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**NOVEMBER 2020**

**When The New York Times Had Integrity**

The New York Times accomplishments have ranged from admirable to deplorable. But no matter how sordid the “newspaper of record” can be, it’s always been esteemed by fashionable people.

A regrettable phase occurred in the early 1930s when most everyone from hairy intellectuals to Park Avenue matrons admired Communism. A 1990’s FEE article outlined that the USSR in the 1930s had a persuasive lobby going on the East Coast. International Socialists were much more successful in getting their propaganda out than National Socialists. And the NYT published a series of articles about how wonderful full-on central planning was in Russia. In publishing glowing articles, the editors ignored the atrocity of deliberate famine.

Ukrainians suffered the loss of some 7 million people, called the Holodomor. Even farmers on the land starved, because Moscow confiscated the food, the ultimate in class warfare.

But in 1932, news of the atrocity was stifled. Which was when Moscow-resident journalist, Walter Duranty, who was aware of it, was awarded the Pulitzer for stories about how well things were going. The NYT thrived in glory.

Blind admiration for central planning is still fashionable, but this article is about the NYT performing a service by bringing down a corrupt and authoritarian government. Democratic and generations ago.

Through the 1860s, Manhattan’s notorious political operator Boss Tweed rose to immense power and staggering personal wealth. In 1870 a carpenter made \$24 for each 60-hour week. That was \$1200 annually, or \$24,000 today.

As part of the new courthouse contract, a carpenter was paid \$4.9 million in today’s dollars for one month’s work.

In 1871, in knowing the NYT was investigating corruption Tweed offered the publisher, George Jones, \$5 million to end the crusade. Worth \$100 million today, but integrity turned down a fortune calculated in any century.

The paper’s break was obtaining the accounts that showed how Tweed was ripping off contracts for the courthouse.

Through unrelenting work, the scandal of Tammany Hall, as the Democratic political machine was called, was finally exposed in July 1871.

The scandal had to be spread across the country. In order to get through to different ethnic communities, for example, hundreds of thousands of pamphlets were published in German.

Contributing to the success, another formidable character was involved, the cartoonist Thomas Nast. He was with “Harper’s” and as his drawings became more scathing of Tammany Hall, Tweed tried to divert him. With bribes up to \$500,000 in 1871 dollars in order to “study art in Europe”, but Nast in his own words was determined “to put some of those fellows behind the bars”.

Most of Tweed’s supporter/victims were illiterate which enhanced the impact of Nast’s images. Apparently, Boss shouted: “stop them damned pictures!”. Indeed, through Democrat channels he threatened to boycott “Harper’s” important textbook business.

Today’s Democrats threaten law firms working to expose election fraud.

At the height of his reign, Tweed personally was the third largest landowner in Manhattan. He served on the boards of some important companies and served a term in the New York State Senate. But his real power was in controlling so many civic commissions.

Tweed encourage a riot, resulting in some 60 deaths and 150 injuries. The Tammany Hall political machine began to lose regard.

Tweed was convicted of stealing some \$25 million to \$45 million from New York City taxpayers. In 1877 the amount was estimated at \$200 million, in 1870s dollars.

Untiring investigations by The New York Times and Harper’s brought one of America’s biggest political scandals to justice. However, it is virtually nothing compared to today’s compulsion to trash the economy and the Constitution.

Going the other way in the 1930s, The New York Times was deplorable in its corrupt reporting of the wonders of the centrally planned Soviet Union. Indeed, their man in Moscow was Walter Duranty who while knowing of the millions of deaths wrote articles denying the famine.

But not The Nation that described Duranty’s reporting as “the most enlightened, dispassionate dispatches from a great nation in the making.”

Of course in 1932, Duranty was awarded the Pulitzer Prize.

And this seems to result from a certain mentality that considers central policymaking as always outstanding. In 1989 Tom Bethell in the “National Review” reported what the leading economics textbooks celebrated the wonders of the Soviet Union’s economy. Despite having no data, the assumption was that because it was a command economy it had to be doing very well.

Ironical, because beginning in November 1989 with the tearing down of the Berlin Wall ordinary folk began to overwhelm Communist governments.

Why?

Because they could no longer suffer the hardships and personal restrictions of central planning without limits.

Interventionist textbooks were just plain wrong.

Eventually, The New York Times had second thoughts about Duranty. In 2003, the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association urged the Pulitzer Board to renew its inquiry into the scandal. The NYT publisher Sulzberger said that Duranty's work "should have been recognized for what it was by his editors and by his Pulitzer judges seven decades ago."

In the 1870s, The New York Times and Harper's had integrity. In the 1930s the NYT in blindly celebrating authoritarian central planning got it tragically wrong. Very much later the newspaper suffered remorse and tried to correct the blunder.

Duranty still has his Pulitzer.

When reviewing political passions, it is best to have accurate terms and there is a practical one from physics. The definition of an authoritarian system is "That which is not prohibited, is compulsory." An elegant description that fits everything from communism to schoolboards.

Lately, The New York Times is again uncritically accepting and even touting the latest passions of control freaks. Authoritarian edicts cover any policy that prohibits or compels certain activities. Another pandemic influenza has been effectively gamed. However, controlling the temperature of the nearest planet is audacity without precedent.

It is time for today's versions of Walter Duranty, Boss Tweed as well as Tammany Hall to meet today's equivalent of Thomas Nast, George Jones and the rule of law.

Professionally run riots are another policy disaster, and ordinary folk can inspire another reform.

Recent article on Duranty and the famine:

<https://expressdigest.com/how-war-reporter-walter-duranty-covered-up-a-kremlin-created-famine-that-killed-millions/>

Thomas Nast Cartoons:

