

Bailouts for journalists?

By [Jim Powell](#) | Published: 11:12 AM 08/03/2010 | Updated: 11:42 AM 08/03/2010

Since there have been so many bailouts, Columbia University President Lee C. Bollinger [suggested](#) in the pages of the *Wall Street Journal* that print and broadcast media should be bailed out, too. He calls this “enhanced public funding of journalism.” He dismisses concerns that government [funding](#) might lead to government control, citing “a strong culture of independence.” A few days after Bollinger’s article appeared, he was named Chairman of the New York Federal Reserve Bank, so he is in a position to promote his ideas on a larger stage.

Government control, it should be noted, isn’t the only concern about bailing out journalism. Every bit as worrisome is how political power seduces many journalists — especially [progressives](#) — to promote ever bigger [government](#).

For example, in 1926 the famous progressive muckraker Ida Tarbell visited Italian fascist dictator Benito Mussolini. She gushed:

“I saw that he had a most extraordinary smile, and that when he smiled he had a dimple...When Mussolini accompanied me to the door and kissed my hand in the gallant Italian fashion, I understood for the first time an unexpected phase of the man which makes him such a power in Italy.”

Another progressive journalist, Lincoln Steffens, called Mussolini “the divine Dictator.” Steffens wrote, “The man is as powerful as an elemental force.” Not to be outdone, the magazine publisher Sam McClure, who published articles by these and other progressive authors, declared that fascism was “a new and dawning civilization,” Mussolini solved “the problem of democracy,” and Italians were “the one free people.”

Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin excited progressives even more than Mussolini. An estimated 20 million citizens of the Soviet Union were killed by their own government, and Stalin was responsible for more those deaths than any other Soviet ruler. English author H.G. Wells reported that he “never met a man more candid, fair and honest...no one is afraid of him and everybody trusts him.” The English playwright George Bernard Shaw hailed Soviet prisons where victims “could stay as long as they liked.” President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s ambassador to Moscow Joseph E. Davies purred that Stalin’s “eye is exceedingly wise and gentle.” One of the members of FDR’s “Brain Trust” was Rexford Guy Tugwell who became an admirer of the Soviet Union after his 1927 visit. He admitted that there was “ruthlessness, a disregard for liberties and rights,” but he insisted it was all worthwhile. Economist Stuart [Chase](#) praised communists for their “burning zeal to create a new heaven and a new earth.” Chase added, “Why should Russians have all the fun of remaking a world?”

The most famous of Stalin's skills was *New York Times* correspondent Walter Duranty, the first Western reporter to interview Stalin (1930). Duranty described Stalin as "a quiet, unobtrusive man who saw much but said little." Duranty claimed that Russian peasants welcomed the Soviet seizure of their homes, their fields, their crops and their farm animals. Duranty soared to awesome heights of duplicity when, during the early 1930s famine that killed some 6 million people in the Ukraine, he reported: "There is no actual starvation or deaths from starvation." He told a fellow journalist: "The 'famine' is mostly bunk.