

August 6, 2015

John Hawkins at Townhall celebrates the 103rd birthday of Milton Friedman.

Yesterday would have been the 103rd birthday of Milton Friedman, who was one of the most brilliant economists of the last century. In honor of Friedman, here are his 20 best quotes.

20) *“A society that puts equality before freedom will get neither. A society that puts freedom before equality will get a high degree of both.”*

19) *“Because we live in a largely free society, we tend to forget how limited is the span of time and the part of the globe for which there has ever been anything like political freedom: the typical state of mankind is tyranny, servitude, and misery. The nineteenth century and early twentieth century in the Western world stand out as striking exceptions to the general trend of historical development. Political freedom in this instance clearly came along with the free market and the development of capitalist institutions. So also did political freedom in the golden age of Greece and in the early days of the Roman era.”*

18) *“It is one thing to have free immigration to jobs. It is another thing to have free immigration to welfare. And you cannot have both. If you have a welfare state, if you have a state in which every resident is promised a certain minimal level of income, or a minimum level of subsistence, regardless of whether he works or not, produces it or not. Then it really is an impossible thing.”*

...

Another great man died a few days ago - Robert Conquest. Here's the Wall Street Journal.

Robert Conquest, an Anglo-American historian whose works on the terror and privation under Joseph Stalin made him the pre-eminent Western chronicler of the horrors of Soviet rule, died Monday in Palo Alto, Calif. He was 98 years old.

Mr. Conquest's master work, “The Great Terror,” was the first detailed account of the Stalinist purges from 1937 to 1939. He estimated that under Stalin, 20 million people perished from famines, Soviet labor camps and executions—a toll that eclipsed that of the Holocaust. Writing at the height of the Cold War in 1968, when sources about the Soviet Union were scarce, Mr. Conquest was vilified by leftists who said he exaggerated the number of victims. When the Cold War ended and archives in Moscow were thrown open, his estimates proved high but more accurate than those of his critics.

Mr. Conquest also was a much-decorated writer of light verse and a figure in the “Movement” poetry of 1950s England. He continued to publish into his 90s, applying an unyielding zest to poetry and prose alike. ...

... The 1937-1939 Stalinist show trials, in which Stalin's political rivals all admitted to serious crimes and were shot, shocked many left-leaning intellectuals in the West. The lurid trials set off mass defections from Communist parties in Europe and the U.S. and helped inspire anti-Communist tracts such as George Orwell's “1984” and Arthur Koestler's “Darkness at Noon.”

But the wider slaughter of Soviet citizens had largely gone undocumented until Mr. Conquest's narrative. Citing sources made public during the thaw under Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev as well as émigré accounts, the Soviet census and snippets of information in the Soviet press, Mr.

Conquest portrayed the trials as a mere sideshow to the systematic murder carried out by the Kremlin, which routinely ordered regional quotas for thousands of arbitrary arrests and shootings at burial pits and execution cellars. The latest data show that during a 16-month stretch in 1937 and 1938, more than 800,000 people were shot by the Soviet secret police.

These executions came on top of millions of earlier deaths amid the forced famines and collectivization of Soviet agriculture, which Mr. Conquest detailed in a later book, "The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine." Mr. Conquest wrote that Stalin summarily executed millions of people by cutting off food to entire regions, particularly Ukraine.

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... "Penultimata," a critically acclaimed collection of Mr. Conquest's poetry, was published in mid-2009 by the Waywiser Press. He was also an enthusiastic crafter of limericks, a form in which his irreverence and flair for language flourished. One version of an often-quoted one reads:

"There was a great Marxist named Lenin

Who did two or three million men in.

—That's a lot to have done in,

But where he did one in

That grand Marxist Stalin did ten in."

A good example of Conquest's humor was a letter to the editor of [New York Review of Books](#).

To the Editors:

In a footnote to John Banville's review of Martin Amis's *House of Meetings* ["Executioner Songs," *NYR*, March 1] I am quoted as having suggested, for a title for a new edition of *The Great Terror*, "How About I Told You So, You Fucking Fools?" A few weeks earlier, in a *TLS* review of Zachary Leader's *The Life of Kingsley Amis* (February 2), Clive James called me "unfailingly polite in controversy."

Hard to reconcile the two views—except that the "I told you so, etc." comment was actually made, and attributed to me, by the ever-inventive Kingsley.

This also gives me an excuse to join in the welcome to Martin Amis's moving new book. I am particularly glad to read in his acknowledgments the tribute to Tibor Szamuely, who understood Stalinism better than I did. I remember saying to him that I could see why Stalin had Marshal Tukhachevski shot, but why did he do the same to his old friend Marshal Yegorev? Tibor's answer was "Why not?"

Robert Conquest

Stanford, California

Here's the obit from [UK's Telegraph](#).

Robert Conquest, the writer on Soviet Russia who has died aged 98, was a polemicist and a serious, published poet; but above all he was an historian, one of the outstanding scholars of his time, whose books did as much as any other man's to alter our view of the communist experience.

Conquest personified the truth that there was no anti-communist so dedicated as an ex-communist. His career illustrated also what the Italian writer Ignazio Silone, another former communist, meant when he said to the communist leader Palmiro Togliatti that "the final battle" of the 20th century would have to be fought between the two sides they represented.

An ardent Bolshevik as a young man, Conquest became a bitter foe of Soviet "Socialism". He had first visited Russia in 1937 as a youthful devotee of the great experiment. It was a half century before he returned in 1989, having spent his life between chronicling the horrors the country had endured, and emerging, in the view of the Oxford historian Mark Almond, as "one of the few Western heroes of the collapse of Soviet Communism". "He was Solzhenitsyn before Solzhenitsyn," said Timothy Garton Ash.

*Of his many works on the subject, perhaps the most important was *The Great Terror*, published in 1968 and detailing the full enormity of what Stalin had done to the Russian people in the 1930s and 1940s. The Mexican writer Octavio Paz paid the most succinct tribute to this book when he said in 1972 that *The Great Terror* had "closed the debate" about Stalinism. ...*

And to start off our weekend, late night humor from [Andrew Malcolm](#).

Meyers: The White House opened a Twitter account to answer questions about Obama's nuclear deal with Iran. Finally using Twitter for what it was designed to do: Explain complex, international nuclear agreements involving several nations.

Fallon: You know that Minnesota dentist who shot a famous lion named Cecil. He's so evil Donald Trump is considering him as a running mate.

Conan: The Trump International Golf Course in Puerto Rico has filed for bankruptcy. This may be because of Trump's rule, "No Puerto Ricans on my Puerto Rican golf course."

Townhall

[In Honor of His 103rd Birthday, Here Are The 20 Best Quotes From The Late, Great Milton Friedman](#)

by John Hawkins

Yesterday would have been the 103rd birthday of [Milton Friedman](#), who was one of the most brilliant economists of the last century. In honor of Friedman, here are his 20 best quotes.

20) "A society that puts equality before freedom will get neither. A society that puts freedom before equality will get a high degree of both."

19) "Because we live in a largely free society, we tend to forget how limited is the span of time and the part of the globe for which there has ever been anything like political freedom: the typical state of mankind is tyranny, servitude, and misery. The nineteenth century and early twentieth century in the Western world stand out as striking exceptions to the general trend of historical development. Political freedom in this instance clearly came along with the free market and the development of capitalist institutions. So also did political freedom in the golden age of Greece and in the early days of the Roman era."

18) "It is one thing to have free immigration to jobs. It is another thing to have free immigration to welfare. And you cannot have both. If you have a welfare state, if you have a state in which every resident is promised a certain minimal level of income, or a minimum level of subsistence, regardless of whether he works or not, produces it or not. Then it really is an impossible thing."

17) "So that the record of history is absolutely crystal clear. That there is no alternative way, so far discovered, of improving the lot of the ordinary people that can hold a candle to the productive activities that are unleashed by a free enterprise system."

16) "When everybody owns something, nobody owns it, and nobody has a direct interest in maintaining or improving its condition. That is why buildings in the Soviet Union - like public housing in the United States - look decrepit within a year or two of their construction..."

15) "The great danger to the consumer is the monopoly - whether private or governmental. His most effective protection is free competition at home and free trade throughout the world. The consumer is protected from being exploited by one seller by the existence of another seller from whom he can buy and who is eager to sell to him. Alternative sources of supply protect the consumer far more effectively than all the Ralph Naders of the world."

14) "Two major arguments are offered for introducing socialized medicine in the United States: first, that medical costs are beyond the means of most Americans; second that socialization will somehow reduce costs. The second can be dismissed out of hand -- at least until someone can find some example of an activity that is conducted more economically by the government than private enterprise. As to the first, the people of the country must pay the costs one way or the other; the only question is whether they pay them directly on their own behalf, or indirectly through the mediation of government bureaucrats who will subtract a substantial slice for their own salaries and expenses."

13) "Nothing is so permanent as a temporary government program."

12) "The supporters of tariffs treat it as self-evident that the creation of jobs is a desirable end, in and of itself, regardless of what the persons employed do. That is clearly wrong. If all we want

are jobs, we can create any number - for example, have people dig holes and then fill them up again, or perform other useless tasks. Work is sometimes its own reward. Mostly, however, it is the price we pay to get the things we want. Our real objective is not just jobs but productive jobs - jobs that will mean more goods and services to consume."

11) "I am in favor of cutting taxes under any circumstances and for any excuse, for any reason, whenever it's possible."

10) "There is all the difference in the world, however, between two kinds of assistance through government that seem superficially similar: first, 90 percent of us agreeing to impose taxes on ourselves in order to help the bottom 10 percent, and second, 80 percent voting to impose taxes on the top 10 percent to help the bottom 10 percent - William Graham Sumner's famous example of B and C decided what D shall do for A. The first may be wise or unwise, an effective or ineffective way to help the disadvantaged - but it is consistent with belief in both equality of opportunity and liberty. The second seeks equality of outcome and is entirely antithetical to liberty."

9) "When the United States was formed in 1776, it took 19 people on the farm to produce enough food for 20 people. So most of the people had to spend their time and efforts on growing food. Today, it's down to 1% or 2% to produce that food. Now just consider the vast amount of supposed unemployment that was produced by that. But there wasn't really any unemployment produced. What happened was that people who had formerly been tied up working in agriculture were freed by technological developments and improvements to do something else. That enabled us to have a better standard of living and a more extensive range of products."

8) "I want people to take thought about their condition and to recognize that the maintenance of a free society is a very difficult and complicated thing and it requires a self-denying ordinance of the most extreme kind. It requires a willingness to put up with temporary evils on the basis of the subtle and sophisticated understanding that if you step in to do something about them you not only may make them worse, you will spread your tentacles and get bad results elsewhere."

7) "We economists don't know much, but we do know how to create a shortage. If you want to create a shortage of tomatoes, for example, just pass a law that retailers can't sell tomatoes for more than two cents per pound. Instantly you'll have a tomato shortage. It's the same with oil or gas."

6) "The great virtue of a free market system is that it does not care what color people are; it does not care what their religion is; it only cares whether they can produce something you want to buy. It is the most effective system we have discovered to enable people who hate one another to deal with one another and help one another."

5) "Workers paying taxes today can derive no assurance from trust funds that they will receive benefits from when they retire. Any assurance derives solely from the willingness of future taxpayers to impose taxes on themselves to pay for benefits that present taxpayers are promising themselves. This one sided 'compact between the generations,' foisted on generations that cannot give their consent, is a very different thing from a 'trust fund.' It is more like a chain letter."

4) "There are four ways in which you can spend money. You can spend your own money on yourself. When you do that, why then you really watch out what you're doing, and you try to get the most for your money. Then you can spend your own money on somebody else. For example, I buy a birthday present for someone. Well, then I'm not so careful about the content

of the present, but I'm very careful about the cost. Then, I can spend somebody else's money on myself. And if I spend somebody else's money on myself, then I'm sure going to have a good lunch! Finally, I can spend somebody else's money on somebody else. And if I spend somebody else's money on somebody else, I'm not concerned about how much it is, and I'm not concerned about what I get. And that's government. And that's close to 40% of our national income."

3) "Indeed, a major source of objection to a free economy is precisely that it... gives people what they want instead of what a particular group thinks they ought to want. Underlying most arguments against the free market is a lack of belief in freedom itself."

2) "If you put the federal government in charge of the Sahara Desert, in 5 years there'd be a shortage of sand."

1) "I do not believe that the solution to our problem is simply to elect the right people. The important thing is to establish a political climate of opinion which will make it politically profitable for the wrong people to do the right thing. Unless it is politically profitable for the wrong people to do the right thing, the right people will not do the right thing either, or if they try, they will shortly be out of office."

WSJ

[Robert Conquest, Seminal Historian of Soviet Misrule, Dies at 98](#)

Anglo-American historian and poet who chronicled Stalin's excesses dies in Palo Alto, Calif.

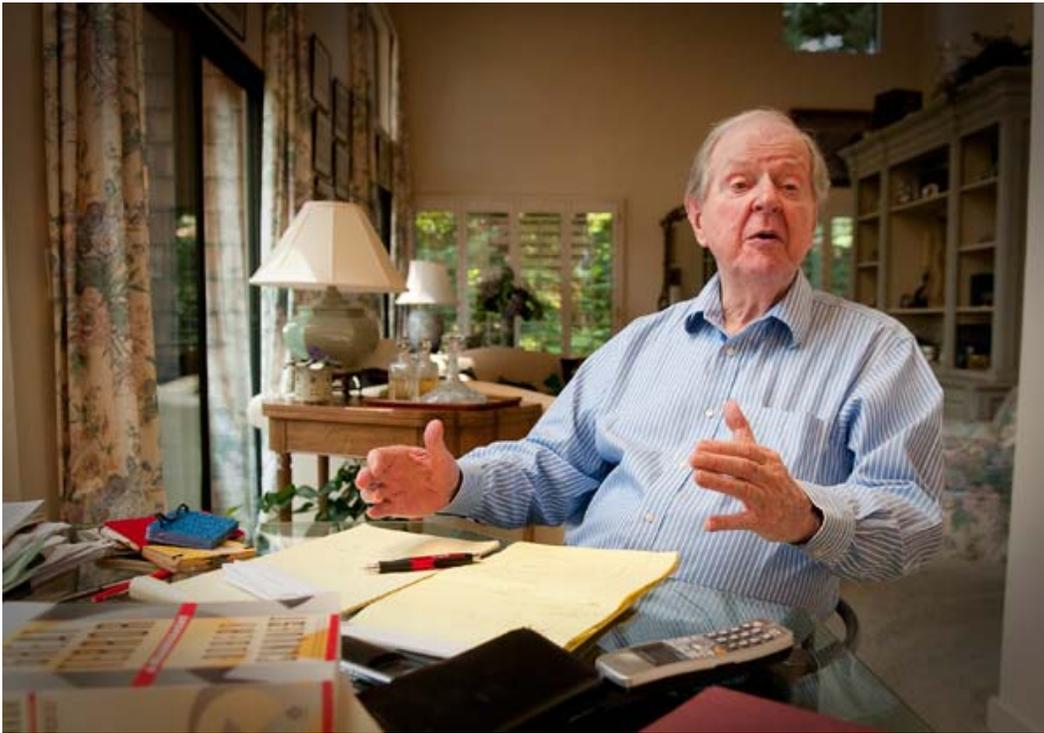
by Brenda Cronin and Alan Cullison

Robert Conquest, an Anglo-American historian whose works on the terror and privation under Joseph Stalin made him the pre-eminent Western chronicler of the horrors of Soviet rule, died Monday in Palo Alto, Calif. He was 98 years old.

Mr. Conquest's master work, "The Great Terror," was the first detailed account of the Stalinist purges from 1937 to 1939. He estimated that under Stalin, 20 million people perished from famines, Soviet labor camps and executions—a toll that eclipsed that of the Holocaust. Writing at the height of the Cold War in 1968, when sources about the Soviet Union were scarce, Mr. Conquest was vilified by leftists who said he exaggerated the number of victims. When the Cold War ended and archives in Moscow were thrown open, his estimates proved high but more accurate than those of his critics.

Mr. Conquest also was a much-decorated writer of light verse and a figure in the "Movement" poetry of 1950s England. He continued to publish into his 90s, applying an unyielding zest to poetry and prose alike.

Born in Malvern, Worcestershire, to a British mother and an American father, he served in World War II and then in Britain's diplomatic corps before a series of stints at think tanks and universities, largely in the U.S. In recent decades he was affiliated with the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, moving to emeritus status in 2007.



While a spirited combatant in academic debate, Mr. Conquest wrote for a wider audience. “The Great Terror” reached millions of readers and won him a following among leaders including Ronald Reagan. [Margaret Thatcher](#) consulted Mr. Conquest on how to deal with the Soviet Union and her former advisers said she trusted him more than any other Soviet expert.

Throughout his career Mr. Conquest kept abreast of ivory-tower squabbles “but he eschewed what he saw as the arcane and parochial nature of some academic literature,” said Mark Kramer, a professor of Cold War history at Harvard.

Mr. Conquest gleefully attacked Western revisionist historians as dupes for Stalin. The 1937-1939 Stalinist show trials, in which Stalin’s political rivals all admitted to serious crimes and were shot, shocked many left-leaning intellectuals in the West. The lurid trials set off mass defections from Communist parties in Europe and the U.S. and helped inspire anti-Communist tracts such as George Orwell’s “1984” and Arthur Koestler’s “Darkness at Noon.”

But the wider slaughter of Soviet citizens had largely gone undocumented until Mr. Conquest’s narrative. Citing sources made public during the thaw under Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev as well as émigré accounts, the Soviet census and snippets of information in the Soviet press, Mr. Conquest portrayed the trials as a mere sideshow to the systematic murder carried out by the Kremlin, which routinely ordered regional quotas for thousands of arbitrary arrests and shootings at burial pits and execution cellars. The latest data show that during a 16-month stretch in 1937 and 1938, more than 800,000 people were shot by the Soviet secret police.

These executions came on top of millions of earlier deaths amid the forced famines and collectivization of Soviet agriculture, which Mr. Conquest detailed in a later book, “The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine.” Mr. Conquest wrote that Stalin summarily executed millions of people by cutting off food to entire regions, particularly Ukraine.

While the opening of Soviet-era archives sparked some attacks on Mr. Conquest, his overall narrative of the purges was confirmed. “The Great Terror” was serialized in Russian newspapers and the revelation of mass graves, such as 20,000 in the Moscow suburb of

Butovo, confirmed a wholesale execution system. Since then the debate among historians has been mostly settled over the immensity of the human toll exacted under Stalin's rule.

Though Mr. Conquest's body count was on the high end of estimates, he remained unwavering at the publication of "The Great Terror: A Reassessment," a 1990 revision of his masterwork. When Mr. Conquest was asked for a new title for the updated book, his friend, the writer Kingsley Amis, proposed, "I Told You So, You F—ing Fools."

The grisly fare of Mr. Conquest's research was at odds with his puckish charm and wit. While a schoolboy at Winchester College in Hampshire and at Oxford, he was a desultory student but a fervent reader and writer of poetry. Along with Mr. Amis, he was something of a bon vivant, holding court at uproarious lunches and tumbling into romances that seemed inevitable given his surname. Mr. Conquest, who married four times, poured much of himself into his poetry, examining love, sex, wartime and loss in more than a half-dozen collections of poems.

"Pa treated everything he did as perfectly normal, nothing exceptional," Mr. Conquest's son, John, said. "It's just what he did, whether writing poetry or books about Russia or books about a lot of other different things."

A colorful private life didn't distract Mr. Conquest from honing a spectrum of interests. He read French, German, Italian, Czech, Russian, Bulgarian, Greek and Latin. In addition to Sovietology, he became an expert on the twilight stage of the roughly 400-year period when Britain was part of the Roman Empire.

One of his father's touchstones, John Conquest said, was "If you know enough about anything, someone will pay you to write about it."

Mr. Conquest's first two books, published in 1955, were a collection of poems and a science-fiction novel. In an interview with the Los Angeles Times in 1986, he said that dabbling in science fiction was useful in getting the proper perspective on the Soviets. Western words like good and evil didn't capture their behavior, he said, because "they're not bad or good as we'd be bad or good."

"It's far better to look at them as Martians than as people like us," he said. "George Orwell said that it needs an effort of the imagination as well as of the intellect to understand the Soviet Union."

In the 1960s, Messrs. Conquest and Amis edited a sci-fi anthology, "Spectrum," and collaborated on a novel, "The Egyptologists," about a secret London society that served as an alibi for philanderers.

Mr. Conquest was one of a handful of influential postwar English poets known collectively as The Movement. The unofficial group, which included Mr. Amis and Philip Larkin, favored a gritty and grounded approach that was seen by many as a reaction to modernism. Movement poets, many of whom bristled at being so labeled, rejected the experiments of earlier practitioners such as Ezra Pound. Instead, they hewed to craftsmanship and discipline, whether in light verse or more serious works, favoring the real over the fanciful.

While the Movement's ranks were fluid, Mr. Conquest had been considered the last surviving original member. He edited two anthologies of the group's poems: "New Lines," published in 1956 and "New Lines II," published in 1963.

In the 1970s, when Mr. Amis was editing “The New Oxford Book of Light Verse,” he chose several of Mr. Conquest’s works for the volume.

“Penultimata,” a critically acclaimed collection of Mr. Conquest’s poetry, was published in mid-2009 by the Waywiser Press. He was also an enthusiastic crafter of limericks, a form in which his irreverence and flair for language flourished. One version of an often-quoted one reads:

There was a great Marxist named Lenin

Who did two or three million men in.

—*That’s a lot to have done in,*

But where he did one in

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New York Review of Books - Letters **[Kingsley Amis and ‘The Great Terror’](#)**

[Robert Conquest](#)
[April 12, 2007 Issue](#)

In response to:

[Executioner Songs](#) from the March 1, 2007 issue

To the Editors:

In a footnote to John Banville’s review of Martin Amis’s *House of Meetings* [“Executioner Songs,” *NYR*, March 1] I am quoted as having suggested, for a title for a new edition of *The Great Terror*, “How About I Told You So, You Fucking Fools?” A few weeks earlier, in a *TLS* review of Zachary Leader’s *The Life of Kingsley Amis* (February 2), Clive James called me “unfailingly polite in controversy.”

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Robert Conquest

Stanford, California

Telegraph, UK - Obituary
Robert Conquest, historian

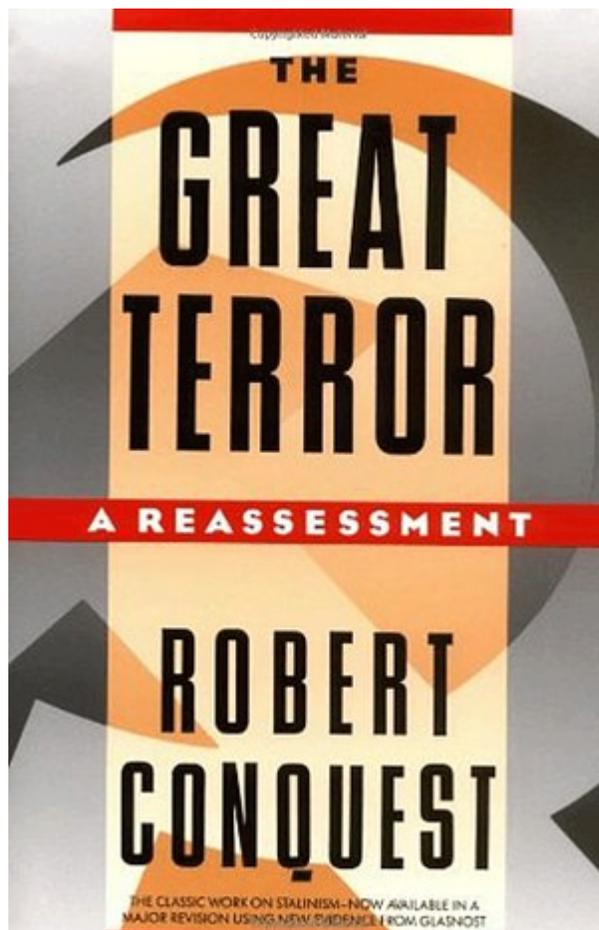
Historian who played a leading role in stiffening western resolve in the Cold War by chronicling the horrors of Soviet communism

Robert Conquest, the writer on Soviet Russia who has died aged 98, was a polemicist and a serious, published poet; but above all he was an historian, one of the outstanding scholars of his time, whose books did as much as any other man's to alter our view of the communist experience.

Conquest personified the truth that there was no anti-communist so dedicated as an ex-communist. His career illustrated also what the Italian writer Ignazio Silone, another former communist, meant when he said to the communist leader Palmiro Togliatti that "the final battle" of the 20th century would have to be fought between the two sides they represented.

An ardent Bolshevik as a young man, Conquest became a bitter foe of Soviet "Socialism". He had first visited Russia in 1937 as a youthful devotee of the great experiment. It was a half century before he returned in 1989, having spent his life between chronicling the horrors the country had endured, and emerging, in the view of the Oxford historian Mark Almond, as "one of the few Western heroes of the collapse of Soviet Communism". "He was Solzhenitsyn before Solzhenitsyn," said Timothy Garton Ash.

Of his many works on the subject, perhaps the most important was *The Great Terror*, published in 1968 and detailing the full enormity of what Stalin had done to the Russian people in the 1930s and 1940s. The Mexican writer Octavio Paz paid the most succinct tribute to this book when he said in 1972 that *The Great Terror* had "closed the debate" about Stalinism.



In the 1970s Conquest was invited to meet the opposition leader Margaret Thatcher to discuss the Soviet threat. According to her authorised biographer Charles Moore, Mrs Thatcher was advised that Conquest liked plenty to drink, so she laid in supplies of champagne. The meeting began at 9.30 am and they were still talking at noon.

In June 1978 Mrs Thatcher drew heavily on an advance manuscript of one of Conquest's books, *Present Danger* (1979), for a major speech on foreign policy she made in Brussels. The theme of the book (and the speech) was, in Conquest's words, "there's nothing the Russians can do so long as we keep the level of our arms right," and he dedicated the work to Mrs Thatcher.

In the run-up to the 1979 general election, Conquest floated the idea that she might appoint him ambassador to the UN once she became Prime Minister, but she declined to do so, believing that the Civil Service should not be supplanted at the public

expense, although she took the unusual step of shifting the file of her correspondence with Conquest into No 10, whereas most of her files from opposition were sent to Conservative Central Office for storage.

Conquest subsequently left Britain for well-paid American academe, but he remained in touch and became one of her “Downing Street irregulars”, a group of intellectuals, many of them defectors from the Left, who gave her ideas relating to the nature and danger of Soviet communism. What worried Conquest particularly was the loss of nerve he detected during the presidency of Jimmy Carter. “I feel the real urgency,” he wrote to her in August 1979, “to stiffen up Washington” – a sentiment which she underlined in green ink and to which she found a receptive ear when Ronald Reagan entered the White House in 1981.

George Robert Acworth Conquest was born a few months before the October Revolution on July 15 1917, in a hotel at Great Malvern, Worcestershire, the son of Robert Folger Acott Conquest, an American of Virginian stock, and his English-born wife Rosamund. His grandfather, HA Acworth, was a friend of Elgar's, for whose opera-cum-oratorio *Caractacus* he wrote the libretto.

Young Bob was educated at Winchester, winning an exhibition to Magdalen College, Oxford, although he was rusticated from the latter after a college servant found what the dean called “amorous engines” (or contraceptives) in his room.

Between school and Oxford he had wandered through Switzerland and France, where he made friends with Walter Bernstein, an American his own age, himself later a screenwriter (and communist). He remembered Conquest in 1936 as “a very militant communist”, on his way to Spain for an anti-fascist “Workers’ Olympics”.

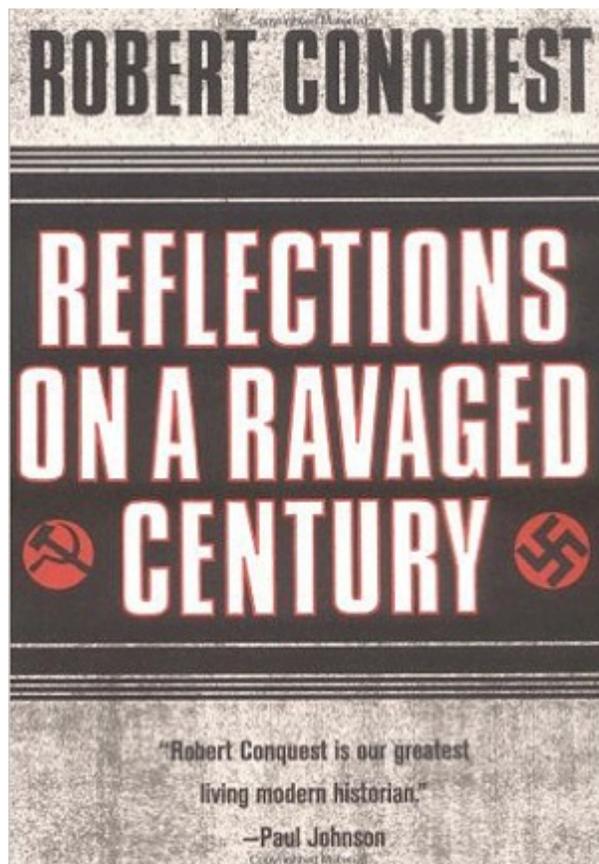
At the outbreak of the Second World War Conquest volunteered for military service and was commissioned into the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. Transferred to the Intelligence Corps towards the end of the war, from 1944 he served in Bulgaria as a liaison officer to the Bulgarian forces fighting under Soviet command, and later as a press attaché with the British military mission to the Allied Control Commission in Sofia. In 1945 his poem *For the Death of a Poet* won the PEN Brazil Prize for the best long poem of the Second World War.

After demobilisation Conquest joined the Foreign Office, but continued to serve in the same job for the British legation in Sofia. In 1948, however, he was recalled to London under a minor diplomatic cloud, after helping to smuggle two Bulgarians out of the country, now in the grip of hard-line Stalinism.

Conquest continued to work at the Foreign Office until 1956, becoming increasingly involved in the intellectual counter-offensive against communism. For several of those years he worked for the FO's shadowy Information Research Department where, like George Orwell, he fell for the beautiful Celia Kirwan, who worked in the department and who inspired him to write several poems, among them *Generalities*, which appeared in *The Oxford Book of Contemporary Verse*.

At the IRD he wrote various papers which sowed the seeds for his later work. One, on Soviet means of obtaining confessions, was to be elaborated in *The Great Terror*. Other papers were “Peaceful Co-existence in Soviet Propaganda and Theory”, and on “United Fronts – a Communist Tactic” describing the fate of the democratic parties in east European countries as they were taken over.

The IRD was sometimes called a propagandist operation, but just how serious and scholarly its work was could be seen when much of it was later published in the Soviet Studies Series. When an American leftist accused Conquest of “falsification” and “black propaganda”, Conquest challenged him to find a single falsehood in this series. There was no response.



After leaving the Foreign Office, Conquest held a number of academic posts. The first was as Sidney and Beatrice Webb Fellow of the London School of Economics in 1956-8 (he was tickled to have a fellowship named after the authors of what he considered the single most preposterously credulous book on Soviet Russia ever written). Then, after a spell as Visiting Poet at the University of Buffalo, he was literary editor of *The Spectator* in 1962, before returning to America as Fellow of Columbia in 1964-5. In the 1970s and early 1980s he was a regular contributor to *The Daily Telegraph's* “Personal View” column. He held other American research appointments, in Washington and at the Hoover Institution in California, and it was at this last that he finally settled in 1981.

His first books on Russia, *Common Sense About Russia* (1960), *Power and Policy in the USSR* (1961), and *Russia After Khrushchev* (1965) were solid, rather than exciting. But it was *The Great Terror* that really established his reputation as an historian. By the time it was published the Cold War was into its third decade and there were seemingly few illusions

about Soviet Russia. All the same, Conquest opened many eyes to the full scale of that horror and everything he wrote was to be vindicated as the Soviet archives were finally opened. In fact, the figures of Stalin's victims which Conquest had given, and for which he had once been derided, have been steadily revised upwards by younger Russian historians to at least 25 million. Most of their deaths were not ordered by the dictator in person, but plenty were. Conquest described how one day in 1937 Stalin and Molotov personally approved 3,167 death sentences, and then went to watch a film.

That book was followed by other major works on Soviet Russia. These included *The Nation Killers* (1970), about Stalin's quasi-genocidal war on smaller nationalities, re-examined in *Stalin: Breaker of Nations* (1991). Then came *Lenin* (1972), *Kolyma* (1978), which dealt with the Gulag camps, *Inside Stalin's Secret Police* (1985) and *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivisation and the Terror-Famine* (1986).

In *Stalin and the Kirov Murder* (1989), Conquest examined the assassination by “opportunists”, in 1934, of the Leningrad party secretary, an event used by Stalin as a pretext for unleashing the first wave of terror. As Conquest demonstrated, Kirov's death was indeed a pretext, and had been ordered by Stalin himself.

Despite his views on communism, Conquest continued to call himself a man of the moderate left, voted Labour until the arrival of Mrs Thatcher, and emphasised that his warmest American political allies were Democrats.

He was one of the first to grasp the weakness of post-Stalinist Russia, and the ineptitude of its leadership which, he told a Senate committee in Washington in 1970, was “intellectually third-rate and likely to commit blunders”. He was also one of the first to foresee the Soviet Union’s disintegration.

In his last two works, *Reflections on a Ravaged Century* (1999) and *The Dragons of Expectation: Reality and Delusion in the Course of History* (2004), Conquest drew on decades of historical study to trace how seductive ideas have come to corrupt modern minds to often disastrous effect and discuss why and how people could have been so blind to what was going on.

Conquest always considered himself as much a poet as an historian (he chose *Two Muses* as the title of an unfinished memoir written before his death). Maurice Bowra once told Conquest that he found his poetry “much more satisfying than almost anyone else’s now writing”. Alongside his historical works, Conquest published several volumes of his own poems and in 1956 edited an anthology, *New Lines*, which included nine poems by Philip Larkin who became a close friend. So did Kingsley Amis, with whom Conquest wrote the squib, *The Egyptologists*, in 1966, and who included some of Conquest’s light verse (under the pen-name “Victor Gray”) in his *New Oxford Book of Light Verse*.

Conquest had a particularly felicitous gift for reducing the classics to doggerel. In a riff on Jacques’s soliloquy, he wrote “Seven ages: first puking & mewling; Then pissed off to hell with your schooling; Then f---s, & then fights; Then judging chaps’ rights; Then sitting in slippers; then drooling.” Larkin quoted this to a friend with the words, “He’s a genius.”

More disconcertingly for their admirers, it emerged from the pages of Larkin’s published letters that Conquest and Larkin shared an enthusiasm for pornography. On one occasion Conquest wrote a letter to Larkin purporting to come from the Vice Squad which had found the poet’s name on a pornographic publisher’s list. Larkin panicked and went to see his solicitor, convinced that he was going to lose his job as librarian at Hull University, before Conquest owned up.

Among other interests, Conquest was a lifelong member, later fellow, of the British Interplanetary Society, to which he was recruited by a young civil servant called Arthur C Clarke. He also published a science fiction novel, *A World of Difference*. In 2009 he published *Penultimata*, a collection of poetry. His last collection, *Blokelore & Blokesongs*, was published in 2012 when Conquest was 95.

Conquest was appointed OBE in 1955 and CMG in 1996. In 2005 he was presented with the US Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Robert Conquest was married four times. By Joan Watkins (1942-48) he had two sons. He then married Tatiana Mihailova (1948-62) and Caroleen McFarlane (1962-78). There were other entanglements, though Larkin was exaggerating when he referred to Conquest’s “limitless number of 24 yr old girls”.

From 1979 he enjoyed an exceptionally happy marriage to Elizabeth “Liddie” (née Neece), who survives him with his children.

Robert Conquest born July 15 1917, died August 3 2015

IBD

Late Night Humor

by Andrew Malcolm

Conan: Darth Vader was in front of me at Starbucks this morning. In typical Starbucks fashion, the barista wrote "Garth Bader" on the cup.

Fallon: Tom Cruise is here to promote the new "Mission: Impossible" movie, which is all about Donald Trump's PR team.

Conan: Big show tonight. We have the cast of "Game of Thrones." I just went to say hi to them in the Green Room and they're all dead.

Meyers: The French language Scrabble championship was won this week by a New Zealand man who does not speak French. Of course, in French scrabble, you win by flipping over the board and going outside for a cigarette.

Meyers: The U.S. won the International Math Olympiad. So if you don't think Americans can compete with Asia in math, maybe you should talk to some of the members of the American team, like Shyam Narayanan, Yang Liu and Allen Liu and their coach Po-Shen Loh.

Meyers: A student at the University of Alabama was arrested for having 10,000 Xanax pills stashed in his home. Not surprisingly, he's taking the arrest really, really well.

Fallon: Some tech news. Google is adding a new feature that will allow customers to shop directly through its most popular search results. In which case, congratulations to the makers of "boobs."

Conan: In an interview, Donald Trump said that he does not know why he agreed to fly to New York to meet Ted Cruz. Then he promised to bring that kind of leadership to the Oval Office.

Conan: There's now footage of the drug kingpin "El Chapo" changing his shoes right before his prison escape. Apparently, authorities didn't notice El Chapo was lacing up a pair of "Nike Tunnel Runners."

Meyers: July 15th was a rare day when no professional sporting events took place in the U.S. Causing millions of fathers everywhere to ask their daughters, "Why can't your dance recital be today?"

Conan: The Trump International Golf Course in Puerto Rico has filed for bankruptcy. This may be because of Trump's rule, "No Puerto Ricans on my Puerto Rican golf course."

Conan: The Obama Administration announced a deal with Iran that will prevent the Iranians from making a nuclear weapon. In exchange, we're giving the Iranians Netflix.

Conan: Iran is celebrating the nuclear deal with the U.S. Iranians are going crazy. They're drinking non-alcoholic champagne and thinking about dancing.

Meyers: New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo has announced a new plan to improve LaGuardia Airport. That's right, they're going to burn it down.

Conan: NASA has released some pretty cool images of Pluto. Pluto is larger than previously thought, and on its surface there is a shape that looks like a heart. So now, scientists are deciding whether to classify Pluto as a planet or an emoji.

Meyers: It took European leaders 17 hours to negotiate a deal to resolve the debt crisis in Greece. *17 hours*. Or as Greeks call that, a work week.

Conan: The N.Y. Times intentionally left Ted Cruz's book off its bestseller list. To get back on the bestseller list, Cruz' next book is about a young boy attending a school for wizards.

Conan: Spain recently held its annual Running of the Bulls. The winner, as is the case every year, is Charles Darwin.

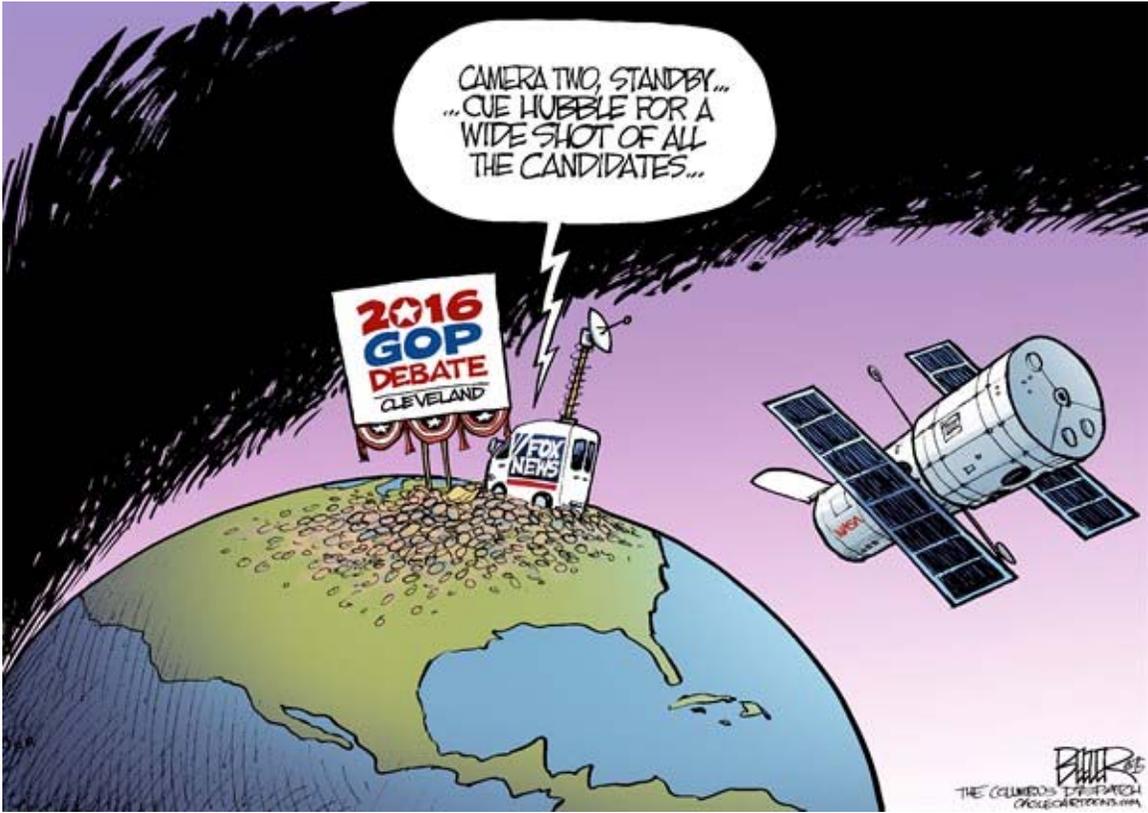
Meyers: Donald Trump read Sen. Lindsey Graham's cell phone number aloud on live TV. It was the craziest thing Trump has done since whatever he did right before that.

Meyers: Republican hopeful Rick Perry compared Donald Trump to cancer. Which really isn't fair because, sometimes, you can get rid of cancer.

Meyers: The White House opened a Twitter account to answer questions about Obama's nuclear deal with Iran. Finally using Twitter for what it was designed to do: Explain complex, international nuclear agreements involving several nations.

Meyers: A former Iowa lottery official was found guilty yesterday of rigging a computerized 'Hot Lotto' game so he could win a \$14 million jackpot. He now faces up to 5, 12, 14, 20, or 25 years in prison.

Fallon: You know that Minnesota dentist who shot a famous lion named Cecil. He's so evil Donald Trump is considering him as a running mate.





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