REVIEW

Gareth Jones and the famine of Ukraine

– the books, the films, the propaganda

Ray Gamache

GARETH JONES: EYE-WITNESS TO THE HOLODOMOR

Welsh Academic Press, 280tt, £19.99, 2013; 2018

Anne Applebaum

RED FAMINE: STALIN'S WAR ON UKRAINE

Allen Lane, 512tt, £25, 2017

Timothy Snyder

BLOODLANDS: EUROPE BETWEEN HITLER AND STALIN

Vintage, 544tt, £10.99, 2010; 2011

Colin Thomas

DREAMING A CITY: FROM WALES TO UKRAINE

The Lounge, 112pp, £12, 2009

Margaret Cyril Colley

MORE THAN A GRAIN OF TRUTH

Nigel Linsan Colley, 450tt, £13.50, 2005

Hiroaki Kuromyia

FREEDOM AND TERROR IN THE DONBAS

Cambridge University Press, 378tt, £40, 1998

Agnes Holland

GARETH JONES

West End Films, 2019,

George Mendeluk

Ned Thomas

Reading time: 22 minutes

28·11·2018

James Norton as Gareth Jones in Agnieszka Holland's upcoming film, *Gareth Jones* , to be released in 2019

I have a meta-story, which is the history of the way the story is told: the story of Gareth Jones in Russia and Ukraine. Many will have heard, at least roughly, of the young and enterprising Welsh journalist who was an eyewitness to the great Soviet famine of 1932–33 and who tried to draw the world's attention to it. Two years later, in 1935, when he was only 29 years old, he was killed by bandits in Manchuria, possibly at the behest of the Soviet secret police. Sixty years passed, and then, in the new century, there was a growing interest in its history. A trilingual memorial was erected to him at the Old College in Aberystwyth, where he graduated in French and German, and another at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he graduated in Russian. A number of books and articles have been published about him or based on his work, as well as radio and television programs and films. Next year (2019) a feature film titled *Gareth Jones* will be released , a co-production of Ukraine, Poland and Britain, which will introduce him to a wide audience.

There is another story that connects Wales with the same part of the world, namely the story of the industrialist John Hughes, who went over from Merthyr Tydfil to the Donbas area in 1869 at the invitation of the Tsar. He established half a dozen quarries, a huge steelworks and a town that bore his name - Hughesofca/Iwsofca. All this where before there was only a shepherd and his dog according to Annie Gwen, an enterprising Welshman, she from the vicinity of Merthyr, who lived in Iwsofca between 1889 and 1892 as a tutor to the two daughters of Arthur Hughes, the second son of John Hughes . Later on, Annie Gwen married Edgar Jones, headmaster of the Boys' Grammar School in Barry; they had three children, the youngest of whom was Gareth Jones. The two stories are therefore intertwined at the level of individuals; but some parallelism can also be seen between the populated mining areas of the Donbas and the industrial areas of south Wales: the influx of population from far and near, the language mix, and the very unhealthy living conditions in the early period. Annie Gwen escaped with the Arthur Hughes family from there in 1892 because of a riot at the time of the cholera. Merthyr had its riot in 1831 and its cholera epidemic in 1833. Since Annie Gwen's time, Yusofca has changed its name twice - to Stalino in

When Gareth Jones came face to face with the brutal process of agricultural consolidation in Russia, it's no wonder he wondered what the response of small Welsh farmers would be.

SUBJECTS:

#Issue 8
#Ned Thomas
#Gareth Jones
#Russia
#Ukraine

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Arrow Films, 2017; ar gael ar DVD,

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THE LIVING

Listopad Film, 2013, the YouTube channel,

Teresa Cherfas

HITLER, STALIN AND MR JONES

BBC, 2012, and Gaelic and YouTube,

1924 and to Donetsk in 1961. Just before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the historian Gwyn Alf Williams (himself from Merthyr) there to film the television series *Hughesovka and the New Russia* (Teliesyn for BBC 2, 1991). By the time the producer Colin Thomas wrote an entertaining book about the experience, *Dreaming a City* (2009), Ukraine was an independent country, and today the Republic of Donetsk and the neighboring Republic of Lugansk are the two states on the border with the Russian Federation which declared their independence from Ukraine in 2014. The territory of each state is considerably larger than the territory of Wales as a whole, although less than half of that land is today in the possession of the rebels. Between them and the government of Ukraine there is an ongoing war, at a low level, and there is an ongoing propaganda war between Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

The history of Gareth Jones would probably have been completely lost except for the research and dedication of two members of his family, namely his niece Siriol Colley and her own son Nigel Colley who have maintained the rich website GarethJones.org where we find read the journalist's original articles and many other relevant documents. Siriol Colley's first book, *A Manchuko Incident* (2001), was about the mystery of Gareth Jones' death - but that is beyond the scope of this article. She and her son then published a full biography, *More than a Grain of Truth* (2005). Naturally, they already had a lot of family information, but then they found letters and diaries that had been hidden, unbeknownst to the family, in a chest belonging to him. Another document that came to light within the family was an interesting article drawn up by Annie Gwen Jones, Gareth's mother, in her old age. The article was published, together with a Welsh radio talk by her on the same subject, 'Life on the Steppes of South Russia 1889–1892'.

The purpose of the family biography was to portray the complete man, and Welsh speakers will understand Gareth's cultural background better than most of the book's readers. His father, the headmaster, came from Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant, and when Gareth came face to face with the brutal process of the consolidation of agriculture in Russia, it's no wonder he thought about the likely reaction of small Welsh farmers if the state confiscated their land and their animals. When he was a student in Aberystwyth in the early 1920s he attended the Tabernacle Chapel and became interested in the work of the League of Nations for peace; indeed, he went over to one of her meetings in Geneva. As someone who studied German and had friends from Germany, he was concerned about the punitive effect of the Treaty of Versailles on the people of that country. Considering the progressive idealism of his background (his mother was also an active suffragist or *suffragist*), it is easy to imagine the kind of moral attitudes he would cherish when stepping into the world of international politics. He went to Russia the first time without anti-communist prejudices, and indeed he discovered a number of things to praise; but neither was he a Marxist or shared the apocalyptic dream of Communists from a more peasant background such as Niclas y Glais, who saw the day of world revolution dawning in Russia. On a ship while traveling to that country he is joined by an Englishman from the Fabian Society and an ardent Communist from Glasgow, both of whom want to visit the promised land. The Englishwoman is somewhat worried, however, about what she heard about the brutality of the political police in Russia. When the revolution comes to Britain, says the Scotsman, a police force that is even more ruthless will be needed. That's when the Welshman Gareth Jones declares that he is a pacifist. I wonder if he knew the young Waldo Williams? They both graduated from Aberystwyth in the same year.

How did Gareth Jones manage to gain access to such influential international circles, when he was just a young, freelance journalist? Through Welsh networking. He got temporary work as a researcher/consultant on foreign affairs for Lloyd George, through his father's connection with Thomas Jones (TJ), who was Cabinet Secretary to several Prime Ministers. Lloyd George's name opened the door for Gareth Jones everywhere: in Russia he had interviews with Crwpscaia, Lenin's widow, and Litfinof, the commissar for foreign affairs; in Germany in 1933 he traveled in Hitler's private plane to listen to the Führer's speech in Frankfurt; there is a picture of him in the United States standing behind President Hoover; and in Wales he met Randolph Hearst, the owner of the largest newspaper chain in the United States who had bought St. Duned Castle in Glamorgan.

It is very likely that it was his mother's early experience that motivated Gareth to learn Russian, and when he went to Russia for three weeks in 1930 on the first of three visits, his first trip out of the vicinity of Moscow was a trip to Stalino/Yusofka, Rostof- on the river Don and Kharcof. The other foreign correspondents in Moscow at the time note that he keeps very detailed notes and are also surprised at how fluent his Russian is – which suggests to me that the same was not true of many of them. He would go

'If not me, who? And if not now, when?'
Gideon Koppel

CCCP 1964
David Elwyn Lewis

to official occasions and interview officials, as well as question experts from abroad who traveled all over Russia; he would keep in touch with other reporters and diplomats, but above all he would take advantage of every opportunity to strike up a conversation with ordinary people. He then used excerpts from those conversations to enliven more analytical articles. He soon understood that the reality on the ground was very different from the picture presented to foreigners on the official visits organized for them. He understood that a new privileged class was already forming, that the ban on ringing the church bells enraged many, that the people of the countryside hated the Communists because they killed and deported the Kulaks, those farmers who were thought to be more affluent. . At the same time, he recognized the ambition of Stalin's five-year plan to develop industry and spend heavily on education, language and culture of the different republics within the Union. He also understood that he was under surveillance. Apart from Russian quotations, the bulk of his notes in the diaries are in English, but here and there he uses a Welsh word or phrase, or translates a quotation into Welsh, and I assume that this, at least in some cases, in order to conceal who he spoke to or what was said. He interviews a priest and uses the Welsh word 'preghter' to describe him in his notes. He talks to a man leading a horse who asks (the recording is in Welsh): 'When will there be war? Everyone wants war. Everyone will rise against the devils.' He had also understood early on that a censor was reading his mail. On his first trip south he posted cards and letters to his family noting interesting and commendable things. The content of the letter he sent the moment he arrived in Berlin was very different:

> Russia is in a very bad state, rotten, no food, only bread; oppression; injustice. ... the winter is going to be one of great suffering there, and there is starvation ... It makes me mad to think that people like [geiriau wedi eu croesi allan] go there and come back, after having been led around by the nose and had enough to eat, and say that Russia is a paradise ... The government is the most brutal in the world. The peasants hate the Communists ... One reason why I left Hughesovka so quickly was that all I could get to eat was a roll of bread ... Many Russians are too weak to work. I am terribly sorry for them.

Things were much worse by his third visit in March 1933, and he was more cunning. On arriving in Moscow in 1933 he was given permission to travel to Kharkov (then the capital of Ukraine) to visit a tractor manufacturing factory. He arranged to stay with the German consulate there. But he unexpectedly got off the train some forty miles north of the city and walked through twenty villages before the police found him and led him to Kharcof. He made notes in his diary of what he heard from people on the train and what he saw and heard in the villages, and this is an example that was quoted again and again:

> Boy in train asking for bread. I dropped a small piece on floor and put it in spittoon. Peasant came and picked it up and ate it. ... I dropped orange peel into spittoon. Peasant picked it up and ate it. Later apple core. Man speaking German, same story. 'Tell them everybody starving.' Bellies extended ... All people say same: 'хлеба нету, все пухлы' [dim bara, pawb wedi chwyddo]. One woman said: 'We are looking forward to death.' In one village, all bread had gone, potatoes had just run out and there was only буряк [betys] for one month. How can they live till next harvest? Went into village. 'There's no bread here. We've had no bread for two months. Each dvor [tyddyn teuluol] had one or two cows. Now none. There are almost no oxen left and the horses have been dying off.'

When Gareth Jones arrived in Berlin this time, he called a press conference. He revealed the truth about what he had seen, and gained worldwide publicity thanks to his association with Lloyd George. The next day, he was lecturing in London and publishing the first of a series of articles on the subject. He knew that he would never again be allowed to visit the Soviet Union.

From the late 1980s onwards the family began to transfer Gareth Jones' papers to the National Library of Wales. They were now available to researchers, among them the American Ray Gamache, an experienced journalist turned academic in the field of journalism. The re-edit of his book *Gareth Jones: Eyewitness to the Holodomor* (2013) has just appeared (*Holodomor* is the Ukrainian word for the Deadly Famine). For Gamache, Gareth Jones is a model of what a journalist

should be. But why, he asks, was the same truth not announced to the world by the English press reporters who were in Moscow at the same time (mainly Americans)? It was not a lack of knowledge that was responsible. It was not necessary to go to the most hungry areas to hear about the situation as refugees arrive in the capital daily and report their experiences. The truth was that the foreign correspondents were all very dependent on the Soviet authorities for being allowed to stay in the country at all. Some of the reporters were convinced Communists, although they were later disaffected. A more complex and cynical character was William Duranty, an Englishman from Liverpool and a reporter for the *New York Times* , a man who liked to quote a sentence attributed to Lenin (but also to Napoleon and Robespierre), namely that it is not possible to make an omelette without breaking eggs. Two days after the Gareth Jones conference in Berlin, Duranty published a piece in the *New York Times* under the heading 'Russians Hungry but not Starving' and went on to suggest that articles should not be based on a walking tour of a few days in one area. Gareth Jones argued in a letter to the paper (which was kept for a month before it was published) that his walk was to confirm what he learned from various other sources. But how much did the claims of the young Welshman count against the words of one of the stalwarts of English journalism, a man who had just received the Pullitzer Prize for his reports from Russia? What's more, Duranty had the support of the other American reporters in Moscow, after a meeting described retrospectively by one present, Eugene Lyons. The reporters all wanted access to the court to hear a case of *sabotage* against the engineers of the British company Metro-Vickers, and the officer who had the right to give them permission came to meet the reporters a day after a conference Gareth Jones in Berlin:

> The scene in which the American press corps combined to repudiate Jones is fresh in my mind ... Comrade Umansky knew he had a strategic advantage over us because of the Metro-Vickers story ... 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*, Umanski joined the celebrations and the party did not break up until the early morning hours.

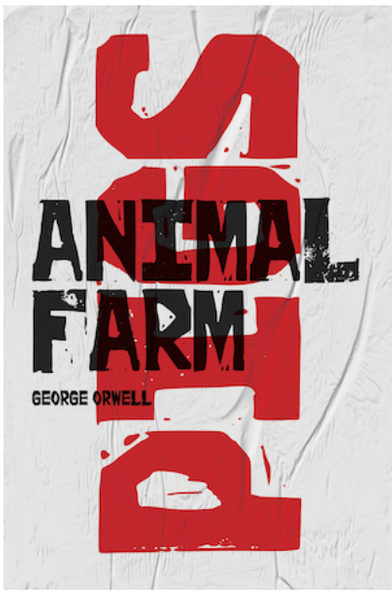
It is also possible that Duranty was writing what the *New York Times* wanted to hear. Franklin D Roosevelt had just started as President in March 1933 after Herbert Hoover's disastrous four years at the helm, the dramatic collapse of the stock market and the start of the great depression. Unlike Hoover, the new President wanted the federal government to intervene in the economy. He was more favorable to the Soviet experiment and was keen to see the United States give formal recognition to the new communist state. In Britain also the attitudes of progressive people were favorable to the Soviet experiment. Bernard Shaw had just visited the country and praised it to the skies. As a result, according to one of Gareth Jones' notes, 'Bernard Shaw is the most unpopular man after Stalin.' A campaign continues in the United States (by Ukrainians, naturally) to persuade the Pullitzer committee to withdraw the award that Duranty received from them, even though Duranty himself is long dead.

Another person who investigated the history of Gareth Jones around the same time was Teresa Cherfas, the producer of the long documentary *Hitler, Stalin and Mr Jones* (BBC 2012, now on YouTube). She had the advantage of knowing Russian and also that some Soviet archives were by then open to the public. The program shows the strengths of the television medium when there are sufficient resources in reserve. It goes over much of the ground I have discussed so far interviewing Gareth Jones' family and showing old film of Lloyd George, Hitler, Litfinof and others. He visits the various locations in Russia, Ukraine, Barry, Aberystwyth and Manturia, and asks a few who remember the man or the period. Widen the focus in reference to the heartbreaking unemployment of the early thirties in Wales, Berlin and the United States - and the solutions offered by the Communists, and also by Hitler in 1933.

Such a program can raise a great many questions and dramatize them, but it can also find it difficult to keep the focus tight on any one question or follow one argument to the end. The producer had things left to say about Gareth Jones after completing the film, and he did so in a long but very readable academic article, 'Reporting Stalin's Famine – Jones and Muggeridge: a case study in forgetting and rediscovery' ', in *Kritika* magazine (2013). A more controversial article was published by her in *Planet* , No. 210 (Summer 2013), which was challenged by Ray Gamache in the following issue of that magazine. While the television program was satisfied with placing Gareth Jones against the background of the ideological battle between Communism and Nazism, the article insinuates that the Welshman is perhaps too fond of Germany and too close to people who would turn Nazis. In his articles, Gareth Jones recognizes the charisma of Hitler the orator and sees possibilities in his plans to solve unemployment, but at the same time, he notes early on that hatred of Jews is central to his worldview. When Gareth Jones was killed in the Far East, that was news everywhere, and I don't find it strange that a tribute to him also appeared in the Nazi paper *Völkischer Beobachter* . Anyone who had criticized the Communist system was sure to be praised by the Nazis. By the end of the controversy on the pages *of Planet* I believe that Teresa Cherfas has withdrawn the personal insinuations about Gareth Jones. What he did manage to do, however, was show the increasing difficulty in the period to find an independent foothold between two overarching ideologies. As the left and progressive faction refused to criticize Stalin's regime, where was he after Gareth Jones published articles about Russia? His last three articles on the subject appeared in the right-wing papers of Randolph Hearst, who was quickly turning from a supporter of Roosevelt to being anti-communist and even supportive of Nazism.

The new film that is on the horizon, Gareth Jones , does not claim to be completely faithful to the history of its subject but rather 'inspired' by it. It would be unfair then, I'm sure, for me to complain about the intention to include a completely unhistorical scene where Gareth Jones meets George Orwell and inspires him (ten years later) to write *Animal Farm* . I don't see influence but some parallelism in the situation of the two. George Orwell at the end of the Second World War was also looking for a foothold between the two totalitarianisms. He called himself a Socialist and fought against Fascism in Spain, but because of his experience there he had turned against Stalinist Russia. In 1944, with Russia fighting on Britain's side, the only publisher willing to accept *Animal Farm* was a small press belonging to the Anarchists, and only a change in the political climate saved the book. As the Cold War began, friends turned to enemies and enemies to friends. *Animal Farm* got a commercial publisher and was a huge success. Very early on there was a Ukrainian translation and Orwell drew up a preface for it. In it he states that nothing has corrupted the original ideals of Socialism as much as the belief that Russia is a Socialist country and that everything done by its government must be excused. But that is enough for some today to call Orwell a right-wing writer.

Stalin's policy before the Second World War was to deny everything about the great famine of 1932–33, and during the war the western world forgot about the issue. Early after the war Ukrainian researchers in the diaspora had begun to gather evidence, but all of the exiles were demonized due to the activity of those Ukrainian factions who collaborated with the Nazis against the Red Army, and also helped them to exterminate Jews. Still, by 1986 the historian Robert Conquest's book, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-famine* , had appeared; two years later a report was published to the US Congress by the Commission on the Famine in Ukraine which contains an extensive selection of the evidence collected. Gwyn Alf Williams (a very unorthodox Communist) knew about Robert Conquest's book when he went to film in Donetsk in 1990, and he made no attempt to deny the facts in it. He proposed, instead, the Welsh defense that we are also victims:



> And as Stalino grew at breakneck pace, back in John Hughes' homeland, South Wales was devastated by the Depression. Thousands of people there looked to the Soviet Union as a beacon of hope as I did myself. We knew little of the repression. We knew of the sacrifices – we saw them as the price paid by a heroic people building a new social order.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 archives became public which placed the Conquest collections on a firmer footing. All this can be read in Timothy Snyder's excellent book, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (2010), and Anne Applebaum's more controversial book, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine* (2017). The unique history of Donetsk and the Donbas is covered in detail in Hiroaki Kuromiya's excellent book *Freedom and Terror in the Donbas* (1998). As to the extent of the great famine of 1932–33, the figures quoted vary widely but at least three million died in the Ukraine, with a further few million in the Kuban, Volga Valley, North Caucasus, and r Blacklands, all within Russia today, and at least a million in what is now Kazakhstan. The oral, written and photographic evidence that is now available records horrors far beyond what Gareth Jones saw: parents killing their children so that they would not suffer further, and very numerous cases of cannibalism. Every witness to the famine is naturally important, but again the question arises: with all the evidence available, why is the story of Gareth Jones used again and again, especially in the Ukrainian narrative about the Holodomor , until he became a hero?

Mycola Bocan's photograph of his family in 1933, with a tribute to Costya who died of starvation
Holodomor Victims Memorial

First of all, the story of Gareth Jones offers a striking parallel with the story of the famine itself, both seeing the light of day after a hidden period. More than that, Gareth Jones' reports were denied as the famine itself was denied and that is a criticism of the outside world, and especially of the progressive circles that chose to ignore or disregard the evidence. That debate is not over either, although it has moved its ground. The debate is now whether the crimes of Communism and Nazism, Stalin and Hitler can be equated. The Prague Declaration (2008) and a number of decisions by the European Parliament and the OSCE that resulted from it, suggested that it was possible to do so. Russia and some left-wing factions in the West (including those around Jeremy Corbyn) are fiercely opposed to equalizing the two things, although they recognize Stalin's crimes in the political context of the time. Many Jewish factions are also opposed as equating the two totalitarianisms means losing the unique status of the Holocaust. Indeed, the terms Holodomor and Holocaust (a phonetic coincidence, not an etymological one) have become weapons in the struggle between Ukraine and Russia: the first sees Putin as an excuse for Stalin, the second accuses the Ukrainian government of celebrating the the very organizations that aided the Nazis. There is some basis for both accusations. And what about the role of Stalin and Russia in resisting Nazism? The Soviet Union lost millions (Ukrainians among them) in the battle known in Russian as the Great Patriotic War – a term now banned in Ukraine. In the background there is a question that pricks the conscience of all of us. It is easier for us to sympathize with the ideals of Marxism and the Bolsheviks, the desire to improve the condition of humanity. They are the product of the intellectual and rational tradition of the Enlightenment while Nazism is more *tabloid* , unwarranted and talks about race and blood. But how much better is it to kill people, or justify it, for purer reasons?

Another aspect of the same debate is the question of whether the Holodomor was genocide. Did Stalin intend to eliminate the Ukrainian nation, or was the famine, rather, the result of more general policies throughout the Soviet Union which had a deadly effect in Ukraine, but also on other groups such as the nomadic Cossacks who lost a greater proportion of u population? I have to say that I have little patience for the game of counting and comparing the number of dead, or arguing over defining terms like genocide. If genocide is defined in the most intentional sense, then the Jews are a unique case; if it can be extended to include the results of a particular policy where an element of ethnic intent runs alongside other factors, then the Holodomor can be included and also the West Bengal famine of 1943, when between one and three million died. At that time, Churchill could have diverted ships carrying grain from Australia to save the Indian population within the empire but chose not to; in the same way that Stalin could have distributed grain in Ukraine that he had reserved for industrial workers and to sell it on the international market.

I turn back to Gareth Jones's diaries and articles. Discussing aspects of the politics and society of the Soviet Union throughout they are for the most part. He spent much of his time in and around Moscow, but he hears about other places from reliable sources – for example, about the losses in Kazakhstan from a German expert who worked there. He heard about famine in Ukraine and decided to go there to see for himself, but his discussion of the question of Ukraine and its identity is relatively limited. However, when Gareth Jones is referred to in the books and films I discuss, a very small group of letters and notes are almost invariably referred to - those specific to places in Ukraine. This is what fits the contemporary Ukrainian narrative, and the present has every right to select from the texts of the past. But it is also fair to note that it is a selection and one that promotes a particular reading of history.

I want to finish by referring to two films made by Ukrainians, very different and very interesting in their treatment of the character Gareth Jones. The first is *Bitter Harvest* (Arrow Films, 2017, available on DVD). The language of the film is English, the money of the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada paid for it, and the producer comes from the same background. It is a fictional, propaganda story, 'based on true historical events'. Easy to sympathize with the motives of the makers and recognize the importance of the theme; but it is also easy to understand why it was not well received by the film critics. It contains all kinds of cliches. The young lovers live in a rural village in Ukraine, a world of paradisiacal scenes in the wheat fields, folk traditions and church rituals. A military-looking crew in jackboots comes to take the grain, smash the icons, and kill those who oppose. It is inevitable that the lovers are separated but survive all oppression, and at the end swim the river that is on the border with Poland from them to freedom, promising to publish the truth about what is happening in their country. We catch a glimpse of a load of bodies lying in a ditch, but no one is seen starving, and the main characters look surprisingly pretty and healthy. Even more surprising is the presence of Gareth Jones (at least for those of us who know the story). The young hero on a train in Ukraine happens to strike up a conversation with a man who speaks English with a South Wales accent. That advises him not to believe the 'party line', somewhat unnecessary advice for one who has just seen the destruction of his village. The event seems to turn the original story on its head. The historical Gareth Jones learned the truth from a villager on the train. The villager in the film learns the truth from Gareth Jones. The fictional Gareth Jones leaves the train at the next station, and through the windows of the carriage the young hero sees the police beating him (and possibly killing him). Gareth Jones is not named at all, and perhaps that is true fame - becoming a folkloric figure.

The second film is a documentary and memorable one. Its title in a version with English subtitles is *The Living* (2013, available on YouTube). It was made to record the memories of some of the people who were left and remember the famine - women and a few old men in their late eighties, mostly rural people, I suppose, their wrinkled faces turning into smiles and tears alternately. The film's editor has satisfied periods of silence, and has also not cut out things that are irrelevant to the purpose of the film. There are funny moments and some sad moments, and the drama of today interrupts the drama of the past. Are there tears in the old woman's eyes because of what they discussed, or because of her anxiety about having to move to an old people's home? One introduces herself by name in the Russian form and then the Ukrainian form, as if she is not sure what is expected anymore. And what are the memories of the famine period? A sister brings a piece of bread home from school and begs her mother to eat it in her mouth. Other members of the family are already beginning to swell due to lack of food and the child fears that they will not survive if the mother is not strong enough to take care of them. Someone remembers pictures of Stalin: 'He was a beautiful man, with a black moustache.' Another remembers a lodger in the house who was an expert of some sort and as a result was given an official ration of food. A four year old boy in the house asking her about chrystyn and she closes the door in his face; he is still waiting. 'Who were these people?' asks the questioner, and gets the answer: 'Not Germans, not Americans: our people.' And this confirms some of the complex truths mentioned by historians. Stalin had mobilized 25,000 men from the towns, 7,000 of them from the Ukraine, many of them young, to go out into the country and enforce the policy that would leave the farmers with nothing to eat. There was an element of war between country and town, between industrial and agricultural workers, between generations as well. 'We were divided,' says someone in the film, 'and we are still divided.' 'Will I go to jail for chatter like this?' asks one old woman.

One of the film's early scenes takes place in Barry, as the family opens the chest that holds Gareth Jones's diaries and letters. Then, we see Nigel Colley in a studio looking through old films. Here and there along the way we move from the Ukrainian interviews to the history of Gareth Jones and see some of the same pictures as seen in the Teresa Cherfas program (there may have been some collaboration). I asked myself what was the purpose of including Gareth Jones' story alongside the memories of those who had the historical experience. Nor is Gareth Jones the only contemporary outside witness quoted. There are extracts from the reports about the famine that were regularly sent to Italy by that country's consulate in Charcof. I came to the conclusion that these 'objective' reports from outside the situation offer a more certain narrative than the varied and complex 'subjective' memories of individuals. This is one kind of confirmation for Ukrainians that shows who they are: people who suffered the great famine, but the truth prevailed. The narrative that comes from Russia confirms another story, a narrative that also has its appeal in Ukraine: the narrative about the heroic fight against Fascism despite the traitors within. The great evil in this propagandistic polarization is that both factions see themselves as heroes and also as victims, and that there is no compulsion on anyone to self-inquire and come to terms with the complexity of their past, as the Germany to do, to some extent, after the Second World War.

ANALYZE

Discouragement

Reflection on the Pontypridd Eisteddfod 2024

Morgan Owen

I had a stereoscopic view of the familiar locale: two times and two visions were taken and combined into a living reality in front of me. The experience of going to the Eisteddfod in Pontypridd this year was like a waking dream as geography involved me in the...

COLUMNS

Doll eyes

Nature today

Sian Melangell Dafydd

There is a preference, in Welsh, for imagining our wild flowers as eyes that look back at us. I will have an 'eye break for the day' on a busy day. Flowers that provoke a smile, without fail. Memories come of making chains with friends, dotting them in...

ANALYZE

Welsh 2050 and the Welsh Language Education Bill

Ioan Talfryn

A few years ago I was at an international education conference and found myself sitting next to an older Spanish speaking woman. Realizing that (and me being a friendly, social person who wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to practice his...

REVIEW

A novelist of a photographer

Siwan M Rosser

Ruth Richards' *'Wider View'* is a unique study of Victorian Wales as seen through the camera lens of photographer John Thomas (1838–1905) . This is not the first time the author has delved into the nineteenth century, and we find in his novels...

Back to top of page

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