the new world order to exist of a bitter division between communism and fascism. According to the Marxist doctrine,

¹²⁸ Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) 79.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* 77.

fascism was the last refuge of the bourgeoisie, the dying stage of capitalism. The people would still be ruled by irresponsible bourgeois demagogues, and in order to achieve a dictatorship of the proletariat, fascism had to be defeated.¹³⁰ Fear of fascism prompted an even larger wave of Western sympathy towards the Soviet Union, and as Malcolm Muggeridge remarks: “Stalin became the antidote to Hitler”.¹³¹

Stalin’s policies and economic achievements, the Five-Year-Plan in particular, were followed with great interest, and formed the base of the favorable predisposition of Western intellectuals towards the Soviet Union. The planned economy had propelled the Soviet Union forward, its successes stood in sharp contrast to the waning economy in the West, and enthusiasm and admiration for the Soviet accomplishments grew explosively. And even though some Westerners recognized the flaws and liabilities that came with these policies, they perceived the wrongs of their own societies as much greater and more serious. The defects of Soviet society were often deemed ‘growing pains’, or hiccups on the path to success, whereas the flaws of capitalism were a reflection of its decline and disintegration. In their enthusiasm for the Soviet Union and overall faith in communism, other Westerners even went as far as flat-out denying any imperfections in Soviet society. Paul Hollander describes the general attitude of some Western intellectuals towards Soviet flaws in *Political Pilgrims* as follows:

Instead of ignoring or slighting the positive features of the regime, they ignored or played down whatever was negative. More than that: they fervently denied, dismissed, disbelieved, and rationalized those “details” that would detract from the shining whole; they went to the other extreme by refusing to admit or discuss *any* imperfection.¹³²

Caught up in the economic turmoil that shaped the early 1930’s, intellectuals were thus extremely critical of their own society, while at the same time willing to overlook any negative aspects of the Soviet regime. This unwillingness to admit to negative features of Soviet society meant that news of the famine, published in Western news outlets in 1932-33, was not received well at all. Readers were not susceptible to the message that Jones and his fellow whistleblowers were trying to convey. It was deemed ‘misinformation’ and immediately considered anti-Soviet propaganda.¹³³ The favorable predisposition that many intellectuals held towards communism led them to visit the Soviet Union themselves, in order

¹³⁰ Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1955) 29.

¹³¹ Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) 81.

¹³² *Ibid.* 96.

¹³³ *Ibid.* 110.

to dispel these 'lies' about scarcities and food shortages. Unbeknownst to the visitors from the West, Stalin, keen on containing the news of the suffering peasantry within the borders of the Union, had found in them a new ally in covering up the massive famine. He was more than happy to accommodate his guests, showing a carefully constructed polished version of reality, where hunger did not exist, keeping the *fata morgana* of the socialist utopia intact.

The tragedy that Jones discovered in Ukraine appeared to be a message that the world just did not want to hear. The foreign journalists working in Moscow were all certainly aware of the famine, but chose to remain silent on the issue. Of course, working conditions were challenging: they were hindered by censorship, and unfavorable reports of famine in the Soviet Union could jeopardize their position as reporter. The news that did appear under their name in Western newspapers depended on what the censor allowed, but this did not mean that it was impossible for accounts of the famine to reach the West. Clyman, Muggeridge and Jones all found a way to bypass the Soviet Press Department, and publish their alarming stories, but newspapers were hesitant to publish. Public opinion on the Soviet Union was overwhelmingly positive, as Western society was seemingly crumbling in light of the Great Depression and the rise of fascism. However, even though Jones' articles were published surprisingly quickly and gained international attention, Soviet peasants continued to suffer. Where were the initiatives that had fed the starving Soviet population in 1921? Had Stalin really managed to deceive the West and conceal the deaths of millions of citizens?

Chapter 3: The Politics of Famine

3.1 Containment

Gareth Jones' message of widespread famine in Soviet Ukraine was not a claim that came out of thin air. For a while now rumors of famine had been spreading, but with Jones' articles exposing the horrible truth and the attention they attracted, Moscow could no longer ignore it. Contrary to the famine of 1921, the news of the famine in 1933 had to be contained at all costs. To Stalin, acknowledging the famine and accepting relief from Western countries as in 1921, was unacceptable. Necessary measures had to be taken in order to make sure that knowledge of the famine did not leave the Soviet Union.

Containing the news of the famine was crucial to Stalin. To understand his motivation in doing so, it is important to discern what was at stake for the Soviet Union. The famine that was sweeping through large parts of the Soviet Union was the result of a series of policies that functioned on two different levels. Firstly, it was an economic matter; the grain that was requisitioned was of vital importance to the Soviet government. The implementation of the first Five-Year-Plan in 1928, was followed by economic chaos. The plan was highly ambitious and promised a rapid turnaround in the economic status of the Soviet Union. However, due to its hasty implementation and the fact that so many new policies in so many different fields had been carried out simultaneously, the plan was incredibly costly. Moreover, the first year it ran at a tremendous loss, policies were constantly adjusted and plans changed constantly which meant that precious resources were wasted. By 1930 the Soviet government was faced with an acute shortage of capital.¹³⁴ To make up for this monetary deficit and continue the plan, Soviet officials increased grain exports. The revenue that was made was used to foster the Five-Year-Plan and aid in collectivization efforts through purchasing new machinery. However, as the Great Depression hit international markets, the price of grain dropped significantly while prices of manufactured goods (such as the agricultural equipment the government planned on purchasing) increased.¹³⁵ This meant that grain export had to be maximized in order to provide the necessary capital to complete the Five-Year-Plan, which in turn meant that in order to continue selling grain to Western countries, it was vital that any knowledge of famine as a result of grain requisitions on Soviet land be contained within its borders. Furthermore, diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union as a sovereign nation by the United States was in the air. This could provide the much needed economic benefits to

¹³⁴ Bohdan Krawchenko, "The Man-Made Famine of 1932-1933 and Collectivization in Soviet Ukraine" in *Famine in Ukraine 1932-1933*, ed. Roman Serbyn and Bohdan Krawchenko (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1986) 17.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

strengthen the Soviet economy, as well as admission into the League of Nations and non-aggression treaties with European power, all of great strategic importance to Stalin.¹³⁶

Secondly, the famine was partial to Stalin's personal politics. According to Stalin Ukrainian resistance against collectivization and the famine were one and the same. As was described in Chapter One, Stalin interpreted the famine as a personal attack. Acknowledging that a famine that was killing millions of Ukrainian peasants and providing any form of relief to keep them from starving to death would mean defeat. The starving peasants were not victims, they were perpetrators. Making concessions to these 'terrorists' – even acknowledging that these hindering factors existed – would lower the esteem of the Soviet Union in the international political arena, precisely at the moment when it mattered the most. As the Soviet government propagandized the social and economic triumphs of the Five-Year-Plan while the rest of the world experienced the biggest economic crisis yet, and with American diplomatic recognition beckoning at the horizon, the scandal of the famine on the Soviet countryside could seriously jeopardize the Soviet international position.

Any evidence that a famine had occurred or was occurring on Soviet territory thus had to be concealed. Inside the Soviet Union the famine was a public secret: public speech was tightly controlled, anyone who spoke of the famine could be sent to the Gulag for ten years. From school teachers to high-ranking Soviet officials, anyone who spoke about it was at risk. Medical documents were forged; peasants who succumbed to hunger officially died of other causes like 'cardiac arrest' or 'infectious disease'. When census records showed a gap of more than 8 million 'missing people' predominantly in Ukraine, the publication was immediately halted, the results were destroyed and the scientists responsible for the numbers were tried and executed.¹³⁷ Official census numbers of the years immediately following the famine are still missing from archives to this day. However, rumours were still spreading, and as the famine reports by Gareth Jones were published and gained more international momentum, different measures were needed to bring the news to a stop.

3.1.1 Competing Narratives – “A Big Scare Story”

The news of the famine and how millions of Soviet peasants were dying of hunger, so compellingly described by Gareth Jones in his Berlin press conference, was quickly picked up by international news outlets. However, Jones' accounts of dying peasants and children with swollen stomachs were quickly dismissed by reports coming from Moscow. On 31 March

¹³⁶ Marco Carynnyk, “Blind Eye To Murder” in *Famine in Ukraine 1932-1933*, ed. Roman Serbyn and Bohdan Krawchenko (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1986) 110.

¹³⁷ Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine, Stalins War on Ukraine* (Milton Keynes: Allen Lane, 2017) 306.

1933, the *New York Times* published an article by Walter Duranty that discredited Jones' claims of famine in the Soviet Union, calling it "a big scare story" and denouncing Jones by name. Duranty responds to Jones' accusations with mitigating words:

Mr. Jones is a man of a keen and active mind, [...] but the writer thought Mr. Jones's judgment was somewhat hasty and asked him on what it was based. It appeared that he had made a forty-mile walk through villages in the neighborhood of Kharkov and had found conditions sad.

I suggested that that was a rather inadequate cross-section of a big country but nothing could shake his conviction of impending doom.¹³⁸

Duranty cleverly places Jones' story against the background of the diplomatic dispute that occurred after six British engineers employed by the Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Company working on construction project in the Soviet Union, were arrested on charges of espionage. In his article Duranty implied that Jones' story served as retaliation for the arrest, questioning Jones' neutrality in his reports of the famine. At the same time Duranty admitted that there were indeed food shortages, stating that "It is all too true that the novelty and mismanagement of collective farming, [...] have made a mess of Soviet food production". However, he continues, the shortages were to be expected in a country that is going through such a momentous change as the Soviet Union, explaining the casualties away by asserting: "to put it brutally – you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs". In other words, in order to reach communism, the end justifies the means.

Duranty continues his report by stressing that the conditions Jones found in Ukraine were anecdotal evidence; one cannot draw conclusions from visiting a handful of Ukrainian villages. Duranty presented more reliable information, gathered from inquiries from reputable sources of Soviet commissariats and foreign diplomats. These were the facts according to Duranty, formulated in impressive Orwellian double-speak that was sure to please the Soviet censors:

There is a 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 deaths from starvation, but there is widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition.

In short, conditions are definitely bad in certain sections- the Ukraine, North Caucasus and Lower Volga. The rest of the country is on short rations but nothing worse. These conditions are bad, but there is no famine.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Walter Duranty, "Russians Hungry But Not Starving" *The New York Times*, 31 March 1933.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

Duranty's direct attack on Jones was incredibly useful in the Soviet efforts to conceal the famine. Duranty was a credible source, praised by the Pulitzer jury for his impartiality and neutrality in his reports on the Soviet Union. The fact that he provided a 'nuanced' view of the situation in southern Russia, admitting in his statement that there were cases of hunger but that a famine was out of the question, discredited Jones' reports and called the legitimacy of his claim into question.

In his autobiography *Assignment in Utopia* Eugene Lyons recounts the events preceding Duranty's article denigrating Jones in the *New York Times* in detail. Although it is questionable whether the conspiracy as described by Lyons actually occurred, it does capture the essence of how the Moscow correspondents were forced to operate and what was happening to Jones:

Throwing down Jones was as unpleasant a chore as fell to any of us in years of juggling facts to please dictatorial regimes – but throw him down we did, unanimously and in almost identical formulas of equivocation. 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 denials.

The scene in which the American press corps combined to repudiate Jones is fresh in my mind. It was in the evening and Comrade Umansky, the soul of graciousness, consented to meet us in the hotel room of a correspondent. He knew that he had a strategic advantage over us because of the Metro-Vickers story. He could afford to be gracious. Forced by competitive journalism to jockey for the inside track with officials, it would have been professional suicide to make an issue of the famine at this particular time. There was much bargaining in a spirit of gentlemanly give-and-take, under the effulgence of Umansky's gilded smile, before a formula of denial was worked out.

We admitted enough to soothe our consciences, but in roundabout phrases that damned Jones as a liar. The filthy business having been disposed of, someone ordered vodka and *zakuski*, Umansky joined the celebration, and the party did not break up until the early morning hours.¹⁴⁰

Though Jones' claims were not "snowed under by denials" as Lyons suggests – Duranty was the only journalist to directly challenge the claims in the press – it does offer another explanation for the overwhelming silence on behalf of so many foreign correspondents. With preparations underway for the Metropolitan-Vickers trial, access to the courtroom had significant priority over reporting the famine. And being on good terms with the censors was thus more important than ever.¹⁴¹ Nonetheless, as the trial ended and all six engineers were acquitted, the silence surrounding the famine remained.

¹⁴⁰ Eugene Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1937) 576.

¹⁴¹ Marco Carynnyk, "Making News Fit To Print", in *Famine in Ukraine 1932-1933*, ed. Roman Serbyn and Bohdan Krawchenko (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1986) 76.

Duranty's damning article did not discourage Jones in his endeavors in exposing the famine. Moreover, Jones was probably not "the most surprised human being alive" as he was well aware that in exposing the famine he could expect some fierce rebuttals coming from Moscow. In a letter to the editors, published in the *New York Times* on 13 May, Jones responds to Duranty's denial of the famine in a flaming article, refuting all Duranty's arguments. Jones describes how Soviet censorship has rendered foreign journalists toothless, and how they are working under duress:

Journalists [...] are allowed to write, but the censorship has turned them into masters of euphemism and understatement. Hence they give "famine" the polite name of "food shortage" and "starving to death" is softened down to read as "widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition."¹⁴²

He continues his story by explaining how he collected his information, countering Duranty's claim of Jones' hasty conclusions, finally ending his narrative with a pointed comment:

Mr. Duranty says that I saw in the villages no dead human beings nor animals. That is true, but one does not need a particularly nimble brain to grasp that even in the Russian famine districts the dead are buried and that there the dead animals are devoured.

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.

Looking for an ally to support him in his response to Duranty, Jones turned to Malcolm Muggeridge. When Muggeridge's articles about the famine were first published – days before Jones' – Jones had supported Muggeridge in his claims with several letters published in *The Manchester Guardian*. Now that Jones was personally under attack by Duranty, he expected Muggeridge to do the same for him. In a letter to Jones Muggeridge assures him: "Duranty is, of course, a plain crook, though an amusing little man in his way. [...] If you send me a cutting of Duranty's piece [referring to Duranty's article of 31 March], I'll gladly write to the *New York Times* a letter of protest".¹⁴³ Though Muggeridge did write a letter – a carbon copy exists in the personal archive of Gareth Jones – it was never published in the *New York Times*. It is unclear whether Muggeridge ever did send the letter to the newspaper, or if the editors

¹⁴² Gareth Jones, "Mr. Jones Replies: Former Secretary of Lloyd George Tells of Observations in Russia" *The New York Times*, 13 May 1933.

¹⁴³ Malcolm Muggeridge, Letter dated 17 April 1933, [garethjones.org](https://www.garethjones.org/soviet_articles/malcolm_muggeridge_correspondence_april_1933.htm). Accessed 20 February 2019
https://www.garethjones.org/soviet_articles/malcolm_muggeridge_correspondence_april_1933.htm

decided not to publish it due to its length and rambling nature,¹⁴⁴ though it is a fact that Jones remained alone in refuting Duranty's famine denials.

Duranty never directly responded to Jones' letter, although he did continue publishing articles denying any famine conditions in the Soviet Union, asserting that these claims were "fundamental absurdities".¹⁴⁵ Duranty even insinuated that the famine reports were a feat of Nazi propaganda:

The accession of Adolf Hitler to power brought new hope – and in some cases new money – to Russian émigré circles in Germany, the Baltic States and elsewhere. These émigrés – like some other more disinterested observers of Soviet affairs – cannot see the woods for the trees and are only too ready to confuse causes and effects.¹⁴⁶

Though Duranty did admit that conditions were hard, and that people were dying as a result, he underlined again and again that a famine was out of the question:

The excellent harvest about to be gathered shows that any report of a famine in Russia is today an exaggeration or malignant propaganda. The food shortage which has affected almost the whole population in the last year, and particularly the grain-producing provinces – that is, the Ukraine, North Caucasus, the Lower Volga Region – has, however, caused heavy loss of life . . .¹⁴⁷

As Duranty published his reassuring articles in the *New York Times* in the spring of 1933 from the safety of his office in Moscow, people in the famine stricken areas were dying in droves. Demographers estimate that as a direct result from the famine, Ukrainian peasants were dying at a rate of 25,000 a day. By comparison, in World War I about 6000 were killed a day.¹⁴⁸

Though his initial articles were refuted by Duranty, Jones did not give up. Over the course of twenty-one articles published in different newspapers, Jones continued to provide evidence of the famine. Through his eye-witness accounts, interviews with starving peasants and extensive knowledge on the political background of the Soviet Union, Jones was able to create a detailed and thoroughly researched study that uncovered the extensive human suffering in Soviet Ukraine. While it is impossible to measure the direct impact on its audience and general reception of these articles in Great Britain and the United States, newspaper records show that a lively public discussion was taking shape in intellectual circles, where contradicting the accounts of famine became a commodity.

¹⁴⁴ Ray Gamache argues that it could be a possibility that Muggeridge only sent a carbon copy to Jones to give the impression that he sent the letter to the *New York Times*, though this claim cannot be verified.

Ray Gamache, *Gareth Jones Eyewitness to the Holodomor* (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press, 2016) 205.

¹⁴⁵ Walter Duranty, "Russian Emigres Push Fight on Reds," *New York Times*, 12 August 1933.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Walter Duranty, "Famine Toll Heavy in Southern Russia," *New York Times*, 24 August 1933.

¹⁴⁸ Marco Carynnyk, "The Famine *The Times* Couldn't Find" *American Jewish Committee Commentary* 76, no.5 (Nov 1, 1983) 35.

3.1.2 Competing Images – “Where Do You See Any Food Shortage?”

The first step for the Soviet government in denying and discrediting the growing number of stories about famine that were emerging in the Western press, was to create a competing narrative. Walter Duranty was a key figure in creating this narrative. His previous prize-winning articles on the Soviet Union and perceived impartiality in his reporting made him a credible source of information and thus indispensable in discrediting Jones’ story. However, to strengthen its position in concealing the famine and contradicting the various eyewitness reports in the Western press, the Soviet government could count on another tactic to sow confusion. If the competing narrative about famine conditions created by Walter Duranty on behalf of the Soviet censors wasn’t enough to discredit Jones’ stories, the competing image of the country painted by its recent Western visitors would assist in undermining its message even more.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, Western public opinion on the Soviet Union tended to be increasingly more positive following the Wall Street Crash of 1929. The Soviet government attempted to appeal to all layers of the Western public, yet its efforts were most successful amongst intellectuals.¹⁴⁹ Understanding that these benevolent sentiments could be extremely useful in maximizing support for the Soviet Union – in both public and political regards – the Soviet government arranged for Western Soviet supporters opportunities to visit their ‘promised land’. Indulging visitors through organizing extensive tours and interviews with high-ranking Soviet officials, the Soviet government could keep tight control over the Soviet image in the West, while at the same time validating the already rosy image its visitors had. Moreover, many Western visitors were eager to visit the country, in part to experience socialism in practice, but many also went to the Soviet Union to dispel ‘misinformation’ about food scarcities that were mentioned in the press.¹⁵⁰

As a result of these visits, any news and opinion in the Western press that reflected negatively on the Soviet Union was received with a certain amount of skepticism, and could expect serious riposte from Soviet sympathizers. Malcolm Muggeridge’s anonymous articles in *The Manchester Guardian* describing the famine in late March 1933, for example, received a lengthy reply from the National Committee of the Friends of the Soviet Union, which quoted extensive figures from Soviet sources, stating that “In Tsarist days the mass of the peasantry went hungry, ragged, illiterate, and lousy. To-day they are better fed, than ever before, wear better clothes (boots, for example), and have nearly wiped out illiteracy; not to

¹⁴⁹ Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) 107.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 118.

speak of village baths, libraries, crèches, etc”.¹⁵¹ Of course, a reply from a committee by such a name was to be expected, but on the other hand, many private individuals were willing to connect their names to denying the famine allegations as well. In a letter to the editor of *The Manchester Guardian* George Bernard Shaw, well-known Irish playwright and convinced communist, condemned the Western press together with twenty other recent visitors, for its one-sided reporting on the Soviet Union and ongoing “lie campaign”. Shaw et al. provided a very different eyewitness account of conditions in the Soviet Union, assuring that none of them encountered evidence of scarcities or hunger. On the contrary: “Everywhere we saw hopeful and enthusiastic working-class, [...] developing public works, increasing health services, extending education, achieving the economics independence of woman and the security of the child”.¹⁵²

Shaw, having visited the Soviet Union in 1931, exemplifies how politically useful Western visitors were manipulated by the Soviet government, only gaining confirmation in their existing views of the Soviet Union and only seeing what they wanted to see. Shaw was so convinced that all reports on food scarcities in the Soviet Union were the result of anti-Soviet propaganda that he, before crossing the border in Poland, had thrown his supply of provisions out of the train.¹⁵³ A story that Eugene Lyons recalls in his autobiography as well, describing the shock of the Russian audience upon hearing the story, as well as Shaw’s reaction when he was subsequently confronted by William H. Chamberlin’s wife: “Mrs. William Henry Chamberlin remarked to Shaw that Russians were sorry he did not wait to throw away his food on Soviet soil. Shaw looked around the restaurant and asked cutely: ‘Where do you see any food shortage?’”.¹⁵⁴

Gareth Jones was well aware of the Soviet efforts to impress its foreign visitors, and of the curated image they were allowed to see. Already in his first articles for *The Times* published in 1930 Jones describes how “groups of tourists, biased from the very beginning in favour of the “workers’ paradise,” are being shown by competent and charming guides the façade of Soviet Russia” continuing that visitors return home “blissfully ignorant of the hunger, discontent, opposition, and hatred which [...] have been steadily growing in intensity”.¹⁵⁵ Following his articles exposing the famine in 1933, Jones further developed this point in a speech at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London. Here Jones

¹⁵¹ E. H. Brown, “Agriculture in Russia: Breakdown Denied”, *Manchester Guardian*, 9 May 1933.

¹⁵² G. B. Shaw et al., “Letters to the Editor: Social Conditions in Russia, Recent Visitor’s Tribute”, *Manchester Guardian*, 2 March 1933.

¹⁵³ Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) 118.

¹⁵⁴ Eugene Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1937) 430.

¹⁵⁵ From Our Correspondent [Gareth Jones], “Rulers and the Ruled”, *The Times*, 13 October 1930.

specifically mentioned the letter sent to *The Manchester Guardian* by Shaw, criticizing Shaw and the other signatories for their gullibility, hypocrisy and ignorance on the real situation in Russia. Jones is even quoted stating that “After Dictator Josef V. Stalin, the hungry Russians most hate George Bernard Shaw for his accounts that they have plenty of food, whereas they are really starving”.¹⁵⁶

Jones continued to object to letters of Soviet sympathizers that appeared in the press, also fiercely backing up Muggeridge’s claims, expressing his concern over how eyewitness accounts of the famine were continuously discredited and denied. However, the Soviet government knew perfectly well that in order to continue discrediting these eyewitness accounts, new eyewitnesses who saw exactly what the government wanted them to see had to be made.

In August 1933, the former prime minister of France Edouard Herriot, was invited to visit the Soviet Union. Herriot, wishing to encourage trade relation between France and the Soviet Union, was shown around the country for two weeks. Aware of the famine allegations that were still emerging in the Western press, Herriot wanted to form an objective judgment of the situation, and insisted on visiting the famine stricken area’s in Ukraine. Naturally, Herriot saw not a single trace of hunger. Throughout the itinerary Soviet officials made sure that Herriot only witnessed a carefully orchestrated and polished version of the country. The day before Herriot was to arrive in Kyiv, all stores on his route in the city were filled with bread and other food. Any victims of the famine – homeless orphans, the dead and the dying – were removed from the streets, and people who were gawking at the sudden abundance in the shops were arrested and taken away by the NKVD, the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The food was not to be sold, and the stores were guarded day and night to protect them from attacks of hungry people.¹⁵⁷ The highlight of Herriot’s trip was a visit to a collective farm on the countryside, where the former prime minister could come into contact with ‘real people’. On the farm all peasants were replaced with well-fed, smiling actors and Herriot enjoyed an elaborate lunch with products of the farm which all disappeared again after Herriot left.¹⁵⁸

Herriot’s visit was highly publicized in the international press, and on his visit in the Soviet Union he was accompanied by a number of French journalists, as well as a delegation of Soviet officials and the French ambassador. Herriot, satisfied with his visit, had found no

¹⁵⁶ Edgar Ansel Mowrer, “Russian Famine Now As Great As Starvation Of 1921, Says Secretary Of Lloyd George”, *Chicago Daily News*, 29 March 1933.

¹⁵⁷ Testimony of I.I. Koval, “Twenty Years of Idhaconic Law” in *Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book* ed. S.O. Pidhainy (Toronto: The Basilian Press, 1953) 269.

¹⁵⁸ Etienne Thevenin, “France, Germany and Austria facing the Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine”, presented at the James Mace Memorial Panel, IAUS Congress, Donetsk, Ukraine (6 June 2005).

evidence of famine, concluding that any rumors of starvation that kept surfacing were being spread by adversaries of the Soviet Union. He publicly announced to the press that Ukraine was “a garden in full bloom”, asserting that “when one believes that the Ukraine is devastated by famine, allow me to shrug my shoulders”.¹⁵⁹ The Soviet newspaper *Pravda* reported on the visit that Herriot “categorically contradicted the lies of the bourgeois press in connection with a famine in the USSR”.¹⁶⁰

Herriot was an extremely useful mouthpiece for the Soviet denial of the famine. Famine denials from convinced Marxists like Shaw and his peers were not surprising, as these intellectuals tended to gloss over any negative sides of the Soviet Union. Herriot, however, was outspokenly hostile toward Marxism.¹⁶¹ And taking into consideration that he still was an influential figure in French politics, the denial of the famine from his side carried significant weight and was hugely influential on public opinion. After Herriot’s visit in the summer of 1933, it appears that international discourse in the press on the famine in Soviet Ukraine was dying down.

Indeed, by that time the famine itself had also – quite literally – died down, and was no longer at a high point. The famine had reached its peak in the spring and death rates were slowly dwindling in summer. As the harvest was ripening, workers and university students were rushed to the countryside to assist in bringing in the harvest to make up for the lack of manpower resulting from the high death rates. The harsh measures of grain requisition set by the Kremlin were slowly relaxed, and collective farms and peasants were now subjected to taxes based on a percentage of the harvest, rather than having to procure a fixed amount of grain.¹⁶² Slowly food became more available to peasants and people were no longer dying at alarming rates. However, ‘excess deaths’ as a result from malnutrition still continued in the following years.

As the travel ban on foreign journalists was lifted, Walter Duranty was the first journalist to be granted access to the famine regions. Immediately travelling to the North Caucasus and Ukraine, he reported of the “famine scare” in seven articles in the *New York Times*. On 13 September Duranty asserted from Rostov that:

The use of the word “famine” in connection with the North Caucasus is a sheer absurdity. There a bumper crop is being harvested as fast as tractors, horses, oxen,

¹⁵⁹ Etienne Thevenin, “France, Germany and Austria facing the Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine”, presented at the James Mace Memorial Panel, IAUS Congress, Donetsk, Ukraine (6 June 2005).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine, Stalins War on Ukraine* (Milton Keynes: Allen Lane, 2017) 288.

men, women and children can work. . . . There are plump babies in the nurseries or gardens of the collectives. Older children are watching fat calves or driving cattle. . . . Village markets are flowing with eggs, fruit, poultry, vegetables, milk and butter at prices far lower than in Moscow. A child can see that this is not famine but abundance.¹⁶³

On the matter of Ukraine, which was hit significantly harder by the famine, Duranty does admit that the Soviet government had something to do with the food shortages, while at the same time placing responsibility with the peasants themselves. Employing classic Soviet rhetoric, Duranty blames the peasants for producing a low yield:

the authorities took too much grain from the Ukraine. Meanwhile, a large number of peasants thought they could change the Communist party's collectivization policy by refusing to cooperate. Those two circumstances together— the flight of some peasants and the passive resistance of others— produced a very poor harvest last year, and even part of that was never reaped. The situation in the Winter was undoubtedly bad.¹⁶⁴

Duranty's articles form the final pieces of famine discourse in the Western press in 1933. Through men like Duranty and Herriot the Soviet government had effectively silenced Jones and pushed his narrative to the background. The fact that millions of people had died as a direct result of Soviet policies failed to materialize and gain traction with Western audiences. Moreover, Western governments showed no initiatives to aid the starving population in the Soviet Union. Were they as easily fooled by the Soviet tactics to silence the famine allegations as Edouard Herriot, or was there more at stake for them, making the reassuring Soviet narrative a convenient lie to believe?

¹⁶³ Walter Duranty, "Abundance Found in North Caucuses", *New York Times*, 14 September 1933.

¹⁶⁴ Walter Duranty, "Big Soviet Crop Follows Famine", *New York Time*, 16 September 1933.

3.2 The Legacy of the West

In addition to Walter Duranty's public denial of his famine articles, Gareth Jones suffered another consequence by his articles. His former employer, David Lloyd George, whom Jones had written about his foray into the Ukrainian countryside upon his return to Berlin,¹⁶⁵ publicly shunned Jones. Jones' connection to Lloyd George had provided him with access to the right people and had enabled him to travel to Ukraine. As Jones' articles exposing the famine broke in the Western press, Jones was explicitly named as Lloyd George's secretary, attributing to the credibility of his articles. But this brought Lloyd George in a difficult position.

Furious with Jones' deceit, the Soviet ambassador in London Ivan Maisky, called on Lloyd George demanding an explanation. After all, Jones had come to the Soviet Union under the pretense that he was Lloyd George's secretary, which had opened many doors for him.¹⁶⁶ And now Maisky wanted to know exactly what Lloyd George's motive for such an action was. In reply to Maisky, Lloyd George's personal secretary A.J. Sylvester assured that Lloyd George had been unaware of Jones' plans, officially distancing himself from him:

Your Excellency, I immediately reported to Mr. Lloyd George the subject-matter of our conversation today regarding Mr. Gareth Jones. I am desired by Mr. Lloyd George to say at once that he is extremely annoyed to hear of the action of Mr. Gareth Jones, for during the time he was in his employ, Mr. Lloyd George deliberately refused, not once but on a number of occasions, to allow him to go to Russia. Mr. Gareth Jones was not authorised to represent to you, as you stated he did on or about January 24 last, that he was visiting Russia for and on behalf of Mr. Lloyd George. He went absolutely on his own responsibility and entirely at his own expense. Mr. Lloyd George is communicating at once with Mr. Gareth Jones demanding an explanation of his behaviour, and I am to assure you that, after receiving his reply, Mr. Lloyd George will take the first opportunity of making it quite clear that he had nothing whatever to do with his visit to Russia.¹⁶⁷

Lloyd George had made it abundantly clear to Maisky that Jones worked alone. However, days before Jones was to depart on his journey to the Soviet Union in March 1933, Lloyd George had written a jubilant letter to Jones about his findings in Germany, thanking Jones for his insights, calling his notes "a first class piece of writing [...] all valuable".¹⁶⁸ But now that Jones' actions could have significant political consequences, Lloyd George washed his hands from him.

¹⁶⁵ See Chapter 1.3.

¹⁶⁶ See Maisky's letter lobbying for Gareth Jones' visit, quoted in Chapter 1.3.

¹⁶⁷ Theresa Chermas, "Reporting Stalin's Famine: Jones and Muggeridge: A Case Study in Forgetting and Rediscovery" *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 14:4 (Autumn 2013) 795.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 796.

This was something that Jones probably did not expect. With his extensive work on the famine that was wreaking havoc in Ukraine that appeared in different international newspapers, Gareth Jones only wished to accomplish one thing. Making this wish explicitly clear, he writes: “As a liberal and a pacifist, I wish that something could be done to relieve the suffering of the peasants in Russia, which [...] is worse than in 1921”.¹⁶⁹ However, the structural forms of aid that Jones called for, never materialized. To answer the question of why this happened – or more specifically, why it did not happen – one must look at the considerations and interests of both the American and British governments. As Jones was being shunned by his former employer, it becomes apparent that the famine was a highly sensitive issue in Anglo-American politics. And while the Soviet tactics to conceal the famine in the press attributed to creating confusion under the public through competing narratives and images, almost all Western governments were aware of the real situation. Both the American and British foreign offices had extensive and accurate knowledge of the situation in the Soviet Union, but were hesitant to act.

As early as 1928 reports of impending famine in Soviet Ukraine coming from foreign observers had started to reach the British Foreign Office in London. Pressing reports from Paul Scheffer, reporter for the *Berliner Tageblatt*, and Ewald Ammende, a Baltic German who was actively involved in the famine relief mission in 1921, foreshadowing a large-scale famine urged the office to consider its options and called for diplomatic action. By 1930 British ambassador Sir Esmond Ovey noted that a famine resulting from the new policy of collectivization and grain requisitions was very likely and that the government would not be “deflected by the death of even hundreds of thousands of peasants in a given district”.¹⁷⁰ In May 1932 William Strang, counselor of the British Embassy, reported back to London that “the Ukrainian peasants have been left in a state approaching famine after successive grain collections”, and that many peasants were desperately searching for food in order to survive.¹⁷¹ Ovey, in another dispatch, expressed his concern of how the crisis in Ukraine was growing bigger, writing “conditions in Ukraine are apparently unsatisfactory. Agriculture in particular has not accomplished what was expected of it and there is a severe food shortage”. In a reaction to this dispatch, Foreign Office official J.D. Greenway responds dryly that “as it is, we already have good reason to suppose that the situation is worse than “apparently

¹⁶⁹ Gareth Jones, “The Peasants in Russia, Exhausted Supplies”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 May 1933.

¹⁷⁰ Marco Carynnyk, *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, ed. Marco Carynnyk et al. (Kingston Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1988) xx.

¹⁷¹ William Strang, “Conditions in Soviet Union, 4 May 1932” in *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, ed. Marco Carynnyk et al. (Kingston Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1988) 5.

unsatisfactory”¹⁷² Exactly how “unsatisfactory” the situation really was would become clear after Ovey forwarded the extensive travel diary of Andrew Cairns to the Foreign Office in London in late June 1932. Cairns, a Canadian grain expert who had visited the Soviet Union multiple times, had just finished a tour of the Soviet Union commissioned by the Empire Marketing Board in London in order to assess the role of Soviet agriculture in the global grain market. Cairns’ vivid and detailed report of the human suffering he encountered in Ukraine and other parts of the Soviet Union made an enormous impression, and it was clear to the Foreign Office that famine was no longer approaching but a reality. Shocked by the “hair-raising” details in Cairns’ statement, Foreign Office official C. H. Bateman ordered to circulate copies of the report to various government agencies, including the Ministry of Agriculture and the Department of Trade. In a reaction to the embassy in Moscow Bateman writes:

It is a record of over-staffing, over-planning and complete incompetence at the centre; of human misery, starvation, death and disease amongst the peasantry. The pity of it is that this account cannot be broadcast to the world at large as an antidote to Soviet propaganda in general and to the *orbiter dicta* of such temporary visitors as Mr. Bernard Shaw, Lord Marley and others.

It is clear as daylight from this report that the only creatures who have any life at all in the districts visited are boars, pigs and other swine. Men, women, children, horses and other workers are left to die in order that the Five Year Plan shall at least succeed on paper. The contrast between the lot of the peasantry and those who are responsible for it is striking indeed. [...] Famine is not only a danger to be feared. From what Mr. Cairns says it is actually there and the appalling conditions of 1921 are apparently being reproduced.¹⁷³

The famine now was a reality, and even though Soviet officials tried their best to conceal what was going on, the British government knew the truth, and they weren’t alone. Even though the United States did not have diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union at the time – and therefore no official representatives in Moscow like Great Britain – the American government had known about the impending famine on the Soviet countryside for some time. Reliable intelligence about localized outbreaks of famine in Ukraine, had reached the State Department already in 1931.¹⁷⁴ American diplomats stationed in Riga also forwarded reports of conversations with travellers coming back from Ukraine and the North Caucasus to

¹⁷² Esmond Ovey, “Conditions in Ukraine, 18 July 1932” in *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, ed. Marco Carynnyk et al. (Kingston Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1988) 81.

¹⁷³ Esmond Ovey, “Conditions in Western Siberia, Kazakstan and Certain Districts along the Volga, 21 June 1932” in *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, ed. Marco Carynnyk et al. (Kingston Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1988) 76.

¹⁷⁴ James Mace, “The Politics of Famine: American Government and Press Response to the Ukrainian Famine 1932-1933” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1988) 78.

Washington, and on 15 November 1932 the State Department received its first official report that widespread famine had broken out in the Soviet Union. In the report, the famine was attributed to the failure of Soviet agriculture which was rooted in “the effects of the reaction of the peasantry as a whole [...] to a Government policy which deprived it of individual ownership in respect of most its property”.¹⁷⁵

It thus appears that in addition to being aware of the fact that the Soviet countryside was suffering as a result of a large-scale famine, both the American and British governments were also aware of the nature of this famine. The testimony of British official C.H. Bateman leaves nothing to the imagination, directly linking the famine to the policies that benefitted the Five Year Plan. The American statement is worded more carefully, which is in line with its official nature, but it does connect the famine to deliberate Soviet policies as well. This means that in 1932 both governments were aware that the famine that was killing millions in the Soviet Union was in fact a man-made famine.

As the situation in Ukraine continued to deteriorate, and the widespread hunger that was reported in the previous year turned into mass starvation, the reports of the British and American diplomats were supplemented with letters of famine victims, urging both governments to take action. Numerous letters, mostly anonymous testimonies, were sent to the British embassy in Moscow. In May 1933 William Strang writes to London that the letters describing social and living conditions in the Soviet Union are increasing, enclosing some of the translated letters in his dispatch. One anonymous peasant writes:

We request you, Mr. Representative, to approach your Government for our protection and with the object of saving the starving people of the U.S.S.R., who are living on all kinds of rotten stuff, carrion, marmots and cannibalism. [...] We are perishing and you are being appealed to by thousands of hungry peasants and workers in the U.S.S.R.¹⁷⁶

Nevertheless, the appeals remained unanswered. Such letters were also sent to the American government. Ukrainian immigrants and refugees who managed to escape from the dying countryside, sent letters to president Roosevelt imploring him to send aid to the afflicted areas as was done in 1921. Most letters did not reach the president, and were left on the desk of Robert F. Kelley, chief of the State Department’s Division of Eastern European Affairs. In a standard response to the letters – *if* they garnered a response – Kelley expressed “sympathy for the sufferings of the persons referred to” but regretted that “there does not appear to be

¹⁷⁵ James Mace, “The Politics of Famine: American Government and Press Response to the Ukrainian Famine 1932-1933” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1988) 78.

¹⁷⁶ William Strang, “Situation in Soviet Union, 8 May 1933” in *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, ed. Marco Carynnyk et al. (Kingston Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1988) 228.

any measure which this Government can appropriately take at the present time to alleviate their suffering".¹⁷⁷ Although the correspondence never reached the American president Roosevelt directly, it is unlikely that he was unaware of the growing crisis. As the official recognition of the Soviet Union by the United States was high on the political agenda, Roosevelt must have been briefed on the famine and the government's role in it.¹⁷⁸

Despite the vehement denials of famine coming from Moscow, and the general positive attitude towards Bolshevism, a small group of individuals were not fooled, and some independent private initiatives to help the starving peasants were established. In September 1933, the European Federation of Ukrainians Abroad, based in Brussels, approached the British Foreign Office pleading them to urge the Soviet Union to permit a relief mission. The plea went unanswered. In the internal documentation Foreign Office official T.A. Shone remarks that "while the deplorable account which it gives of conditions in the Ukraine is no doubt largely true, it is anti-Soviet in complexion and I presume we can only ignore its appeal".¹⁷⁹ Numerous appeals asking for assistance in humanitarian aid were made to the British government, but most were ignored or even actively discouraged. Organizations wishing to increase awareness of the famine amongst the British public in order to raise funds to aid the starving Ukrainian population, were told that they should under no circumstance seek publicity. The official line of the Foreign Office, as appears from internal communication, was "that while information available here tends to confirm that famine conditions exist [...] there can be no question of issuing an appeal unless and until the Soviet authorities admit that conditions merit such assistance".¹⁸⁰ In other words, unless the Soviet government asked for help, the British government was unable to act. Not surprising, such a plea from the Soviets never came. On the contrary, the Soviet government, wishing to contain the news of the famine as much as possible, actively opposed the efforts of relief organizations, calling the allegations on multiple occasions "wholly grotesque" and "the work of political imposters".¹⁸¹ In the eyes of the British Foreign Office, the Soviet government would never allow humanitarian aid to enter the country, let alone alter the agricultural

¹⁷⁷ James Mace, "The Politics of Famine: American Government and Press Response to the Ukrainian Famine 1932-1933" *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1988) 79.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ "Famine in Ukraine, Memorandum by the European Federation of Ukrainians abroad to Sir John Simon, 27 September 1933" in *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, ed. Marco Carynnyk et al. (Kingston Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1988) 321.

¹⁸⁰ "Famine in Russia: L.B. Golden, General Secretary of the Save the Children Fund, to Sir Robert Vansittart, 24 August 1933" in *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, ed. Marco Carynnyk et al. (Kingston Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1988) 288.

¹⁸¹ Marco Carynnyk, *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, ed. Marco Carynnyk et al. (Kingston Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1988) xxiv.

policies that caused the famine. Any form of charity that aimed to help the starving peasants would thus be futile. Moreover, pressure from the British government to allow a relief mission would antagonize a country with which Britain held “normal relations” and could seriously endanger these relations and potentially harm British interests.¹⁸² Throughout the famine the official position of the Foreign Office remained that “it is not His Majesty’s Government’s business to enter into controversy on the subject of the internal affairs of foreign countries”¹⁸³

This position echoed the stance of the American government. In the United States independent initiatives to aid Ukraine and raise awareness on the crisis were founded as well. But similar to the British response, charities wishing to help were discouraged. Assistance was never granted as neither American citizens, nor American interests were involved. The official response coming from Washington would always refer to “alleged conditions”, even though the facts of the situation in Soviet Ukraine had been known to the government for quite some time.¹⁸⁴

In 1933, a number of protest marches were held by the Ukrainian-American community in order to raise awareness of the ongoing hunger in Ukraine and to protest against the American recognition of a regime whose deliberate policies meant the death of millions of its own citizens. The marches were met with anger and violence from the American public. The protesters were followed, harassed and spat on by American communists, and in one case severe riots broke out, injuring over a hundred people.^{185, 186} Mentioning the famine had become an act of anti-Soviet propaganda.

The Anglo-American restraint in acknowledging the famine was rooted in diplomatic concerns. In 1921 humanitarian aid in a country torn apart by civil war, headed by a weak government was a legitimate reason for Western intervention. However, by 1933 the Soviet experiment appeared to have succeeded, the Soviet Union had established itself as a powerful nation, and a collapse of the government seemed improbable. Maintaining good relations with the Soviet government was thus imperative to both the British and the American government. This meant that ‘undermining factors’ in maintaining these relations, such as claims that the

¹⁸² Laurence Collier, “Relief Work in South Russia, 1 December 1933” in *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, ed. Marco Carynnyk et al. (Kingston Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1988) 354.

¹⁸³ “Famine Conditions in the Soviet Union, reply to Lord Charnwood, 25 July 1934” in *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, ed. Marco Carynnyk et al. (Kingston Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1988) 418.

¹⁸⁴ James Mace, “The Politics of Famine: American Government and Press Response to the Ukrainian Famine 1932-1933” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1988) 87.

¹⁸⁵ “Ukrainians March Here, Reds Boo”, *New York Evening Post*, 18 November 1933.

¹⁸⁶ “100 Hurt in Communist-Ukrainian Riot As Reds Attack Paraders in Chicago”, *The New York Times*, 17 December 1933.

Soviet government was deliberately starving people to death, could under no circumstance be encouraged.¹⁸⁷

Furthermore, with fascism gaining more momentum in Germany in the West and Japan in the East, many thought that an alliance with the Soviet Union would be essential in order to maintain peace and stability. This was exactly the reason of Herriot's visit to the Soviet Union in 1933. Laurence Collier of the British Foreign Office remarked of the visit that "M. Herriot seems surprisingly gullible,"¹⁸⁸ however, Herriot's reaction was more likely the result of the idea that a détente with the Soviets was absolutely vital. And the prospects of a Franco-Soviet alliance outweighed the acknowledgement that millions of people perished of hunger at the hands of the Soviet government.¹⁸⁹

With Hitler's accession to power in January 1933, the British government was among the many governments around the globe faced with the question on what diplomatic relations to seek within the new political landscape of Europe. As time progressed, Hitler's speeches centered increasingly around expansion and conquest. And now that Stalin had adopted a policy of Socialism in One Country, expressing his desire for peace and co-operation, Nazism posed a larger threat to Europe than communism. In the eyes of the British Foreign Office Nazism threatened the world whereas communism threatened only its own peasant population. In the event of a confrontation with Nazi Germany, an ally in Eastern Europe would be indispensable, and Britain could not afford to lose this ally.

In the United States these diplomatic concerns played an equally important role. In light of the developments in Germany and the increasing threat of Japan, establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union was vital. Official recognition of the Soviet Union had already been on the political agenda when Roosevelt was still a presidential candidate in 1932, and one of his public advisors on the matter was none other than America's biggest authority on Soviet affairs, Walter Duranty. Duranty's personal involvement in the recognition contributed to a certain extent in his willingness to conceal the famine. News that reflected negatively on the Soviet Union could severely impact American public opinion surrounding the recognition, which in turn could negatively influence the negotiations.¹⁹⁰ Duranty's reporting of the famine in the *New York Times* had a profound influence on

¹⁸⁷ Marco Carynnyk, *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, ed. Marco Carynnyk et al. (Kingston Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1988) xliv.

¹⁸⁸ "Visit of Monsieur Herriot to Soviet Union" in *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, ed. Marco Carynnyk et al. (Kingston Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1988) 302.

¹⁸⁹ Etienne Thevenin, "France, Germany and Austria facing the Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine", presented at the James Mace Memorial Panel, IAUS Congress, Donetsk, Ukraine (6 June 2005).

¹⁹⁰ James Mace, "The Politics of Famine: American Government and Press Response to the Ukrainian Famine 1932-1933" *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1988) 87.

Roosevelt's perception of the Soviet Union, and despite reliable information available to the American government, the United States officially recognized the Soviet Union in November 1933. Duranty accompanied the Soviet minister of Foreign Affairs Litvinov to New York for the ceremony, and during the subsequent festive banquet at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, Duranty – guest of honor – received a standing ovation from the public.¹⁹¹

Yet, as pressing as these diplomatic concerns were, the Anglo-American silence surrounding the famine was to a large extent economically motivated. The Great Depression had caused an international recession and trade relations were now more important than ever. American recognition of the Soviet Union would open up export markets, leading to the lucrative commercial relationship that the United States needed to recover from the financial crisis.¹⁹² This was no different for the British government, which had harboured trade relations with the Soviet Union since the mid-1920's.

By 1930, as the British economy suffered under the Depression. The Soviet Union accounted for a profitable market to export goods produced by Britain's struggling industries, while at the same functioning as a source of cheap food, which Britain needed to feed its increasingly discontented population. Encouraging British exports to the Soviet Union was thus a pressing matter, and the official policy, as described by Sir Esmond Ovey in March 1930, was "to maintain correct and friendly relations with the Soviet Government, with a view to encourage trade as much trade as possible" Ovey continues describing the method to achieve this: "The more Russia sells to us the more she should be sympathetically inclined *ceteris paribus* to buy from us".¹⁹³ The only way to increase British exports to the Soviet Union, was to buy as much as possible from them. What the Soviet Union was selling to Britain, was grain. Between 1929 and 1933 the Soviet Union sold a total of forty percent of its exported grain to Great Britain.¹⁹⁴ If the flow of Soviet grain to Britain were to stop by returning the grain to those who needed it the most, Britain would lose one of its most valuable trade partners in economically challenging times.

Taking these economic interests into consideration, paired with the growing threat from fascist governments – which in turn meant that both the United States and Britain had to be financially stable in case of war – London and Washington had no other choice than to look away from the famine. The Soviet cover-up of the Holodomor was a success, but it could

¹⁹¹ Robert Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 320.

¹⁹² Applebaum 325.

¹⁹³ Marco Carynnyk, *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, ed. Marco Carynnyk et al. (Kingston Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1988) xlvi.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

not have succeeded without the deafening silence of the British and American governments. As 1933 came to an end, so did the famine. In the West the Great Famine of 1932-1933 failed to materialize in public consciousness, and in Russia Soviet officials ensured that it would disappear from the records, as if it never happened.

As for Gareth Jones, his fate was remarkably similar to that of the Holodomor. In August 1935, Jones, investigating Japanese military expansion in Manchuria, was kidnapped by Chinese bandits in Inner Mongolia and murdered one day before his thirtieth birthday. This last episode in his short life is shrouded in mystery, circumstances surrounding Jones' death are highly suspicious: the vehicle Jones was kidnapped from belonged to the NKVD and the driver was Russian. It is still unclear who gave the order for Jones' execution, but with his death one of the key witnesses of the Holodomor was eliminated, and Jones' voice was silenced for good. Gareth Jones faded from public memory, and his articles and diaries containing all his evidence of the famine would disappear in a dusty suitcase and remain in obscurity for more than seventy years.

Conclusion

The Ukrainian famine of 1932-1933 is still one of the most controversial episodes of modern European history. In the previous chapters an analysis has been made on the role of Gareth Jones in exposing the famine in the Western press. Through applying Jan Ifversen's approach of correlating text, supertext, context, with the addition of perception, an effort has been made in interpreting the effect of Jones' reporting and the lack of interest in the respective countries of publication. Jones' motive in publishing his famine-articles was crystal clear: after witnessing the starvation first-hand, he wanted to alert the world of the human suffering that was caused by the Stalinist regime. And yet, despite Jones' compelling account of the three days he spent alone in the starving Ukrainian countryside that appeared in newspapers in Great Britain and the United States, his exposé did not have the effect Jones desired.

The low impact that Jones' reports had on its intended audience cannot be attributed to a lack of knowledge and reliable information on the subject. As Ray Gamache's analysis of Jones' work argues, the knowledge of international affairs – the Soviet Union in particular – that Gareth Jones possessed, was extensive. His education, knowledge of the Russian language, curiosity and willingness to go the distance to investigate matters for himself made him a uniquely qualified reporter. Jones' claims were not rooted in sensationalist rumours or gossip, as Walter Duranty suggested in his articles denigrating Jones' story. Jones had studied Stalin's Five-Year-Plan and the impact it had on Soviet food supplies since 1930, and became increasingly aware of the possibility of a large-scale famine. The articles that Jones published following his first two trips to the Soviet Union in 1930 and 1931, reflect this growing concern. His unauthorized walking tour in Ukraine in March 1933 confirmed his fears: Soviet peasants were dying from hunger at an alarming rate. Jones' reporting was thus based on thorough research, supplemented with eyewitness accounts, revealing the reality of one of the most tragic events in European history.

Why then did his account have so little impact? The theory of a multi-leveled cover-up of the famine as suggested by Anne Applebaum, partly offers an answer to this question. The fact that the famine failed to materialize in the Western collective consciousness, is attributed by Applebaum to Soviet domestic strategies aimed at undermining the legitimacy of the famine claims, combined with the challenges of the international political landscape of the 1930's. As the news of the famine broke in the Western press, the Soviet government had to take action in minimizing the damage. To achieve this, the Soviet government attempted to discredit the news through creating competing narratives and competing images in the

Western press. Walter Duranty, Pulitzer prize winner and reporter for the *New York Times*, played a decisive role in denying Jones' famine claims. His credibility, authority and seniority on the matter were quite successful in creating a narrative that was more favorable of the Soviet Union. Aided by the rosy image of Soviet society in the testimonies of Western visitors, like Shaw and Herriot, the smoke screen hiding the grim reality was complete. By creating different narratives, the Soviet government was able to undermine Jones' reports, creating doubt and confusion amongst the public.

Yet, as successful as these strategies were in deceiving the public, reliable information about the famine had been available to the different parties involved. All foreign correspondents in Moscow were aware of the disaster and both the British and American governments had known about it for some time. It appeared as though everyone knew, yet no one mentioned it.

Applebaum rightly identifies the global political situation of the 1930's as one of the reasons for this silence. As the menace of fascism and Nazism grew following Hitler's accession to power, it appears that Western governments made a conscious decision to ignore the famine in the Soviet Union. A feat of *Realpolitik*, it was thought that an alliance with the Soviet Union in case of a war was absolutely necessary. Nazism posed a threat to global stability and peace, whereas communism only menaced its own population. As Malcolm Muggeridge so strikingly pointed out: "Stalin became the antidote to Hitler".

However, what this argument fails to sufficiently take into account, and what is arguably more telling of the Anglo-American reaction to the famine, are the economic interests that were involved. The Great Depression had left large parts of the world in a deep economic crisis, and the Soviet Union accounted for a profitable market. The official U.S. recognition of the Soviet Union as a sovereign country opened up significant possibilities for trade, imperative in financial recovery from the Wall Street Crash of 1929. This argument applied to the British government as well. British exports to the Soviet Union were vital to support the national treasury, and in order to safeguard this income, the British government intended to import as much goods as possible from the Soviets to maintain open and friendly trade relations. For the Soviet government the success of the Five-Year-Plan was crucial, and to finance the plan it was selling grain on the international market, the bulk of which was sold to Great Britain. Over time, the steady flow of cheap Soviet grain had become so crucial to the British economy that it could under no circumstance miss this source of affordable goods. The British government was thus stuck in a vicious circle. If it would stop importing Soviet grain, the Soviet government would stop importing goods from England, which would be

harmful to the British economy. Moreover, if Britain would buy its grain elsewhere, it would have to spend a lot more money, endangering the already instable economy even more.

This economic co-dependence may have made Gareth Jones' exposé of the famine a particularly uncomfortable message. Any action that would be taken against the Soviet Union would severely impact the global economic situation, destabilizing the British and American economies even more. It was a risk that no one was willing to take, especially against the backdrop of a looming war, which demanded strong financial stability. There was no other choice than to look away from the famine, ignoring pleas for help and actively discouraging initiatives to feed the starving.

Furthermore, the global economic malaise was conducive to a more positive public opinion on communism. As capitalism was seemingly disintegrating, many – especially Western intellectuals – looked up to the Soviet Union as an example to follow in the future. As a result, discourse in the West about the Soviet Union was predominantly positive, leading to selective perception on behalf of many Soviet sympathizers. Any news that reflected negatively on the Soviet Union, Jones' message of famine is a prime example of this, was not believed or deemed anti-Soviet or fascist propaganda. The tendency to ignore, downplay or react with outright hostility to such news, meant that the competing narrative of Walter Duranty with its mitigating message, was far more likely to be believed. Moreover, because communism was in fashion in the West, the news value of the fact that Soviet policies had caused a massive famine was not very high. Newspapers were thus not very willing to publish these stories, as is illustrated by the cases of Rhea Clyman and Malcolm Muggeridge. The fact that Jones' message appeared in newspapers so quickly and prominently was quite exceptional. His previous work on the Soviet Union and his ability to profile himself as an authority on the matter due to his affiliation with Lloyd George, made him a respected journalist which meant that his articles were eagerly published. However, following its jump-start Jones' message quickly lost momentum, making Walter Duranty's "Russians Hungry but not Starving" the accepted version of reality for many years to come. Jones was caught in a spider web of global political and economic interests. As a final blow Jones was shunned by his former employer, and adding insult to injury, his ally in uncovering the famine, Malcolm Muggeridge, failed to publicly come to Jones' defense. Gareth Jones was left to argue his case alone, his credibility as a journalist cast aside. That his message failed to gain traction, can not only be attributed to Soviet propaganda. Though the Soviet strategies to undermine the news of the famine may be the most visible in discrediting his message, three more deciding factors were at play. Governments looked away, the audience was not receptive to the message, and

Jones lost the support of his network, severely impacting his credibility.

This thesis has argued how external factors severely influenced Jones' reporting on the Holodomor. Of course, these circumstances were unique to the 1930's, yet the case of Gareth Jones appears surprisingly familiar. For instance, when looking at Venezuela or Yemen, the political complexities of food shortages can still be observed. However, what is most striking about the history of Gareth Jones is what it reveals about the way news is consumed in general. Especially now, as the era of 'fake news' is upon us and competing narratives and images seem to have infiltrated all layers of society – online and offline – parallels can be drawn between Jones and current news coverage. This appears to be the particular case regarding news about Russia. The annexation of Crimea, the Euromaidan protests, and the disaster with Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, are all heavily politicized issues, subject to scrutiny from public opinion. Further comparing these examples to the points that emerged from this thesis would make for an interesting topic of research.

Walter Lippmann and Charles Merz once concluded about the *New York Times* that its news about Russia was “a case of seeing not what was, but what men wanted to see,” a conclusion that can be applied to the case of Gareth Jones and Walter Duranty as well. Even today, it remains relevant. Distinguishing between different narratives and being aware of selective perception seem to be more difficult than ever, as people become increasingly stuck in their respective 'news bubbles'. This will in all probability continue to be one of the most challenging issues in consuming news in the future. Though a solution to 'popping the bubble' has not yet been found, it remains important to be aware of the existence of such bubbles, so that hopefully the conclusion of Lippmann and Merz can sometime become a thing of the past.

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