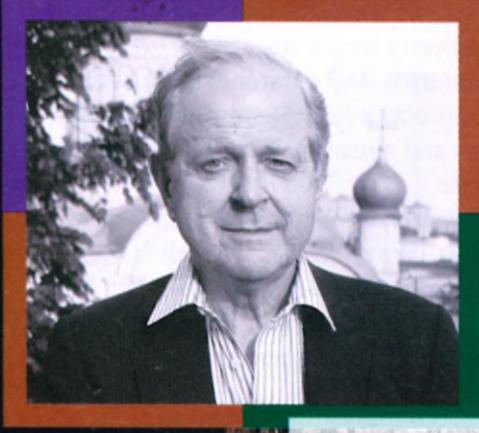
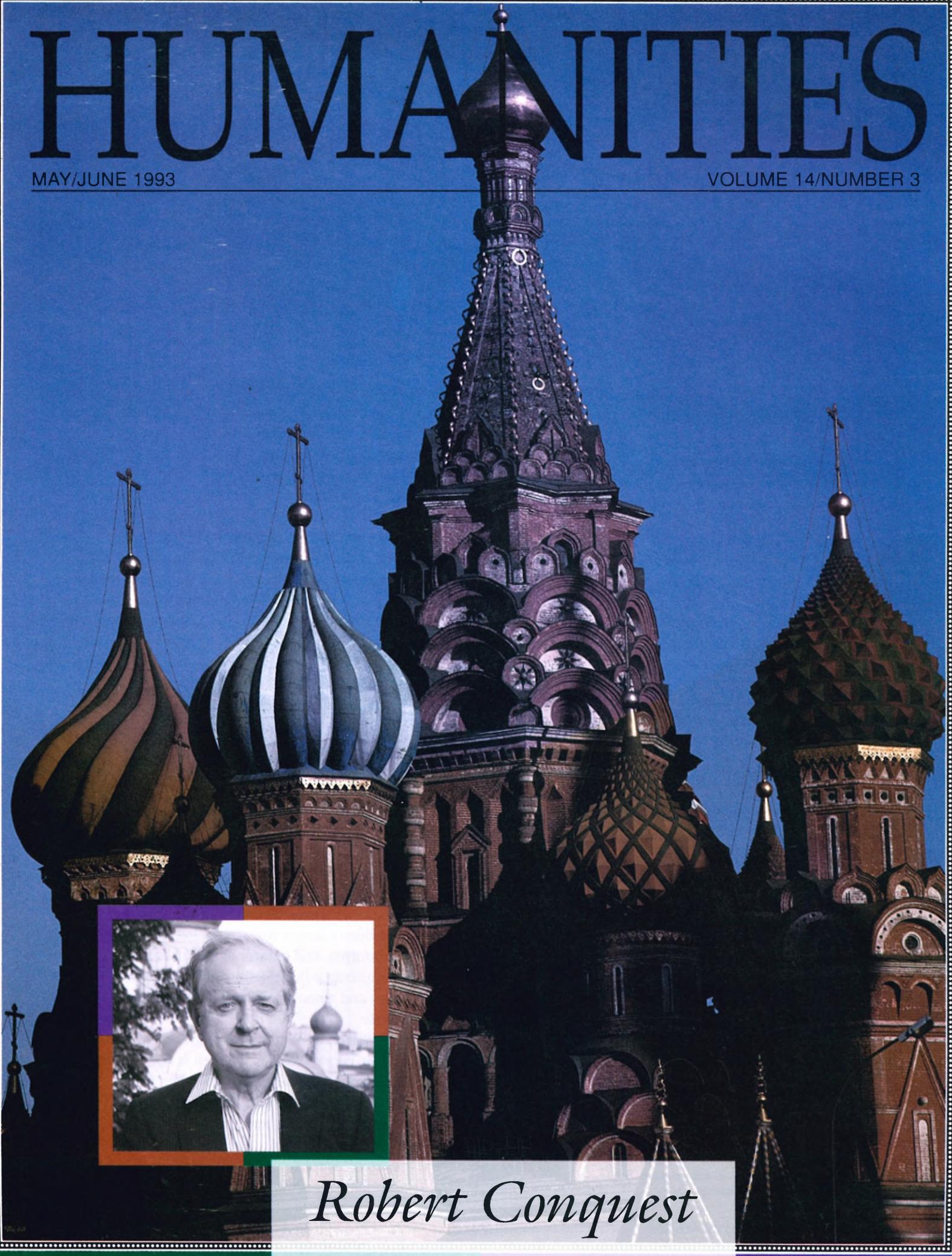


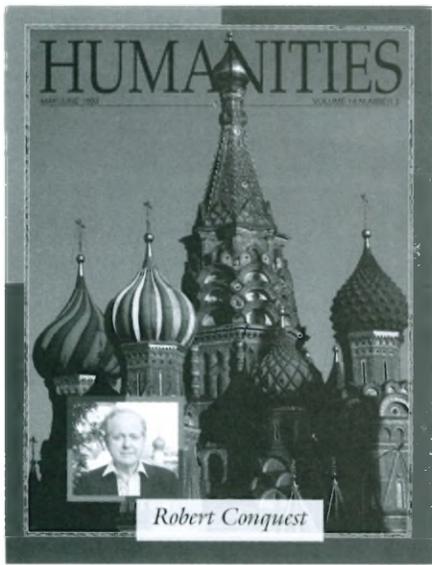
# HUMANITIES

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*Robert Conquest*



Moscow, Saint Basil's Cathedral, Red Square.  
—© Photo by Craig Line. (Inset) Photo by Elizabeth Conquest.

#### Humanities

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

### Robert Conquest

"The task of the historian," writes Robert Conquest, "is the notoriously difficult one of trying to represent clearly and truly in a few hundred pages events which cover years of time and nations of men and women."

For the past thirty-five years Conquest has been pursuing the history of a particularly enigmatic part of the world, the part known until recently as the Soviet Union. In looking at its past, Conquest adds somberly in *The Harvest of Sorrow*: "We may perhaps put this in perspective in the present case by saying that in the actions here recorded about twenty human lives were lost for, not every word, but every letter, in this book."

This issue of *Humanities* looks at the life and work of Conquest, who has been chosen as the 1993 Jefferson Lecturer in the Humanities. He is the twenty-second recipient of the honor, which is the highest award the federal government bestows for distinguished achievement in the humanities.

Born in Worcestershire, England, of an American father and an English mother, Conquest holds dual citizenship. He was educated at Winchester College; the University of Grenoble in France; and at Magdalen College, Oxford, where he read politics, philosophy, and economics. He left the university in 1939 and joined the British army, serving in Italy and the Balkans in World War II; after the war, he joined the British foreign service and served in Sofia, Bulgaria, and with the British delegation to the United Nations. He wrote as well, producing novels and books of poetry.

In the 1950s, having edited a volume of "thaw" poetry by Eastern Europeans, Conquest found himself intrigued by the path the Soviet Union was taking, its history still submerged six years after the death of Stalin. From that interest came a lifelong fascination and continuing scholarly study.

Conquest has published fifteen books of Soviet history. In addition to *The Harvest of Sorrow*, they include *Russia after Khrushchev*, *Stalin and the Kirov Murder*, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties*, and most recently, *Stalin: Breaker of Nations*. He has written three other books on political themes as well as six volumes of poetry, two novels—one of them science fiction—and a book of literary criticism. He is a former literary editor of *The Spectator* of London.

Since 1981 Conquest has been a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution in Stanford, California, and curator of its Russian and East European collection. He is also an adjunct fellow at the Washington Center for Strategic Studies and a research associate at Harvard's Ukrainian Research Institute.

Conquest follows with interest the events in Russia and the republics. "History, production figures, census results, were all faked," Conquest commented in a recent issue of *Freedom Review*. "But even more demoralizing, the whole sphere of thought was controlled and distorted." He writes: "The political situation is still dangerous. But at least they are shot of Marxism-Leninism. They may not quite know what they want. But they know what they don't want."

—Mary Lou Beatty

# HUMANITIES

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# The RIABOV Collection



*The Transfiguration, 17th century.*

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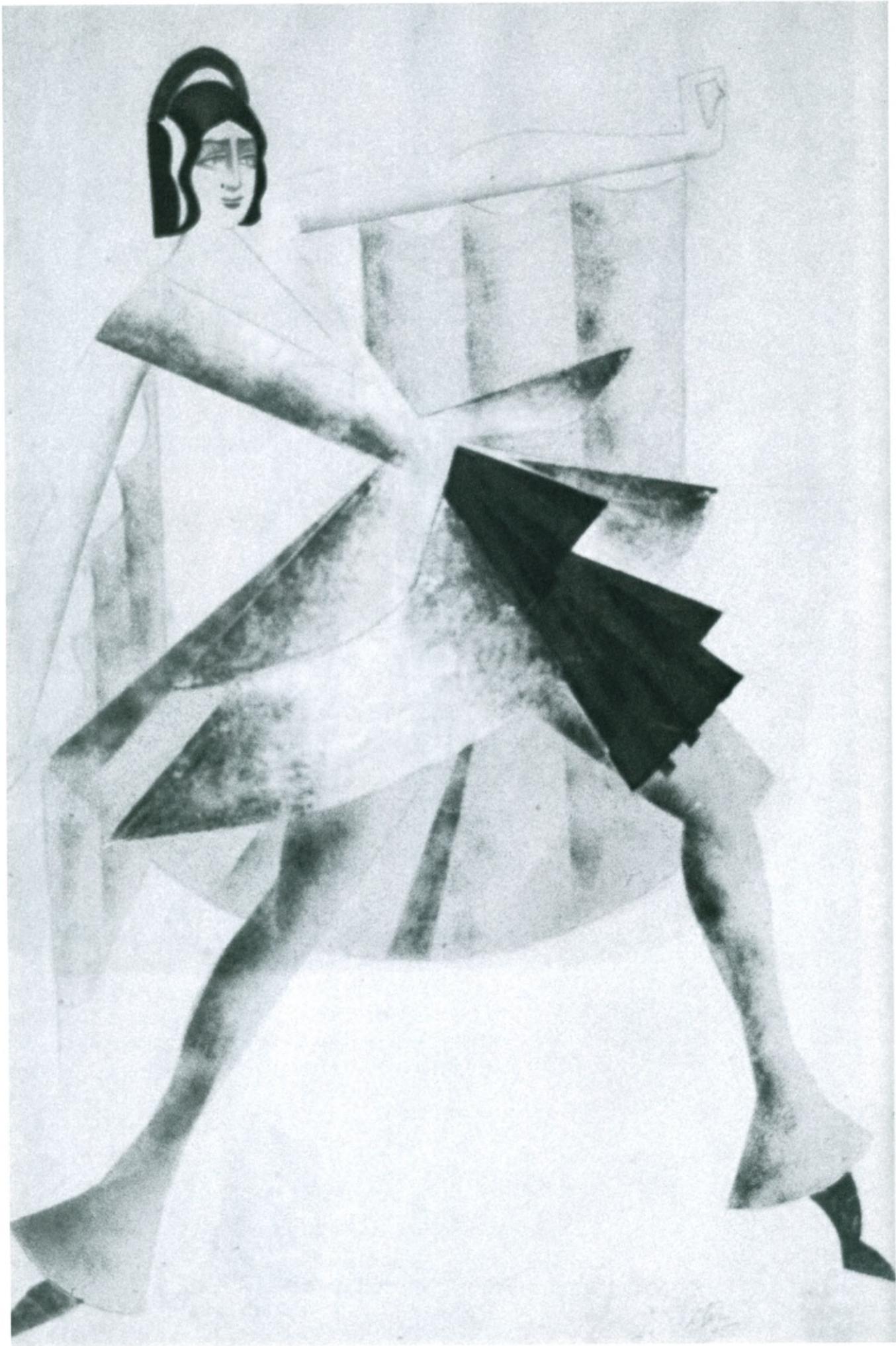
HEN GEORGE RIABOV WAS A BOY OF THIRTEEN LIVING IN A SMALL RUSSIAN EMIGRE COMMUNITY IN POLAND IN 1937, HE BOUGHT A POSTCARD OF A DRAWING BY RUSSIAN ARTIST IVAN BILIBIN FOR A FEW PENNIES. IT WAS THIS SMALL PURCHASE THAT WOULD LAUNCH RIABOV'S LIFELONG DEDICATION TO SOVIET ART AND CULTURE AND ULTIMATELY LEAD TO ONE OF THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE AND UNIQUE COLLECTIONS OF RUSSIAN ART OUTSIDE OF THE SOVIET UNION.

"BEFORE THAT, I HAD ONLY SEEN RUSSIAN ART IN BOOKS," RECALLS RIABOV, THE SON OF WHITE RUSSIAN PARENTS, WHO FLED RUSSIA AFTER THE REVOLUTION. RIABOV WAS BORN IN POLAND AND EMIGRATED TO THE UNITED STATES IN 1946. "IT WAS AT THAT TIME I DECIDED THE REST OF MY LIFE WOULD BE DEDICATED TO RUSSIAN CULTURE AND ART."

IT WAS A LIFE THAT WOULD LEAD THE YOUNG ART COLLECTOR FROM CORUN, THE POLISH BIRTHPLACE HE SHARED WITH COPERNICUS, TO THE DISPLACED PERSONS' CAMPS WHERE MANY RUSSIAN EMIGRES WERE SENT FOLLOWING WORLD WAR II, AND FINALLY TO THE EMINENT ARTS COMMUNITY OF THE NEW YORK METROPOLITAN AREA. THROUGHOUT HIS TRAVELS AND HARDSHIPS, RIABOV NEVER CEASED HIS SEARCH FOR RUSSIAN ART.

A FORMER CONSULTANT TO THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART AND PART-TIME RUSSIAN ART CONSULTANT TO CHRISTIE'S, RIABOV HAS ALLOWED HIS COLLECTION TO BECOME A PERMANENT PART OF THE JANE VOORHEES ZIMMERLI ART MUSEUM AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, HIS ALMA MATER. COMPRISED OF APPROXIMATELY 1,000 PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS, SCULPTURES, AND PRINTS, THE RIABOV COLLECTION OFFERS A BROAD SELECTION OF RUSSIAN ART—FROM A RARE FOURTEENTH-CENTURY RUSSIAN ICON CARVED IN STONE TO MODERN

*Nicholas Roerich (1874-1947).  
Costume design for the ballet, *Le Sacre  
du Printemps*, by Stravinsky; 1913.*



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costume and stage designs done in watercolor and gouache. An auxiliary library of 5,000 books, journals, newspaper clippings, and slides bears directly upon the documentation of the art objects. The museum staff recently completed a computerized catalogue of the collection, with the assistance of Riabov and funds provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The chance to provide a scholarly enhancement of his art collection was a factor in Riabov's decision to donate the entire 1,000-piece collection to Rutgers. "I believe in education along with art. During the course of my collecting, I was constantly studying, doing research, and training my eye to see the historical context in the art. I like to convey the importance of that to others. That is why I believe the



*Aleksei Jawlensky (1864-1941). Head of Christ, 1934.*

(Left)  
*Alexandra Exter (1884-1940). Costume design, 1925, possibly for Bronislava Nijinska's Theatre Choreographique.*

—Photos courtesy of Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University

proper place for my collection is at an educational institution," explains Riabov, who received a B.A. and M.A. in German from Rutgers.

The Riabov collection demonstrates how Russian art, paralleling other European national cultures, covered a full range of historical styles, from neo-Classicism and Romanticism to Impressionism and Cubism. "We wanted to show that the art of Russia reveals international relationships and contexts like any other nation's art would do," says the Zimmerli's assistant director Jeffrey Wechsler.

The manner in which Riabov acquired his works of art is as diverse as the collection itself. His paintings and drawings by unofficial Russian artists can be attributed to the friendships he established as a young boy among the émigré community in Poland. "Many of the artists made up the friends who supported me in my early endeavor of collecting," he says.

Some of the collection's rare icons were obtained by Riabov when he was working as a translator in a displaced persons' camp in Germany after his family fled Poland in the early 1940s. The icons were an important part of the heritage his parents labored to uphold, says Riabov. "The beauty and mystery of icons are a part of the Russian soul, like reading great Russian literature," he says.

Riabov speaks of the "intense" cultural life the family led in Europe, which included the commissioning by his mother of local émigré artists to paint portraits of her children. "We were a stateless people," Riabov says. "My parents fought to preserve our Russian heritage in the countries in which we lived in exile."

Riabov's quest for Russian art did not wane once he arrived in the United States. The collector recalls during his years at the Museum of Modern Art, wandering around Manhattan art galleries during his lunch hours, magnifying glass in pocket. "It was a matter of ridicule among some of my colleagues," he says. "There was no interest in Soviet art at the time."

Zimmerli's Wechsler echoes Riabov's view: "You cannot find



*Nicholas Roerich. The Sacred Lake, 1917.*

extensive Russian art and history development in American museums. They may have some Russian paintings, but they don't broadly represent the styles, movements, and background of the art."

Now that the barriers of the past have made way for an intense curiosity about the art he loves so much, Riabov has become a sought-after expert on Russian art in the United States. His flair for art collecting was noted long before his emigration to the United States, however. Riabov, now sixty-nine, recalls: "When I was in high school in Germany, I was drawing sketches of Gothic sculpture with a classmate. I was never artistically inclined, in the way of creating something. A voice behind me said, 'You shall never be an artist, but you shall always be dealing with art.' It was a German soldier. He turned and walked away and I never saw him again." □

*Laura Randall is a free-lance writer in Washington, D.C.*

*In 1992 the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey received a \$50,000 grant from Humanities Projects in Museums and Historical Organizations, Division of Public Programs, to support documentation of the George Riabov Collection of Russian Art.*



*Robert Conquest (right) with the Bulgarian journalist Ilya Kovachev, in Sofia, 1944.*

*—Courtesy of Robert Conquest*

*A Conversation With*

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# ROBERT CONQUEST



*Robert Conquest with his father's mastiffs, 1919.*

*—Courtesy of Robert Conquest*

*W*HEN HUMANITIES EDITOR MARY LOU BEATTY SPOKE WITH ROBERT CONQUEST, THE 1993 JEFFERSON LECTURER IN THE HUMANITIES, THE CONVERSATION TURNED TO THE ATROCITIES OF JOSEPH STALIN AND THE CURRENT STATE OF SOVIET AFFAIRS. CONQUEST IS SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW AND SCHOLAR-CURATOR OF THE RUSSIAN/CIS COLLECTION AT THE HOOVER INSTITUTION AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY IN CALIFORNIA. HE HAS PUBLISHED FIFTEEN BOOKS OF SOVIET HISTORY, INCLUDING *THE HARVEST OF SORROW*, *THE GREAT TERROR*, AND MOST RECENTLY, *STALIN: BREAKER OF NATIONS*. CONQUEST IS ALSO A POET AND NOVELIST.

**EDITOR:** You are both a poet and a tracer of the bloody deeds of Joseph Stalin. I don't want to call this schizoid, but certainly they're rather divergent paths.

**CONQUEST:** How the poetry comes in, I'm not sure, but I think you needed a lot of imagination to grasp the Stalin phenomenon. After all, it was better understood by George Orwell and Arthur Koestler, the novelists, than by the political scientists. My first two books were a book of poems and a science fiction novel. I think the science fiction side of it at least probably qualifies one to understand the old Soviet Union. It was like a totally alien order.

**Q:** I gather that Stalin himself was a poet, as was Ho Chi Minh. Is there some sinister connection between poetry and politics?

**CONQUEST:** I once meant to do a book of poems by Stalin, Ho Chi Minh, Castro, and Mao Tse-tung, illustrations by A. Hitler—who, of course, painted. (laughter)

**Q:** In your book you describe Stalin's effect in powerful terms. Let me quote you: "Stalin, to whom the aura of death clings so strongly, is himself only now ceasing to live on in the system he created. When he died in 1953, he left a monster whose own death throes are not yet over more than a generation later."

**CONQUEST:** That's still true up to a point. The monster has died, but its stinking corpse is still around. What do you do with this enormous dead tyrannosaurus? The results are still there, the total failure to keep up the infrastructure—the buildings, the sewers, the roads, and so on. It's left a very nasty stench behind, including, of course, the stench of Chernobyl.

**Q:** Do you think that there are still Stalinists in significant positions? They'd be pretty old by now.

**CONQUEST:** There still are some, but very few. I think one of the remarkable things about present-day Russia is that practically nobody talks Marxism or Stalinism. Even the conspirators who tried the coup d'état didn't mention Marxism or socialism in their manifesto. They just spoke of restoring order and preserving the borders of the old union. But you never know. In a very dangerous situation, some sort of totalitarian group might gain power.

**Q:** In your books, you mentioned different sources of material—dissidents, émigrés, and so on. Do you still have to protect some of them?

**CONQUEST:** No. Everything is now out in the open and has been for some years, published by the official press. Back in the '60s and even in the '80s, I had difficulty in constructing the true story of the main events of the Stalin period because everything was hidden. But there was enough evidence around from various sources to build what turned out to be a perfectly sound picture. Of course, now there are many more details available—nothing that changes the total picture much, but very interesting, fascinating stuff.

**Q:** Have you been to Russia?

**CONQUEST:** Oh, yes. I went when I was a student in 1937 for a couple of weeks, without a word of Russian or Slavic or anything. Then I was back in '89, and often since.

**Q:** You're the classic English gentleman, I would think.

**CONQUEST:** As to my family, my father was Virginian. He was in Europe when World War I broke out. He came to England and married my English mother. Then he joined the French army in the American ambulance service, like so

many other Americans. He couldn't get into the British army because he was too short-sighted. He won the Croix de Guerre in 1916. Anyway, after that, he remained in England. I was brought up in England and France, but I remained and remain an American citizen and dual national. Then, of course, when the war broke out, the second war, I joined the British army. I was following in his footsteps in a way.

**Q:** Your Russian must be pretty good. I see you've done a translation of Solzhenitsyn's *Prussian Nights*.

**CONQUEST:** Well, my spoken Russian is not good. My listening Russian is not good. My Bulgarian is excellent, and if you know Bulgarian, you think you know Russian, and you don't. I can give a little speech in Russian if I'm prepared, but even then I get cases wrong. But then, so do Russians sometimes. Stalin did, too.

**Q:** The Stalin biography is wonderful. It is mesmerizing. I was about to ask, why the sudden interest in Stalin, or wasn't it so sudden?

**CONQUEST:** If you want the story of how I got into Soviet affairs, it's not a particularly logical one. It starts off in 1937. I went bumming around Europe with my best friend, three months with a backpack, to the Arctic, to Turkey, and so on. We arrived back in Paris, and I was welcomed by my girlfriend. He hadn't got a girlfriend in Paris, so he wandered the streets, and by the Sorbonne, he saw two students begging in the gutter, so, having very little money on him, he joined them, and they turned out to be Bulgarian. We became very good friends of these Bulgarians. That's Act One.

Act Two is I'm in the army and I'm acting as adjutant at my regiment's infantry training center, and there's an army circular, "Officers wanted to learn Balkan languages. Urgent." I put my name in, and a few months later, the colonel howled, "What's all this about your going on a course for three months?" "You remember, sir, you signed it." And so I went on the Bulgarian course. Then in 1944 I was flown in to the Balkans. So I got a Slavic language, I got into Eastern Europe. After the war, I went back as press attaché there, and then in 1950, back to the Foreign Office, one of the research departments.

I became interested in Russia. No one else seemed to care about the secrets. I found that five nations had disappeared from the map and no one had written about them. So I wrote a book, which later was called *The Nation Killers*, about the deportation of these two or three million people. Really, at the beginning, it was in a sense trying to find the hidden. It was sheer intellectual curiosity.

**Q:** How did you discover that Stalin was a monster, not just a ho-hum dictator, if you will?

**CONQUEST:** Well, one of the problems with Russia was, after about 1930, when all the programs went wrong and everything was in a frightful condition, they lied about it. You had two Soviet Unions. You had the true one, the real one, which was horrible terror, famine, you name it, and then you had this one on paper with posters and demonstrations and enthusiasms. One of the troubles was that the West, or some in the West, swallowed the phony one. Why should a Westerner believe one story rather than the other? This is the first time I think it's ever happened that a large, important country was falsifying on so big a scale. Some Westerners could not believe the mere scale of terror. But even now, people understand the terror more than they do the falsification. Its terrible omnipresence crushed the Soviet peoples in some

ways more than the actual terror. They went together. The terror was to enforce conformity and belief.

**Q:** You talked about grain production falling and how they therefore changed the classification to “biological yields.”

**CONQUEST:** Yes, what *should* have been there rather than the reality. They did that until after Stalin’s death. It was denounced, I think, in 1953 or ‘54.

**Q:** Five million people died of starvation, seven million?

**CONQUEST:** It’s difficult to say, but my bet is something around seven million. That wasn’t a genuine famine—I mean, they only died because they took the grain away. The grain was there, all right.

**Q:** They took it away for the army?

**CONQUEST:** They took it away to sell abroad. They sold several million tons abroad. They also put some into what’s called the Strategic Grain Reserve, which wasn’t, technically speaking, for the army, but was supposed to be used in case of war with Japan. Of course, if you’re starving large sections of your own population, you’re not going to have very good recruits. Besides, they ruined the army by shooting practically all its generals. But the whole thing was, at one level, crazy, paranoia run mad. So they crushed the peasantry. The basic reason was simply ideological, that an independent class could not exist under the Marxist schema, as they understood it, and they had to get rid of it. They had first to collectivize it and then to crush its remnant resistance.

**Q:** What were the kulaks supposed to have? They were people who had fifty to one hundred hectares of land?

**CONQUEST:** Nothing like that. At the beginning of the regime, the peasants took the landlords’ land. There were then a million or so richer peasants, of about fifty to eighty, as you say, hectares, who at first went untouched. The communist state took their land in 1918-1919, and there weren’t any rich peasants after that. The people they went on calling kulaks were people with two cows and twenty acres. It was a category invented to provoke what the regime thought would be a class struggle in the countryside, but there wasn’t any class struggle. The poor peas-

ants were usually related to the others. They were villagers like themselves. So it was all done from above, by terror and denunciation, and they deported them by the millions to the Arctic.

**Q:** The figure I heard was thirteen million.

**CONQUEST:** It’s hard to say; perhaps a bit fewer. It may have been something above ten million.

**Q:** Including women and children?

**CONQUEST:** Yes, of course, and children died like flies. They were the biggest casualties. The Arctic hadn’t been farmed because it wasn’t easily farmable; you dump people down on the tundra, they’re not likely to survive. Some did—the prodigious workers, the old Russian peasantry.

**Q:** Were the men put into forced labor camps?

**CONQUEST:** Some were, but others were just left in these deportation areas.

**Q:** To fend for themselves.

**CONQUEST:** Well, they were told to produce, and the ones that survived did, but many others just died on the spot. It was one of the biggest operations of its type ever seen. One of the most infuriating things was to read in some of the Western writers’ that institutional and structural changes were more important than the terror and deportations. If millions of people were involved, in what sense does social or structural or institutional change matter more than these vast events, which were much, much more the essence of Stalinism?

**Q:** You borrow a line from Joseph Conrad about “hopes grotesquely betrayed, ideals caricatured.”

**CONQUEST:** I think the idea was flawed in the first place. The notion that the state can run an economy is not a sound one in the total sense, anyway. And, also, their analysis of social forces was largely fantasy. So what with one thing and another, it was a disastrous aberration, I mean unbelievably disastrous. I don’t think it’s true that Stalin failed to carry out the original ideas. He did carry them out.

**Q:** Perfectly?



*Conquest, at left, in Bulgaria with a colleague and a Soviet officer and translator, 1944.*

—Courtesy of Robert Conquest

**CONQUEST:** Well, as much as they could be, yes. Molotov, his chief accomplice until he turned on him in his last year, said later that people thought Lenin would have carried out the collectivization without so many losses: but Molotov added, "How could it have been carried out without such losses?"

**Q:** It's ironic to see that picture in your book of, who is it, Stalin's daughter in a very fond moment with Beria.

**CONQUEST:** There's also a picture of Stalin with the little daughter of a Buryat-Mongolian communist, Ardan Markizov. That picture was made a statue of in the subway after he'd shot her father.

**Q:** Clearly, Stalin has to be a psychopath.

**CONQUEST:** Well, in Russian psychological circles, they're discussing to what extent he was, strictly speaking, insane. I don't know about the medical definition, but he was certainly paranoid; and a psychopath in the sense that he had absolutely no qualms about killing people. He rather enjoyed it.

**Q:** His seminary training apparently did him no good. It looks like a classical curriculum—plus liturgy, scripture, Church Slavonic, and so on.

**CONQUEST:** It wasn't in itself a bad curriculum, but it was rather narrow. And the teachers were anti-Georgian, which left a mark on him because he was Georgian. Stalin wasn't in some senses uneducated; there was self-education, reading in his spare time.... There is a remark by Churchill about Hitler, that he was "loosely educated," and I think that also applies to Stalin.

**Q:** But how does he become a socialist, a communist? Or is he just a rebel in that period?

**CONQUEST:** Well, he was a rebel, but, of course, other rebels took to other factions or other views. I think, as one of Lenin's earlier collaborators says, that Marxism came to look so fresh and scientific; it promised on scientific grounds that they would win. It hadn't got the smell of the Russian earth, although, as he put it, they took it up with a sort of enthusiasm and a sort of fanaticism which wasn't originally quite there in the western version. But basically they thought that this was a new belief which would trample over the church, which Stalin disliked—religion and every other class or idea that stood in its way.



Senior Research Fellow Robert Conquest, and former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, at Stanford, 1991.

—Courtesy of Hoover Institution

**Q:** Well, I was intrigued by Lenin's doubts about Stalin as a member of the Politburo, as Lenin was having his second or third stroke. But the doubts never come to light, and Stalin slides through. Of the eight in that original group, he is the one who survives, and indeed prevails.

**CONQUEST:** Yes, but Lenin's quarrel with Stalin was really mainly a personal one. I mean, he found Stalin's crudity and brutality annoying, particularly when he tried it out on Lenin's own wife. But Lenin hadn't got much trust in any of his subordinates. Lenin was an extremely egotistical man in his own way, of course, and a terrorist. I saw in one of the last issues of the official party ideological organ, *Kommunist*, an article which said that Stalin was a usurper, but a usurper within the system, and that the rest of Stalin's rivals would have carried out much the same program. I think that's probably about right, although Stalin made things as bad as they possibly could be. I remember a Trotskyite in 1931 or '32 who said, "Well, we must back Stalin. He's doing it in a crude way and his people aren't as intellectual as ours, but, still, he's doing it."

**Q:** Who survives in this situation? Is it the poets, the writers?

**CONQUEST:** No, no. They got shot on a big scale, purged.

**Q:** I meant spiritually. Solzhenitsyn in exile, Akhmatova.

**CONQUEST:** Akhmatova is a wonderful example. She really was in one sense the alternative view of the human being. But you had to be pretty tough. Solzhenitsyn survived. He was in a labor camp, of course, but he survived. There were many people who didn't survive, including great poets like Osip Mendelstam, who died in camp. I think you could argue that a tough-minded generation evolved that included Solzhenitsyn and, of course, people like Sakharov. That's what I felt when I spoke to them. They had gone through the mill and they didn't give a damn. As I think Solzhenitsyn points out, the Bolsheviks whom Stalin shot, who confessed, had been treated very softly under the tsarist regime. They were jailed and then exiled with an allowance and housing. It's quite different going to one of the torture chambers of Lubyanka, or being in a cell with a hundred people, standing up, and then being beaten up for days to confess. They weren't ready for it. But the people under Stalin who survived were more or less ready for it, as you can see at the end of Solzhenitsyn's *First Circle*. A really tough element, intellectually tough and physically, morally tough, was produced. They're, in one sense, the hope of Russia.

**Q:** Do you think Solzhenitsyn will ever go back there?

**CONQUEST:** Well, I think he'd like to in certain circumstances. But it's hard to say because, as he says himself, his going back is bound to be a political event. He has to choose what he does and when he does it.

**Q:** One of the controversies in your career was the one over numbers in the Great Terror. You put the numbers, what, at seven million arrested, a million executed?

**CONQUEST:** Yes. Well, that hasn't really settled yet, but it's settling down. Where I've gone wrong on that—not essentially, but it makes quite a difference—is that we underestimated the number executed. So as a result, we overestimated the number in camps. The arrests are probably about right. Both the head of the Russian Parliamentary Commission on the Terror and the head of the security ministry's own research branch are now saying that here were nineteen to twenty-two million arrests of whom seven million were executed over—they give slightly different periods, but,

roughly speaking—1935 to '41 or 1935 to '46. If seven million were executed, then there were fewer to go to camp, obviously, of the number arrested. Basically it shakes out. The lowest figures now given imply that, in the camps and colonies, about fifteen million people went from the period after 1935; if you put that with the seven million shot, that gives roughly the figure. And then you have to add in those people, the two to three million deported 1943 to 1945 and so on. But all these figures are still inexact.

**Q:** I gather you're something of a hero in the Soviet Union.

**CONQUEST:** Well, I got a very good reception there the first year or two of glasnost when this was new to them. In fact, I still do. They're still publishing my histories of the Great Terror in the communist countries.

The trouble is that their trained historians were trained not to write history or to write non-history; so the history departments were frightfully bad. They had literary people like Solzhenitsyn, who wrote *The Gulag*, which of course was a fascinating document, but they still don't have full histories of their own periods, so they still to some extent use my work.

**Q:** I guess the question is, who will write the history books for the various parts of the Soviet Union and Central Europe? Where does truth begin in certain parts of their histories? It comes at different times in different places.

**CONQUEST:** Yes. It was almost incredible. The level of falsification wasn't only historical; it was economics, demographics everywhere. Even now we don't know quite what the five-year-plan figures were. They used to give huge figures for the alleged industrial successes, which supposedly compensated for the terror, but they now say that the increase was about the same as in Germany.

**Q:** We haven't gotten into that at all, parallels between the Soviet Union and Germany.

**CONQUEST:** Well, there wasn't an economic parallel. The German improvement was done under normal conditions. I'm talking about the 1934 to 1939 time period, where the Soviets used to claim a growth figure like 800 percent, and it turns out to be about 3 percent per annum. And even that doesn't allow for the fact that most of the products weren't any good. So these sacrifices were made for almost nothing. I remember once, somebody saying, "Ah, Stalinism is one method of industrializing," and I answered, "Well, yes, and cannibalism is one method of getting a high-protein diet." But even that was too favorable a view.

**Q:** Let's turn to the future for a moment. In John Lukacs's new book, *The End of the Twentieth Century*, he puts the beginning of the twentieth century at 1914 and the end in 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the beginning of the disintegration of communist states. He says we are not seeing a democracy, really; that in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Russia itself, the situation is one of moving toward nationalism, and to what he calls a new feudalism in the world.



A chart indicating that the industrial production of the USSR far surpassed that of the United States, Great Britain, and France, was among the gifts from the French Communist party to Stalin in honor of his seventieth birthday in 1949.

—National Archives, Washington, D.C.

**CONQUEST:** I don't think that's quite right. Of course, the old Soviet Union was itself basically a feudal structure. I remember saying to Yuri Afanasiev, democratic leader, five or six years ago, that what was needed in Russia, the Soviet Union, as it then still was, was the destruction of the feudal element, because everything in the old Soviet Union, every appointment, every job, every profit depended on appointment, as it did in the feudal system.

Now, when Lukacs talks about nationalism versus democracy, these are not in fact contradictories. France has always been nationalistic and often been very democratic. I don't think these contradict each other in essence. They do beyond a certain point. If you get the perverse nationalism and the Nazi ideological nationalism, or the super tribal-murder nationalism—what's now going on in the Balkans—yes, of course these are incompatible with democracy. But I don't think that it's a true statement of most of Eastern Europe and even of Russia as yet. It's true that they haven't yet got democracy and they haven't yet got what to my mind is more important than formal democracy, the rule of law. After all, how democratic was England in the 1800s? It was democratic in one sense: it was consensual, it was civic. But only a tenth of the population if that had the vote. The rule of law they did have. In England even today you don't hear the expression, "We're a democracy," in pubs. You hear the expression, "It's a free country, isn't it." And I think freedom, political freedom, is more important and more basic than democracy.

**Q:** What do you see happening in the next five years?

**CONQUEST:** I'm not as clear on these matters as perhaps Mr. Lukacs or, indeed, Mr. Fukuyama, seem to be. I think this is very difficult to predict. There is indeed going to be a great deal of trouble of one sort or another, and much of that is associated with nationalism. Assuming that a total breakdown can be avoided, in Russia in particular, I think the evolution can take place. I'm not saying it will. I'm saying we're at one of those cruxes of history where a lot of things could happen. □

BY  
CHARLES  
FAIRBANKS

AN  
APPRECIATION:

Robert  
Conquest

**O**ur century will be forever remembered in history as the century of totalitarianism, which came to power out of World War I and is now collapsing with the end of the century. The horrors that distinguished earlier centuries—the Mongol invasions, the Black Death, the wars of religion—were easy to recognize but ours were not. Communism and fascism not only had millions of sympathizers and apologists, they gained also from the tolerance of establishment figures. Robert Conquest has eloquently described our difficulty:

A periwigged Hanoverian king would never have thought that the intentions of a turbaned and scimitared sultan were the same as his own. Gladstone can hardly have believed the Mahdi's deepest motives to be much like those of a British Liberal. Nowadays the Politburo in Moscow wear Western suits and speak a variant of the

Western political dialects. But the Soviet leaders are as much as any Sultan or Mahdi the product of centuries of history very different from our own.

Totalitarianism kept fading from view and reappearing, and this was no accident. Socialism and nationalism were, in various Western countries, the very definition of respectability; and all the ideas of totalitarianism originated in the West. How strange it is to realize that you yourself, on a vacation in Paris, may have brushed up against the student Pol Pot on the crowded Boul' Mich. Pausing briefly at the sidewalk used-book tables of Gibert Jeune, you may have glanced briefly at one of the wordy treatises that inspired him to the murder of millions before tossing it, entirely uninterested, back on the pile.

In fact, totalitarianism is not only the product of what is worst in us, but of what is best in us: of idealism, commitment, loyalty, hope. Totalitarianism

was hard to recognize, hard to respond to, hard to fight because it was in some way a mysterious double of Western civilization, a kind of secret sharer.

Now that totalitarianism in its twentieth-century form is expiring, we owe a special debt to those who helped us to distinguish totalitarianism as something different and frightful when it was thoroughly unpopular to do so. Robert Conquest is one of those rare human beings. Conquest has given us a vast and diverse body of work on the Soviet form of totalitarianism. His fifteen books

related to this subject cover Politburo politics, literary policy, the nationalities, the Soviet future, the terror, the collectivization and famine, Lenin, and more general issues such as the differences between "despotic" and "civic" culture. This work is particularly distinguished by the rare combination of abilities to talk (in *The Great Terror*, for example) about both high politics and its effects on the society. Conquest grasps the suffering of ordinary people with the imagination of a poet, and the endless contention of powerful men with the weary recognition of someone who knows it from the inside. He cuts through the abstract debates about whether Soviet leaders are motivated by ideology or by the desire for power, or are trying to be good managers, with an example from university politics and this persuasive phrase: "Idealism, conviction, careerism, and factiousness formed an inextricable blend. Anyone who has been connected with a large organization will recollect similar instances." Unlike many of our scholars, Conquest is worldly.

Conquest adorns his unpretentious narrative with an art of graceful allusion and comparison, ranging from paleontology to the historians of the Mameluke sultanate. These riches are strewn about with an effortless, absentminded air. Conquest has a gift for the telling fact and for the phrase that brings it decisively to our awareness. In the new Stalin biography, for example, we read that "On 12 December 1937 alone, Stalin and Molotov approved 3,167 death sentences, and then went to the cinema." Lysenkoism (the crank genetics of Stalin's court biologist) appealed because it "promised the submission of the plant world to the orders of the party." When he hits his stride Con-

quest can be quite funny. He expressed the predicament of the critic in assessing Ezra Pound's poetry as follows:

No one can criticize him 'rigorously' until he has actually read all the Cantos....Clear-eyed marksmen who can shoot the pip out of an ace with their Winchesters are at a loss when bogged down before mile upon mile of impassable earth-works, barbed-wire entanglements and mud churned into a morass.

### Desecrating Specialization

Robert Conquest is not only a distinguished Soviet specialist, but a poet, science fiction writer, literary critic, and parodist. It is odd that he criticizes Stalin for his belief that he could direct many fields because Conquest must be, out of the four billion human beings who crowd the earth, the one unique person who is simultaneously all these things. Conquest is one of the scholars who still give the concept of "the humanities" some reality in our times: normally the historian works in isolation from the literary critic, the art historian, and so forth. In our time everything is being whirled apart, like a pile of autumn leaves scattered every which way by the wind. The thinker is no longer an artist who tries to write beautifully, the administrator no longer a man who reflects, the man who proves things no longer a man of feeling.

This turn in human existence is pregnant with consequences. There is more and more "data" or research, in a hundred different compartments, but it is less and less clear how one would turn it into any broad overarching theory; as a result, the contact of such theories tends to come from Paris or from mere prejudices. And out of the contemporary division of labor there tends to arise a mutual hostility between the scholar and the public. If scholars are narrow specialists, and if we no longer make any effort to be "artists" in our presentation, our lifework will neither interest nor attract the public. Conversely, specialization gives us a source of superiority in our given area and of pride that cannot be shared by the public, which is shut out of it. Finally, there is the alienation so powerfully described by Conquest's foe, Karl Marx. To interpret our human experience or some major part of it, and to describe it as gracefully as we can, is a natural joy. But to interpret a tiny, isolated part of our experience by means that are imposed on us externally (e.g., a "methodology")

and to feel obliged to purge our presentation of every element of charm, is to turn scholarship into a form of *work*, that is, pain we undergo for the sake of a reward external to it, money or vanity. Our own human activity becomes an alien power, watching over us, forcing us, torturing us.

These very real problems of the academic division of labor may explain why Conquest brought back together, for one lifetime, some ever more separated human possibilities. He overcame powerful worldly incentives to specialize in a single area as well. Scholars are evaluated on one area; everything Conquest learned about poetry or paleontology or the Mameluke sultanate was time lost from laboriously heaping up the pile of data on which he would eventually be judged. (Conquest has never held a tenured position in any university.) If Conquest wanted to nail down just what had gone on in the USSR, as he clearly did, why did he waste his time with poetry and a lot of other things?

Conquest's tastes, their range, complexity, and contradictions, are most visible in his poetry. Though he has been seen by social scientists as an unrelenting moralist and judge, he scorned the abolitionists in verse. The celebrant of love in language conventionally "poetic," he also wrote epigrams and limericks lewder than Catullus', as well as the invocation of the pleasures of a Soho pornographic

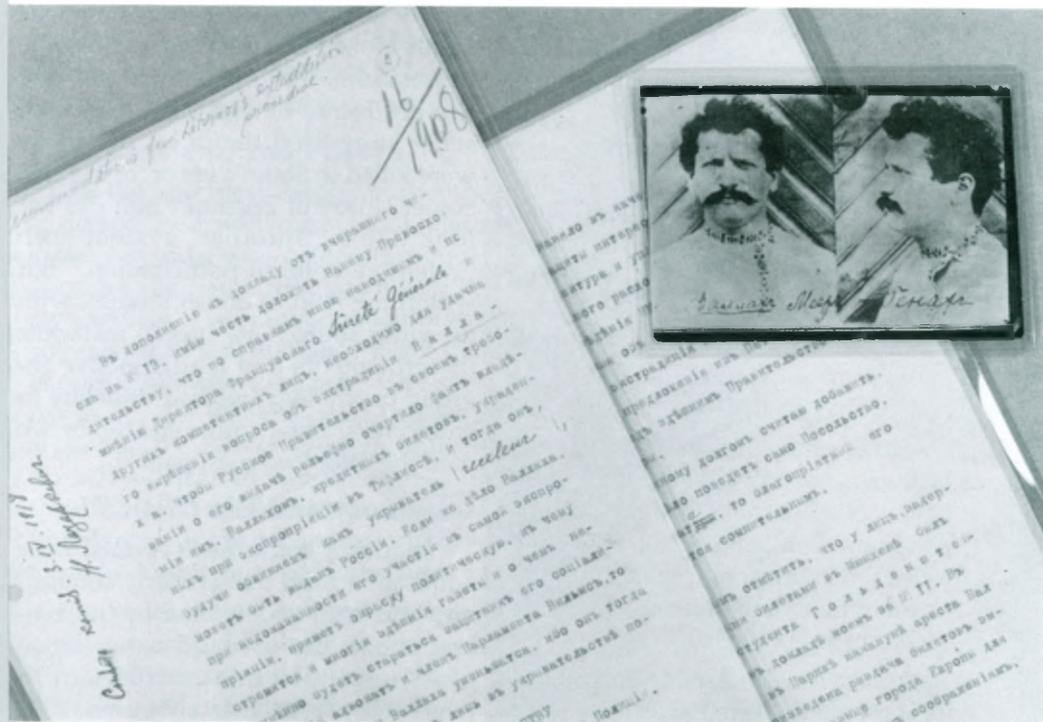
bookstore in terza rima. (What an extraordinary combination: Aristophanes and Solzhenitsyn in the same body.) In lieu of these, an impression of university life; imitating W. M. Praed:

Good night to the year Academic,  
It finally crept to a close:  
Dry fact about physic and chemic,  
Wet drip about people and prose.  
Emotion was down to a snivel  
and reason was pulped to a pap,  
Sociologists droning out drivels  
And critics all croaking out crap.

The human being who writes this poem or is depicted, even in comedy, in it, is not good raw material for the vast Utopian social experiment planned by the humorless Lenin.

Conquest's Soviet history, poetry, and literary criticism are united by a certain common taste: a joy in the variety and complexity of life, an impatience with orthodoxies, political or cultural, that try to iron all this flat, and above all a desire to call things by their real and simple names. He does not shrink from using four-letter words, and he calls murder murder. Perhaps the simplicity and immediacy of the poet's responses countered, for Conquest, our tendency in politics to take words for things, illusion for reality. Conquest wrote in an early poem about the United Nations:

In the foreground, outside the vacant lawns,



Police report on the status of extradition proceedings initiated by tsarist government representatives in France in 1908 against Maxim Litvinov, future foreign minister of the Soviet Union.

—Hoover Institution



Lenin's successors take a walk, Moscow, 1925: Stalin, Alexei Rykov (shot 1938), Leo Kamanev (shot 1936), and Grigory Zinoviev (shot 1936).  
—National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Amazingly vivid leaves are slowly falling;  
And in here, in a sense at the heart of the human world  
Those tangibles are merely memory,  
And paper and words are immediately real....

Conquest and his friends, such as the novelist Kingsley Amis and the late poet Philip Larkin, don't like lying, don't like pretentiousness; and he sees them both in communist politics and in establishment literature and criticism, especially of the modernist persuasion. Conquest is a natural rebel.

Perhaps Conquest actually gained understanding of his Soviet specialty itself from his profligate dispersal of energies. To know that tyranny really did exist in Byzantium or in Baghdad is to open yourself to the possibility that it might exist among people who look and talk like us. History, anthropology, and literature activate the imagination, which was, before Gorbachev and even after, so dormant in our assessment of the Soviet future. As Conquest has argued,

One of the tests of a scholar is that he knows not only his chosen field,...but also much in other fields peripheral to it or illuminative of it. Indeed, without some perspective on other times and other cultures...he is hobbled.

What reforms of scholarship and of education would be required if we took this seriously?

In fact, the cruelties of totalitarianism are not unrelated to the loss of common

sense that takes place most easily in small, closed groups like the Politburo or Hitler's *alter Kaempfer*. Every small closed community has its idiosyncratic way that seems utterly normal and natural. The evidence: every family, mine and yours. In such groups, there is also terrific pressure to conform. Take communist "democratic centralism": at the Moscow trials, brave and intelligent men confessed to baseless charges and went to their deaths rather than be separated from the party. In this atmosphere mass murder becomes the thing to do.

For us, the tribe has vanished and the family is sickly. More and more, the small closed community means the professions, the interest groups, and the academic disciplines. Common sense suggested that a lot of people were killed in Stalin's terror, or that the Soviet Union of Brezhnev still did not look like a "pluralist" system with "extensive political participation." But within the field of Soviet studies, with its wider sources, its special methods, its refinements and its distinctive in-group psychology, we had difficulty in enunciating these truths clearly; or we paid the price Conquest paid.

#### Conquest and His Critics

Conquest's works have evoked wide admiration from the scholarly community and been widely read by the general public. But it would be wrong to gloss over the serious criticism to which they have been subjected. This criticism came in two waves. The first wave came from political scientists, beginning in the mid-sixties. At this

point the impacts of the sixties protest against the Cold War and of social science hit the field of Soviet studies almost simultaneously and reinforced each other. Conquest's work was labeled as "political journalism" rather than political science. It is now easy to forget the enormous hopes and claims set out by scientific social science in the sixties. Social science claimed that it would develop *by specialization* a value-free science of man that was as rigorous and precise as natural science, that this science would rapidly make huge advances over non-scientific work like Conquest's. Contemporary social science makes the demands that scholarship be theoretical in the sense of posing clear generalizations (as Conquest indeed does not) and confirming or refuting these by a definite body of evidence, preferably quantitative, and a testing process ("methodology") defined ahead of time.

Those criticisms did point to ways in which Conquest's work had visible limitations, which show themselves, for example, in attributing to Stalin "profound mediocrity." The critics provided a program for overcoming those limitations. And they cannot be faulted for the notion that descriptions of a social reality ought to be judged by empirical tests of correspondence with that reality.

In the last twenty years a vast amount of research and writing was done in fulfillment of this program. Then came the collapse of Soviet communism, which provided an empirical test of the adequacy of alternative understandings of the Soviet system. It turned out that none of the prominent social science analysis on the Soviet Union had allowed for any possibility of the system's sudden destruction. Social science clearly had not understood the regime's fragility and unpopularity. Conquest was wrong on points, particularly on the openness of the ruling elite to reform. But statements of the following kind, made in 1965, are far more prescient than the scholarship that emerged from the social-science critique of Conquest:

...a faction within [the apparatus] might feel bound to attempt alliance with something in the nature of a genuine democratic force. This cannot be excluded... when it is evident that the social, economic, and intellectual tides have set in firmly against the system, then, in the long run, the apparent and visible stability is mis-

leading. The Soviet Union must now be regarded as being in a most unstable condition and subject to extreme change over perhaps quite a short period.

For many decades the humanities, most recently history, have been under pressure from the intellectual claims of social science. The unexpected collapse of communism ought to spark a wide debate on all of our assumptions about politics and society. That debate ought to reassess the success of all the methods of understanding man prevalent in the social sciences, the humanities, and the creative arts.

The second wave of criticism of Conquest peaked in the late seventies and the eighties, and came mainly from historians and demographers.

While the first wave of criticism had assumed that Stalin's Russia was totalitarian, but the contemporary Soviet Union no longer so, the second wave tried to show that even the Stalin period was not totalitarian. As Roberta Manning put it:

...we find at the grassroots a government far more human, more prey to events outside of its control (like crop failures) and more vulnerable to the vagaries of public opinion than any of us have hitherto dared to imagine. In 1937 in Belyi raion, the Soviet regime governed the countryside insofar as the countryside was governed at all, *dependent ultimately, like all government, on the consent of the governed.*

It is strange that the thirties reemerged in the eighties as a burning issue. The reasons may emerge in a polemic against Conquest by one revisionist, Robert Thurston:

Everyone in the field realizes the importance of studying these issues; one's assessment of them bears enormously on one's view of the entire Soviet experiment and of the U.S.S.R. today.

The revisionists' critique reopened most of the questions about Stalin's Russia that seemed to have been decided in the thirties and forties. Arch Getty, for example, suggested again that Tukhachevsky and the other generals might have plotted a military coup against Stalin. The revisionists argue against Conquest that "Central control, in the traditional sense, was nonexistent or ineffective," and see Stalin very differently from Conquest. Getty says that "his position, as

always, was that of a balancer or makeweight....He preferred the role of mediator." In the terror, it "seems far more realistic to suspect that Stalin, like everyone else, was reacting to events rather than instigating them."

On the oppressiveness of the system, the revisionists argued that "the *Ezhovshchina* (1937-38) was an aberration," that many social groups were little affected, and that in any case "general fear did not exist in the USSR at any time in the late 1930s." Morally, Stalin was at fault, Getty admits, for the famine that followed the collectivization,

But there is plenty of blame to go around. It must be shared by...the peasants who chose to slaughter animals, burn fields, and boycott cultivation in protest.

On the scale of the terror, Jerry Hough suggested that as few as "tens of thousands" of people may have died, in contrast to Conquest's early estimate of twenty million for the entire Stalin period. Demographers such as Stephen Wheatcroft, Brian Silver, and Barbara Anderson argued that "These wild unscholarly estimates serve neither science nor morality," drawing Conquest, with Steven Rosefielde, into a long exchange of polemics. Conquest and his opponents argued from different planets: Conquest believed the 1939 census was a "fake" because it replaced a 1937 census that was suppressed, its authors having been shot for minimizing the Soviet population. Silver and Anderson, who do believe Stalin killed several million people, see no reason to believe he would have issued false statistics.

#### Conquest and the Future

This last and most desperate attempt to defend the Soviet regime took place in the very final days before its repudiation by the Soviet public and by its own leaders. The Soviet opinion of the Soviet system that suddenly burst free of censorship was, to be brief, very similar to the one that Conquest had long argued in the face of Western opposition. It suffices to use the words of the USSR Prime Minister, Nikolai Ryzhkov, a figure far more conservative than Yeltsin or even Gorbachev:

You know that in our society the supremacy of ideology over everything else did in fact always occur....The priority of ideology over the economy is not a trifle, not a detail, not voluntarism, not the stupidity of some

leaders or other—it is the essence of the model in which we lived. It is its mainstay.

On the terror, the opening of mass graves (more than one hundred discovered so far), free discussion, and preliminary searches of official records have left no doubt about its staggering scale. The lowest Western guesses, such as those of Jerry Hough, are comparable to the figures now given officially for Leningrad deaths alone (sixty thousand) or even for NKVD men alone (more than twenty thousand). For the whole country, official estimates of the Russian Ministry of Security, formerly the KGB, now run to eighteen million arrested during the years 1935-1945 and seven million sentenced to death (apparently not including camp deaths)—figures actually higher than Conquest's estimates of eight million arrests and one million death sentences for 1937-38 only.

On the question of terror "from above" or "from below," scholars have now seen the actual documents in which Stalin and his lieutenants approved hundreds of thousands of executions by individual name; he was often informed of decisions as minor as the arrest of five or ten ordinary citi-



Stalin voting in Moscow, 1947.

—National Archives, Washington, D.C.



Winston Churchill, Harry Truman, and Joseph Stalin at Potsdam, July 23, 1945.

—National Archives, Washington, D.C.

zens. This does not settle the question of the extent to which Stalin also mobilized terror from below, a question usefully raised by the revisionists, but it suffices to refute their overall image of Stalin and of the system.

What will become of Conquest's life-work now? For the rest of Conquest's lifetime, he can rightly feel a sense of triumph. With the revelations of glasnost, most of what Conquest wrote about the terror has been confirmed. Soviet scholars who had attacked Conquest have apologized, and he has become a popular figure in Russia. For those of us who feel the need to rethink the meaning of the twentieth-century totalitarian experience, Conquest's works will be an enormous resource and a direction to pursue.

But for the remoter future, isn't this all purely academic? Totalitarianism in its twentieth-century form is clearly doomed, and Stalin may become what Attila and Genghis Khan have become: a joke. The Gulag will turn into "Hogan's Heroes." This outcome would be regrettable. It presupposes that the possibility of a new totalitarianism is excluded in the future. To assume this is to forget, first of all, that totalitarianism is that curious double of modern democratic civilization, a secret sharer in our normal life. Concretely, the dissatisfaction with the status quo and with its establishment, which so inspired the young Conquest and his friends, remains a permanent possibility, ever-beckoning to the young, the restless, the ambitious, and

particularly to the intellectuals. The blemishes of the status quo suggest inevitably an alternative, a counter-order, which easily turns into a Utopia. In the history of the West the greatest barrier to this evolution was religion, which argued that the good social order is not attainable on this earth. But in our secular society, science and the taste for progress are far more powerful forces and they implicitly suggest the opposite: the availability of radical improvements and of the truth made real and palpable, as in technology.

Intellectuals are particularly tempted by Utopian rebellion. Every specialist is conscious of understanding something we believe important but which is shockingly muddled in the public discourse, in the newspapers and TV. This is cause for a natural pride in no way rewarded by democratic society. Democratic society will never treat intellectuals as aristocrats. Hence arises the attachment of the intellectuals to the adversary culture, Lionel Trilling's term for the intellectual's critical or judging stance toward the surrounding society. Of course, the attachment of the intellectuals to the adversary culture is speeded by the real defects of the status quo, defects that will not soon vanish.

#### Conclusion

In Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* the heroine keeps encountering, while traveling to and from her trysts with her lovers, a blind beggar, who haunts the roads into Yonville, singing racy folk songs.

A mass of rags covered his shoulders, and an old staved-in beaver hat, rounded off into the shape of a basin, hid his face; but, when he took it off, he uncovered in the place of eyelids two gaping sockets, all bloody. The flesh was frayed into red shreds, and from them poured liquids that congealed into green scabs down to his nose, whose black nostrils sniffled convulsively....

This frightful sight, who makes his final appearance just as *Madame Bovary* is dying, seems to embody within Flaubert's fiction the irreducibly tragic or ugly side of life, which we avert our eyes from but which keeps forcing its way into our awareness. Appropriately, the great foe of this blind beggar is the sophisticated pharmacist Homais, all of whose tastes are shaped by science, enlightenment, modernity: the sightless creature, horrible and incurable, is a constant reminder of the limits of science and progress. And at the end of the novel Homais, who had earlier failed to cure the blind man, does succeed in getting him out of sight by having the authorities lock him up in an asylum.

Robert Conquest, like Flaubert, insisted on showing us what we simply don't want to see, the horrible side of modernity, which accompanies, as a secret sharer, our compassion, prosperity, order, and progress. He insisted on showing us fanaticism, relentless cruelty, the helplessness of people in the face of absolute power, the truth effaced by lies, the empty place where justice ought to be. It was probably the insistent and understandable need to somehow or other get this awful stuff out of sight, to say it wasn't as bad as it seemed, or that it belonged totally to the past, that accounted, as much as politics and social science, for the critical reactions to Conquest. Totalitarianism can acquaint us, if we are willing to gaze at it, with extremities outside our normal experience. The work of Conquest can serve for future generations, as it did for us, to reveal the blind beggar who lurks beside the familiar, well-travelled road. □

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# The Stages of Struggle

By  
**Anthony  
Hartley**

**N**ow that what used to be called the "Cold War" has been concluded by the victory of Western democracy and the defeat of a cheerless ideological tyranny, it is salutary to look back on the stages of intellectual struggle in which the soul of the world was at stake. Those who opposed Soviet Communism did so because its nature disgusted them and because they apprehended its power. Only for a time was there real fear. The fear was this: Would not all the lies and suppressions of the truth, deriving from Soviet propaganda, finally, by force of repetition over a long period, come to be believed by a wearied world? Were we not bound for Orwell's *1984*, where reality vanished in the ash of a burning document? Even the Kravchenko libel case in Paris, during which the nature of Stalin's rule and the horrors of Soviet forced labor camps were fully explored, was simply ignored by many left-wing intellectuals. Too much faith had been invested in the "Socialist Sixth of the World" for it to be disturbed by mere facts.

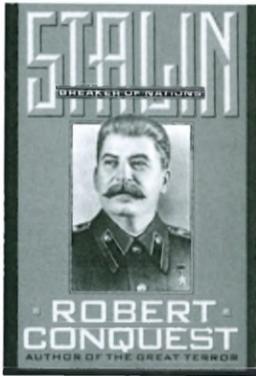
But the destruction of truth did not happen. First, the Hungarian revolution in 1956 showed that the conquered peoples of Eastern

Europe could not be compelled to become believers. And gradually the spiders' webs of falsehood and sophistry were swept away through the toil of historians and political scientists, and it became impossible for anyone who was not determinedly myopic to see Stalinism and the Soviet regime as anything other than it was. It was with growing relief that one realized how fast the number of convinced Communists was dwindling, how few of Malraux's *conquerants* there were left.

No writer played a greater part in this crucially important work than Robert Conquest. His book on Stalin's purges, *The Great Terror* (1968), provided overwhelming evidence of the true nature of Soviet totalitarianism. After its publication there was no longer any excuse—if, indeed, there ever had been—for judgments like that of Ambassador Joseph Davies, who reported to the State Department that there was "proof...beyond reasonable doubt to justify the verdict of guilty of treason" or of the British-Russian historian Sir Bernard Pares, who wrote in a standard work, re-published as late as 1962, that "Nearly all admitted having conspired against the life of Stalin, and on this point it is not necessary to doubt them." Nāiveté and casuistry were simply swept out of existence by Conquest's massive accumulation of facts. Since 1968 these have been confirmed over and over again by witnesses like Solzhenitsyn and, more recently, by the opening of the Soviet archives, which have provided additional facts for a revised edition of *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (1991).

Con't on page 36

# Excerpts from the Writings of Robert Conquest



## Stalin: Breaker of Nations

Such bold champions of glasnost as Lev Razgon and Vitaly Korotich tell the same story. Razgon says, "The servile terror of Stalin lives in the bones and veins of people who never knew him;" Korotich, "All my life I had Stalin inside me," though he adds, "It was a small schoolboy Stalin; those who were politicians, they had big Stalins."

If there is one point that has been insufficiently stressed in this book, if only because it is almost impossible to stress it sufficiently, it is the psychological horrors of mass falsification, more than the physical horrors of mass terror. What was imposed on the population was a disjunction not merely between truth in general and the official interpretation, but between the experienced reality of their own and their country's life and the fantasy world they had mentally to accept. As the Soviet historian Natan Eidelman says, in the Stalin period a significant part of the Soviet population "was living under a special hypnotic spell." Exorcism proved immensely difficult and painful.

ON THE POET AKHMATOVA: Anna Akhmatova, especially, may indeed be seen as defining Stalinism and Stalin's own personality by its opposite. She did stand for the personal life and the personal conscience, for the autonomy of the individual and of art. Like most, she had not been exempt from the public events that had racked and were still racking Russia. Her first husband, the poet Nikolai Gumilev, had been shot as a counter-revolutionary in Lenin's time. Her second husband was a victim of Stalin's. Her son by Gumilev had been arrested and this led to her magnificent (and long unpublished) cycle of poems *Requiem* which (in a sense Stalin would not have approved of) is profoundly political—the protest of the helpless individuals against a politics designed to crush the personal life. She speaks of her mouth as one "through which a hundred million people cry." But what we may find in Akhmatova is not only her voice, but also that extraordinary toughness of mind which enabled the best of the Russian people, of the Russian intelligentsia, to outlast Stalin and Stalinism. And Stalin was right to see in her principles a fundamental threat to his system. Over the long run they helped to destroy it.

*Stalin: Breaker of Nations* (New York: Viking, 1991).

## Crises and Power Grabs

Ideologies do evolve. They evolve under pressures. And if we ask ourselves what the relevant pressures are in the Soviet Union, we see that they are twofold. In the first place, there is the pressure of what may be thought of as the permanent economic crisis. The whole tendency of society in

the USSR is to break out from its present lines.... The other pressure on the ideology is the international situation. It is not simply that the ruling group is faced with powerful states fully determined to prevent expansionist adventures. It is the fact that is generally penetrating the consciousness of the Soviet leadership, that the risk of war is one that cannot be seriously taken with modern weapons....

ON FEDERATION: Meanwhile, we may note that if the Soviet Union is to deal with its colonial problem in even the most superficially adequate way, it has no real choice but to turn itself into a genuine federation. But if the unity so created were voluntary, it might be temporary and precarious. The present rulers would certainly make no move in such a direction if they could possibly help it. But they may yet find themselves constrained by forces outside their control to make concessions—which could only lead to bigger demands, put forward from positions of increased strength. The question is critical, and not only is it unsolved, but it is probably insoluble under the present system. That is to say, it is one of the elements in the present general crisis of the Soviet system, and one that could lead to future changes which may now appear remote and extravagant. Here, again, we should remember that the Soviet future is unlikely to comprise an easy and evolutionary development, and that any too cautious or conservative view of its potentialities is certain to be wrong.

*Russia After Khrushchev* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1965, New York: Praeger, 1965).

## Marx and the Bourgeoisie

Marx (like others facing a fresh social phenomenon) came to his conclusion about the mystic historical nature of the new proletarian class before he had even seen an actual proletarian—as, indeed, was true of Lenin in the 1880s. But, come to that, Marx seems to have had a very odd idea of the bourgeoisie. Who can read without laughter those paragraphs of the *Communist Manifesto*, which are solemnly printed year after year, about bourgeois sex life in Victorian times?

The Communists have no need to introduce community of women; it has existed almost from time immemorial.

Our bourgeois, not content with having the wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes, take the greatest pleasure in seducing each other's wives.

Bourgeois marriage is in reality a system of wives in common....

Even apart from the notion of the Victorian bourgeoisie sharing each other's wives on this grand scale, there is

way, one of the Nazi gas chamber operators, Roze, is a mild character who "had never doubted that the Party had set itself one aim only: the wellbeing of the small and weak." For, Grossman insists, about the Nazis too, "the sun has been extinguished by the smoke of the gas ovens. And even in these crimes, crimes never before seen in the Universe... have been committed in the name of good."

Grossman's essential argument is that the human being must be treated as an individual, not as a pawn in some struggle of transcendent theories: even Tolstoy seems to him to err in this direction. He appeals, in a magnificent apostrophe, to Chekhov as the exemplar of humanity as against Lenin and all other inhuman manipulators. His central point is that "the extreme violence of totalitarian social systems proved able to paralyse the human spirit throughout whole continents."

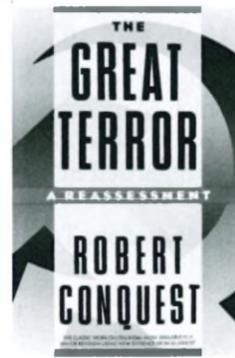
But it is not only overt violence which is its enemy. The lie is the other side of the coin of terror.

ON SOLZHENITSYN: More broadly, what may be seen in the whole of Solzhenitsyn's work, concentrated out of the experience of millions of his compatriots, is an entirely new historical phenomenon—a liberalism of the catacombs. For this is the first time that, over a long historical period, modern humanist ideas which had already emerged in a national literature and an intelligentsia, have been crushed and repudiated. The difference in tone between Solzhenitsyn's Russian attitudes and our own is not so much one of essence, as a matter of this experience which he and his have faced and we and ours have not. On the other hand, he is harder, more hammered and tempered, than the writers of the West; on the other, his liberalism has been purged of illusion—the comfortable fat has been sweated off it.

ON ORWELL: Above all, Orwell had the imagination to understand that there are people who would find it perfectly satisfactory to see the future in terms of a "boot stamping on the human face—forever." The parochial notion that everyone is much the same, that we all dislike war or terror, is absent from his view of history—as well it might be in the twentieth century. He saw that Stalin, like Tamerlane or Jenghiz Khan, was not in the least put out by the idea of the killing of millions. He knew that there have been cultures where torture was commonplace. That is to say, he knew that there are people, now as in earlier ages, who are not the product of the moral principles to which he himself gave assent.

Even today, the greatest hurdle to understanding the Soviet Union or similar regimes is the unthinking and inexplicit assumption that the basic motivations of the Soviet leaders differ little from our own. It was an advantage to Orwell that he knew nothing of one sort of "political science"—a supposed discipline which to this day, by concentrating on forms and structures, removes the essence of a given polity from active consideration. It is a notable fact that Orwell, like Koestler, was a novelist and journalist, and that in general, the record of such writers is far better than that of many "serious" students. Perhaps the reason is that to understand the Stalin regime took an effort not only of the intellectual, but also of the imagination.

*Tyrants and Typewriters: Communiqués from the Struggle for Truth* (New York: Macmillan Free Press, 1989).

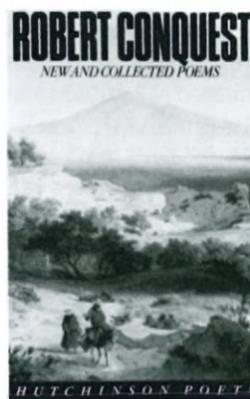


### Stalin: Master Manipulator

For Stalin's political genius consisted precisely of this: he recognized no limitations, either moral or intellectual, in his methods of securing power.

His calculation about the effect abroad was on the whole sound. It is true that the frame-ups were clumsy fabrications. It is also true that Stalin did not in fact silence everyone who knew anything about them. But he did not have to. The notion that things would have been very different if the frame-ups had been seamlessly perfect and if everyone who had known the truth had instantly been shot is a superficial one. Stalin had a clearer idea of the state of public mind both in Russia and in the West. It is only too plain that he was right. Those who were prepared to believe his story believed it regardless of its peripheral faults, and rejected accounts put out by people who had had access to the correct information. Thus a State prepared flatly to deny its own malpractices, and to prevent open access to the facts, could successfully persuade many people abroad, even in spite of a large and growing body of first-hand evidence from those who had actually experienced the Terror. This is a lesson that has clearly been learned by similar regimes in other parts of the world, and is still the basic principle of much misinformation that appears in the West.

*The Great Terror: Stalin's Purges of the Thirties* (London: Macmillan, 1968; New York: Macmillan, 1968; revised edition, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).



### Poems

**G**et Lost, Gulag Archipelago!

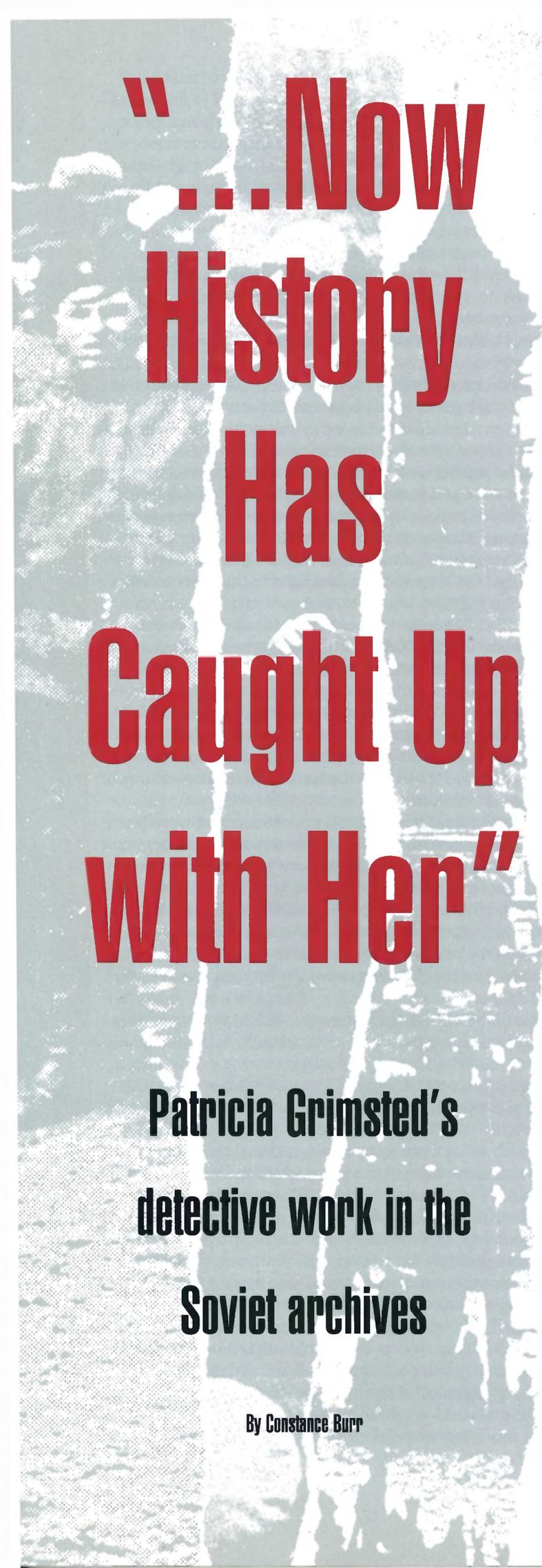
"The present Soviet generation is not obsessed with the errors of the past. It looks to the future..."

For years those dreary old complaints  
That we'd unfairly snuffed the lives  
(We've never claimed we're plaster saints)  
Of husbands, brothers, sisters, wives.

Thank God for the present lot!

They won't act up like those others.  
After all, we only shot  
Their fathers, uncles, aunts  
and mothers.

*New and Collected Poems* (Irvine: Schlacks, 1986).



# "...Now History Has Caught Up with Her"

**Patricia Grimsted's  
detective work in the  
Soviet archives**

By Constance Burr

nting fragments of the Soviet past continue to emerge from the newly opened Russian archives. Previously censored documents have revealed a cache of secrets, from warnings of construction flaws at Chernobyl to exposure of the Afghan war debacle.

Nearly thirty years before Russian government reform made these disclosures possible, American historian Patricia Kennedy Grimsted began tracking down the whereabouts and describing the history of archives in the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries.

She has often been a solitary researcher, documenting this vast, elusive legacy for the past three decades. In her view, "Russian archives are now opening their doors and providing access to information few would have thought possible. They are being caught in the crossfire in the current chaotic government situation, however, and find themselves thrown into an international arena of intense public interest."

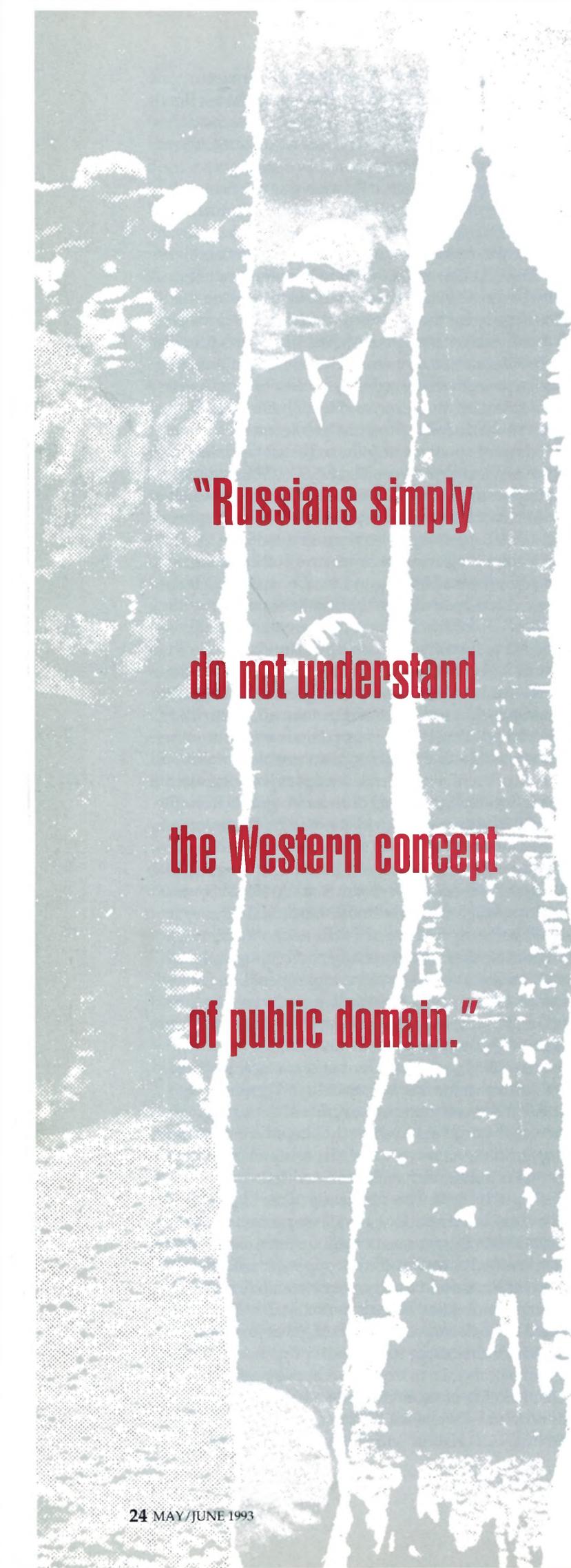
In 1992 Grimsted spent six months in Russia updating her *Handbook for Archival Research in the USSR*, (1989) and preparing a computerized directory of holdings in close to two hundred Moscow and St. Petersburg archives. She has been using a new database and publications system that she developed for the project and named ArcheoBiblioBase. With three computers operating in Moscow and St. Petersburg, Grimsted has been able to work collaboratively with Russian specialists for the first time, a dramatic reversal made possible by the collapse of communism.

Pre-glasnost and post-Soviet, Grimsted has served as the chief guide to American scholars seeking access to extensive archival holdings that were censored, renamed, destroyed, reorganized for political purposes, or dispersed in the Russian diaspora. She is the author of an ongoing multivolume directory of archives and manuscript repositories in the former USSR, funded by a series of research grants from the Endowment. The directory provides historical background on former Soviet archives.

Under International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) sponsorship, she is working with the State Archival Service of Russia (Rosarkhiv), the State Public Historical Library, and the St. Petersburg Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences. This database for a directory and bibliography of finding aids for archives and manuscript repositories is being adapted for a parallel Russian-language version, and by the end of 1993, coverage will extend to archives throughout the Russian Federation.

Grimsted describes recent transformations in archival organization and access in the framework of broad government reform, political and economic upheaval, and the struggle to obtain Western financial aid to offset decimated archival budgets. Ending centuries of secrecy, the first comprehensive legislative act regarding Russian archives since Peter the Great was enacted June 19, 1992. This regulation of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation provides for access to government records within thirty years of their creation, except for files legally classified as state secrets. It applies to citizens and organizations of Russia and foreign countries alike. Documents relating to individual citizens are accessible after seventy-five years. The decree confirms the right of Rosarkhiv to sell licenses of documents for commercial purposes.

"I think some of the alarm expressed about profiteering and commercializing of the archives is overstated," she says. "Westerners do not always see the full context of the economic and financial crisis in which the archives are trying to



**"Russians simply  
do not understand  
the Western concept  
of public domain."**

24 MAY/JUNE 1993

survive without the government subsidies they had under communism. The institutions have simply had to find ways of making ends meet in the face of reduced state budgets by raising fees and by finding new sources of income.

"Russian archives are faced with catastrophe by the lack of financial resources to staff the archives, offer basic services, repair deteriorating buildings, and provide heat and light." Grimsted recounts that the State Archival Service feared that microfilm of vital state records was in danger of total destruction during the winter because no coal was available to heat the facility in the Urals where it was stored.

"Furthermore, the director of the archival service for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs claims that without outside foreign support they cannot even afford the necessary declassification procedure. But foreigners inevitably protest when they are asked to pay high search fees in hard currency (often more than the monthly salary of many Russian archivists) for a thematic search in party files."

"I can remember an evening I spent in Moscow with a couple of archive directors, including Vladimir Kozlov, State Archival Service deputy chairman, and Trudy Peterson, assistant archivist of the United States for the National Archives. I wanted the Russians to hear her explain that the National Archives was not allowed to sell publication rights.

"Many Russians wouldn't believe it when Peterson told them that by law the National Archives is not allowed to copyright government documents—that these records are in the public domain.

"Russians simply do not understand the Western concept of public domain," according to Grimsted, "nor do they comprehend that Western journalists can go in their own archives or those of other countries and do not have to pay for access or publication rights.

"They also found it hard to believe that archivists in the National Archives are not allowed to accept private payment for consulting work or searching, or to have exclusive publication rights to documents that are unavailable to other researchers. The whole concept of public service in the archives of a capitalist society is new to the Russian public. Now that they're coming into a market economy, they assume that archives are a commodity for selling and making all they can."

Public outbursts sometimes show a lack of understanding of Western copying practices, archival microform publishing ventures, and their commercial value.

"When it was announced in January 1992 that the British firm Chadwyck-Healey was filming extensively in the CPSU archive (for a handsome royalty), the public did not comprehend that these were copies and that this was a perfectly normal transaction in other parts of the world. These documents were freely available to Russian researchers in the former Central Party Archive.

"Nonetheless, criticism of foreign filming projects escalated and a strongly nationalist, chauvinist reaction set in. The fear that they were letting copies go abroad, thereby 'alienating the fatherland' and losing control of their culture, took hold. But it wasn't just that. There was also the criticism—and this was just unbelievable—that they were giving their patrimony away too cheaply, that Russian scholars were being deprived of their national heritage, that Russian institutions should get more in return, and that it should be sold for much higher prices."

One of the most outspoken criticisms appeared in the Russian press following the announcement of a Hoover Institution/Chadwyck-Healey agreement in April 1992 to microfilm documents in high-level CPSU archives. Writing in *Izvestiia*, Iurii Afanas'ev, rector of the Russian State University for the Humanities, feared that documents transferred to Hoover might be accessible there even before they were available in Russia; that Russian historians were being slighted. According to Grimsted, such complaints were groundless.

"Rosarkhiv officials have tried to point out the benefits of such projects to Russian researchers and to the archives—technical assistance, preservation microfilm, and copies of Russian materials abroad—given the lack of material and technical resources that prevents Russia from preserving its own archives," Grimsted states. "Particularly misleading are the inflated figures that Russians are quoting of prices for microfilm abroad.

"Afanas'ev was claiming in an article that the world price for microfilm was between \$3 and \$5 per frame. (Major U.S. libraries report a median price of thirteen cents per frame for negatives and twenty cents per running foot for positive copies.) When Terry Emmons from Stanford University responded in *Moscow News* that the U.S. National Archives charges about \$23 a roll, it got translated into Russian as \$23 a frame."

Grimsted believes that Afanas'ev and others want to push prices and royalties higher in an attempt to redress economic woes with higher foreign currency income from the long-suppressed files. "What he fails to realize is that few university libraries can afford such exorbitant rates."

Russian archivists must now participate in a nascent market economy without experience in Western-style publishing relationships. Allegations that bribes rather than regulations are determining access have appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* and elsewhere. But without hard currency, copy machines and computers—even microfilm and toner—are usually gifts from foreign institutions or barter for copies. As long as equipment and supplies are otherwise beyond reach, Grimsted contends, such contributions ought to be encouraged.

Another casualty of the economy that affects the publication of research is the almost total breakdown of academic publishing. "Russians simply cannot afford the higher cost of paper, nor can they afford the higher cost of books that would have to be charged to make a go of it. This is one of the main reasons so many of them are searching for Western partners and publishers." The factors of financial need, legalized license fees for commercial publication, search fees for readers, and the lack of a tradition of a public reference service have created problems. Also, says Grimsted, researchers need to remember that they are dealing with many of the same archivists who for decades were taught to withhold archival files and provide disinformation, especially to foreigners.

"When I last met with Rudolf Germanovich Pikhov, the chairman of Rosarkhiv," Grimsted recalls, "he hoped that the new State Archival Service would create a better paid and more professional civil service and eliminate some of the fees and alleged corruption. The country has become so used to bribes—there have always been under-the-table deals for services—that I think institutionalizing the ideas of public service and public domain will be difficult.

"Since archives always reflect and serve the society in which they operate, the archival scene in the Russian Federation cannot be expected to stabilize before there is political and economic stabilization as well," she states.

Over the years, Grimsted's knowledge of the locations and descriptions of the archives have led to major discoveries, among them, extensive captured records held by Soviet authorities since World War II. She was one of the first Western scholars to have found out that long-lost pre-1939 French intelligence records that had been plundered by the Nazis and sequestered in Czechoslovakia were found by the Soviets in 1945. They had been held in secret in Moscow since then.

"That discovery happened by chance. A Ukrainian colleague and I were trying to follow the fate of a major archive taken by Nazis from Kiev that had also been moved to Czechoslovakia when we discovered a file explaining how Soviet authorities had found the French intelligence records. Twenty-eight railroad freight cars brought the records to Moscow by Beria's personal order.

"At the same time, Soviet authorities had found other records captured by the Nazis hidden in various castles, monasteries, and salt mines in what is now Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. The captured records held in Russian archives in addition to the French intelligence archives, include many records of Masonic, Socialist, and Jewish groups, gathered by the Nazis throughout Europe, as well as Nazi wartime occupation records. What the Soviets found had been kept secret for more than fifty years."

Grimsted gave a talk in Paris in November 1992 that detailed the French intelligence odyssey. "Coincidentally, after a year of negotiations, an agreement for the return of these records to Paris was signed the day after my talk."

Complicated negotiations are underway for the restitution of captured records to Dutch, German, Austrian, Belgian, Norwegian and other authorities—many of whom didn't even know they had been saved after the war.

Grimsted also discovered more detailed information about the Nazi capture of the Communist Party archive from Smolensk that was later captured by Americans. It is slated to be returned to Russia from the U.S. National Archives.

"There is so much interest in trying to right the wrongs and get the records back where they belong. But there's also interest in following details of the migration and destiny of other cultural treasures as a result of the war." She is collaborating with archivists in Bremen, Kiev, and Moscow to set up a database on displaced archives, libraries, and works of art. She hopes to find time to write a longer book about them.

"Grimsted's work has a prescient quality," notes Edward Kasinec, chief of the Slavic and Baltic Division of the New York Public Library. "Years ago, her work was seen as recondite, abstruse; now history has caught up with her. Thanks to her foresight and persistence, we are positioned to fully exploit collections that political events have made accessible. When the authoritative history of Slavic and Eastern European scholarship in the U.S. is written, her place is assured." □

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*Patricia Kennedy Grimsted is a research fellow of the Russian Research Center and a research associate at the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard University.*

*Since 1974, Grimsted has received \$992,000 in grants from the Division of Research Programs for equipment and personnel to support her work on guides to archival and manuscript repositories in the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries.*

*Constance Burr is assistant editor of Humanities.*

# FAULKNER'S IDEA OF OWNERSHIP



*Russian scholar Maya Koreneva.*

—Courtesy of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture

BY MAYA KORENEVA

*William Faulkner was introduced to the Soviet people in a 1934 anthology published in Moscow, American Short Stories of the Twentieth Century. For years his work was politicized, though it defied easy categorization: Was he "formalistic," "decadent," or "bourgeois"? The process of Faulkner's "rehabilitation" began during the Khrushchev thaw in 1955. An essay on his work, then three short stories, then full versions of his works, began to be available to Russian readers.*

*Maya Koreneva, senior researcher at the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow, delivered this essay at the nineteenth Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference of the University of Mississippi.*

None of us is ideologically innocent. So it's better to plead guilty at the beginning, and proceed with the subject of our discussion.

When in Faulkner's *Intruder in the Dust* Chick Mallison speculates about the North which, he remarks, is not "even a geographical place but an emotional idea," in the end Faulkner makes him summarize this idea the following way: "a volitionless, almost helpless capacity and eagerness to believe anything about the South not even provided it be derogatory but merely bizarre enough and strange enough."

This is true not only of the relationship between the North and the South, or the South and the North. The words, of course, have a wide reference, and can be attributed to anything if it is taken to be "an emotional idea." Or anybody, even William Faulkner himself.

So when the cold war was transferred to the literary front, Faulkner became a target of most vicious attacks in the Soviet Union. Presented as a degenerate artist, full of contempt and hatred for man, with *Intruder in the Dust* providing, from the point of view of Soviet cold war ideologies, ample material to accuse him of decadence and misanthropy, in general, and necrophilia in particular, Faulkner was used as "an emotional idea," the epitome of the "American Writer" at the time of war. So anything could be said

and believed about him "not even provided it be derogatory but merely bizarre enough and strange enough," though at the time it was also certainly derogatory enough.

All ideologies make people blind and deaf. "You don't listen," the young girl, one of the protagonists of Edward Albee's play *Listening*, keeps saying to the other characters, ending the play with the symbolic act of slashing her wrists. Rather than symbolically slash their own wrists, our countries went for each others' throats.

Had Faulkner's works been read in a way that would have allowed those who attacked him to hear what he was saying, they might have found there something that could have made them change their views of him and even to sympathize with him. Yet, they did not and they could not, blinded even not so much by the ideology of communism, as that of the cold war. Time for that did not come until many years later.

Throughout his career, since his early novels, Faulkner was consistent in his castigation of money fixation, be it Jason in *The Sound and the Fury* or Flem Snopes, who are obsessed with money, or the very instinct that, as Faulkner could not help noticing, has eroded the nation's set of values, the American ethos.

The category of ownership is closely related to the obsession with money associated with most repulsive Faulkner characters, though it is, of course, much more complex and is

presented in a complicated, even ambiguous way.

*Go Down, Moses* reaches its climax in Ike's relinquishment of his patrimony. He repudiates it, because he believes that God "made the earth" and "created the man" "not to hold for himself and his descendants inviolable title forever, generation after generation, to the oblongs and squares of the earth, but to hold the earth mutual and intact in the communal anonymity of brotherhood."

God's wish, Ike argues, was violated when the Indians sold it for "white man's money," and even before that, "because on the instant when Ikkemotubbe discovered, realized, that he could sell it for money, on that instant it ceased ever before that, too, for the accursed even as Ikkemotubbe and Ikkemotubbe's father, old Issetibbeha, and old Isseibbeha's fathers, too, held it, already tainted even before any white man owned it...."

What we have in the end is Ike's vision of "Dispossessed Eden" with the fall translated from the myth into the historical process and presented as the establishment of the institution of ownership.

Obviously, Ike's repudiation of his patrimony does not and can not solve the problem that he tries to deal with, for it's beyond Ike's power to restore the earth through his act to its prelapsarian state that we all have for the lost innocence.

It can and should be argued, though, that Ike's vision belongs to and characterizes just him, one of the characters of the novel, even if one of the main ones, or the main one, and it is juxtaposed with others' views of the matter. These characters indicate that there are limitations to the authority of his vision, not only because their views and practices are so different from or opposite to Ike's. Their very presence helps the reader to realize that each of them as well as all of them together are but a small part of an immense world, and as such cannot stand for the whole.

Yet, there are among these characters those who in an oblique way support Ike's position. One of them, I believe, is Lucas and his relation towards the land. Of course, he does not go with Ike all the way and most probably would not have understood much of Ike's argument had it been presented to him. But Lucas's spiritual bond with the land is in accord with Ike's vision, at least in its refutation of ownership as possession and the establishment of it on the basis of emotional identification with and toil on the land. To make it clear, let me quote a passage from "The Fire and the Hearth" which describes that relation:

But it was his own field, though he neither *owned it nor wanted to nor even needed to.* (emphasis added) He had been cultivating it for forty-five years, since before Carothers Edmonds was born even, plowing and planting and working it how he saw fit (or maybe not even doing that, maybe sitting through a whole morning on his front gallery, looking at it and thinking if that's what he felt like doing), with Edmonds riding up on his mare maybe three times a week to look at the field, and maybe once during the season stopping long enough to give him advice but the very voice which gave it, as though the other had not spoke even...

Though Lucas's feelings towards the land are devoid of Biblical connotations so important for Ike, his spiritual bond with the land is closer to Ike's idea of "the communal anonymity of brotherhood" than to the idea of land as commodity on which the McCaslins' and Edmondses' and Carothers' and all the others' ownership of it is based.

It is also closer to the idea expressed aphoristically by Chick in *Intruder in the Dust*, "...one shame must be, one expiation since expiation must surely be but above all one unalterable durable impregnable one: one people one heart one land."

In Faulkner's canon, however, Ike's vision has more authority. An unexpected support comes from outside *Go Down, Moses*. Ike's argument is echoed in the book where he is not even mentioned, *Requiem for a Nun*. For those who are acquainted with *Go Down, Moses* cannot fail to notice the affinity of Ike's views to the vision developed in chronicles opening and closing the sections of *Requiem for a Nun*. These chronicles telling the story of the settlement of the Mississippi valley or the whole South—or the entire United States—have no direct connection with the story of Temple and Nancy central to the novel. They present this process as a long history of devastation and dispossession when "a heavy leather heel engaged not in the traffic of endurance and hardihood and survival, but in money" trod everything that preceded it "from the sight and memory of man." Dispossession, they record, was carried out in such a crude and ruthless way that we find one of the early settlers, Ratcliffe, tempted to regard his restraint from outright robbery as something both exceptional and puzzling. For years he kept wondering why when he had charged sacks of candy to old Mohataha's grandchildren he "had refrained from adding two zeroes to the ten and fifteen cents for ten years... *amazed at his own virtue or at least his strength of will* (emphasis added)".

It is not through a character that this indictment of the evil brought upon the

earth by man, the white man, primarily, is given voice in *Requiem for a Nun*. Now it is the narrator's voice which, in its anonymity, can be taken largely for the author's. Since there are no indications of a distance between Faulkner as the author of the novel and the narrator persona, one may assume that in these passages we hear Faulkner addressing the reader directly.

This time again, Biblical allusions, so operative in *Go Down, Moses*, are not part of the overall picture and the few of them that appear there are mostly ironic in tone. This helps to highlight the uniqueness of Ike's vision.

Despite his idiosyncrasies, there is a common denominator that links his view to that of the anonymous chronicler in *Requiem for a Nun*. Their common ground is the denunciation of the wrong done and a vision of harmony in the organic unity of the world—the earth, the air, the water, the plant, the beast, the man.

Unlike Ike, though, Faulkner does not present any doctrine or propose any kind of action that, according to his view, might put an end to and expiate the evil brought by ownership of land. He refrains from drawing political conclusions from the picture of the world he unrolls.

He remains an artist and prophet. His statements are enigmatic, ambiguous, contradictory, and mysterious like the world he created. No convenient phrases can be fished out of it to be formed into neat packages and used as handy guidelines for the future. At the utmost he demands from us a recognition of the wrong we have brought into the world or inherited. That is one of the reasons, I think, why Faulkner's vision in his last books is so gloomy.

Yet, Faulkner also shows that next to the temporal and transitory, which is the condition of man's life, there exists eternity which comprises it and allows—not makes, just allows—man to transcend the tragic limitations of the temporary. What we do with this knowledge, Faulkner maintains, is entirely our business. □

The first Ferris wheel was  
on the midway of the World's  
Columbian Exposition.

—Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society,  
photo by C.D. Arnold



# Grand Illusions: Chicago's World's Fair of 1893

BY JANIS JOHNSON

Near the end of the nineteenth century, exactly one hundred years ago, the United States had practically reached the limits of its Western frontier. The Industrial Revolution had brought tremendous progress; yet the need for wider markets forced the United States to regard Europe with new eyes—as a competitor. The expansionist spirit, the uneasy relationship with Europe, and the 400th anniversary of Columbus's journey led to a collective reflection about just how far the nation had come. The conclusion—as evidenced by the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago—was loud and clear: the United States was now a world power. The mammoth exposition became a grandiose statement of the nation's coming of age.

In a major exhibition, "Grand Illusions: Chicago's World's Fair of 1893," the Chicago Historical Society evokes the fair's marvelous spectacle and focuses its lens on culture, business, and politics of late nineteenth-century America. The exhibition opens May 1, the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Chicago world's fair, and runs through July 15, 1994. It was made possible in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Illinois Humanities Council, and the Illinois General Assembly, and additional support from Sandoz Agro, Inc.

The World's Columbian Exposition was the celebration of progress that brought such innovations as the "City Beautiful" planning of Daniel Burnham, the world's first Ferris wheel, Aunt Jemima's pancakes, a blue ribbon for a beer called Pabst, Scott Joplin's ragtime, and a chocolate-making machine for Milton Hershey. Almost ten times the size of the fairgrounds at the Paris world's fair of 1889, the Chicago site, symbolized by the dazzling white Court of Honor, preened with decorative references to historically significant European cities.

But there was illusion to this spectacle. The dazzling panorama was created from a 700-acre swamp. The monuments to 400 years of progress were designed to last just six months: The classical "marble" buildings were really plaster over steel and glass sheds. No one seemed to care. Spectators were swept up by America's visible economic and technological superiority.

Beyond the facades, however, the fair became a demonstration of social divisions of race, gender, and ethnicity that afflicted the country then and still looms inescapably 100 years later. African Americans were largely excluded, except as entertainers; women were relegated to their own building; and the "superiority" of Euro-Americans over native Americans was assumed time and again.

Consequently, for the modern viewer, the exhibition offers timeless themes and a contemporary experience. "It was built in a particular shape, as a result of a number of cultural and social factors of the late nineteenth century," says curator Wim de Wit. "But it had enormous influence on twentieth-century America's thinking about itself. Problems very much alive in the late

nineteenth century still linger on, still are part of our society. This exhibition helps people look at who and what we are now."

As an architectural historian, de Wit, curator of the society's Charles F. Murphy Architectural Study Center, was first attracted to the idea of the exhibition because of the grandeur of the buildings. But he and others gradually recognized that broader cultural and sociological themes lay below the surface. The fair was meant to project a specific vision of the world: Its power lay in the massive manipulation of scale, publicity, and images.

The present-day exhibition, which features more than 500 objects, takes a look at the meaning underlying the illusions. It also offers visitors a sense of optimism through the transformation of a swamp into a city of beauty and fantasy.

President William McKinley described world's fairs as "the time-keepers of progress." In the second half of the nineteenth century, the institution blossomed as a forum for nations competing for new markets. The first world's fair was held in London in 1851.

Chicago competed successfully against New York, Washington, and St. Louis for the Columbian exposition. The Midwest center of one million held access to new markets as well as the reputation as a place to get rich quickly. Several social problems, brought on by immigration of rural and foreign workers, coupled with the devastating Great Chicago Fire of 1872, induced city leaders to work to change the city's negative image as dirty and unsafe. Out of the swamp the fair grew to 200 buildings spread over 633 acres in Jackson Park. The fair achieved the aim of its creators: It solidified Chicago's position as the Midwest's chief metropolis.

The first part of the exhibition, "The Fair as Spectacle," recaptures the excitement experienced by visitors in 1893. An opening symbolic comment is the reproduction of Daniel Chester French's golden statue, "Statue of the Republic," which functioned as an emblem for the entire fair.

Matched against each other are large-scale reconstructions of the Court of Honor, serving high culture, and the Midway, promoting entertainment and commerce. Consultant Alan Trachtenberg of Yale University called the

*"Out of the swamp the fair grew to two hundred buildings spread over 633 acres in Jackson Park. The fair achieved the aim of its creators: It solidified Chicago's position as the Midwest's chief metropolis."*

*West end of the Main Basin.*

*—Courtesy of Chicago Historical Society*



World's Columbian Exposition "one of the most fully staged and manipulated mass experiences of voyeurism at the time—visitors invited to be urban voyeurs without any of the distractions of real street traffic."

A replica of the Agriculture Building, designed by McKim, Mead and White of New York, represents the Court of Honor. What most impressed visitors a century ago were the grand scale of the buildings and the stylistic reference to European traditions. Having built on this legacy, America was a cosmopolitan nation ready to play a major economic and cultural role in the world, the fair seemed to declare. The Agriculture Building, demonstrating America's Greco-Roman legacy, visibly summed up such progress.

To make sure the message got across properly, the organizers took advantage of the "imaging revolution" of the late nineteenth century. They employed official photographers and discouraged amateurs. They exploited new technologies to create and sell a particular image, based upon paintings and prints by Charles Graham, Charles Curran, and Childe Hassam. And to reinforce the intended image of cultural magnificence, flood light-

ing of the building was used on a large scale for the first time.

In designing the exhibition, the historical society captures the sheer physical scale of the fair through an audiovisual program recreating the Agriculture Building in the museum's North Atrium, where a thirty-two-foot ceiling and a sixty-foot length of wall lend themselves to powerful suggestion. New and old technologies combine to build the 1893 fair's "grand illusions" out of a one-time swamp, culminating in such breathtaking vistas as decorative perimeter colonnades of the Beaux-Arts architecture, the misty fountains, and floating gondolas in the expansive canals.

Out on a partially reconstituted midway, artifacts illustrate a quite different mood, recreations of the "exotic" (a Javanese village), the "uncivilized" (a Turkish village), "old-world folklore" (an Irish village), the commercial (glass objects from Libby Glass Company's building), and entertainment—a mural of the twenty-six-story high Ferris wheel, the symbol for the entire dreamy experience.

In the second part, "People at the Fair," a cacophony of voices prepares the visitor for the various groups rep-

resented—and not represented—in the exposition. A model of the fair, both of the "White City" and the midway, orient visitors to the placement of images and activities coming later. Key fair participants, including principal architect Daniel Burnham and Frederick Douglass (a Columbian commissioner), are presented in the portrait gallery.

"Beyond the White City," the third section, further explores the notion of contested turf and shows how the fair was used to demonstrate American "achievements" since 1492. More than twenty-one million Americans experienced merchandising as a form of entertainment for the first time at the 1893 exposition. Products of rival companies were placed side by side to stimulate comparison and promote competition, such as beer by Anheuser-Busch Brewing Association and Pabst Brewing Company. For the historical society's exhibition, the Agriculture Building was selected for its architecture, appearance, and content. Its Roman architecture and decoration on the outside were contrasted by a shed-like interior, crowded with merchandise in artistically designed pavilions to reinforce notions of prosperity and ingenuity.

Commemorating the 400th anniversary of Columbus's voyage, the fair inevitably conveyed the message that the white Americans had developed the opportunities of the new continent while the native peoples did not. Here the historical society's curators ran smack into the conflicts which surfaced again 100 years later in planning for 1992 commemorations of Columbus's journey. (In fact, disagreements over what approach to take were among the reasons that a planned Chicago world's fair of 1992 never came off.)

"One hundred years ago the country felt it needed a starting point for development of this country," explained de Wit. "We put what we said about Columbus completely in the context of what happened 100 years ago. All kinds of ethnic groups in the city gave us evaluations of the exhibition. We brought in focus groups, the general public and scholars, a group of African Americans and native Americans. They said, if you put it in that context and you explain it to us, then you should do what you want to do. We do not present Columbus as the Discoverer,



which is such a painful word for some in our population."

By contrast, authorities overseeing the fair one hundred years ago emphasized Columbus's sainthood. Showing what was said to be the anchor of the Santa Maria and other "relics" suggested that the "Great Discoverer" was chosen by God to make his expedition. Elsewhere on the fairgrounds, statues of Columbus were sited prominently.

Meanwhile, the native American served as a baseline for American progress since 1492. Even measurements of native Americans' heads and bodies were compared to those of Euro-Americans, with statues of white students from America's best schools intended to represent the highest form of progress. In addition, out on the midway, stereotypes reinforced the idea of foreign "primitive" cultures as inferior, including the "weird" percussion instruments of the Javanese and the "uncivilized" street scene of Cairo.

Cultural and racial prejudices were revealed by the near exclusion of African Americans. While Africans performed on the midway, Americans of African descent were virtually excluded. No African Americans were hired to work at the fair. The only food or restroom facilities available to them were in the Haiti Building. In "The Reason Why The Colored American Is Not In The World's Columbian Exposition," by Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells, the fair was described as a true "White City...in the building of which the Coloured American was allowed no helping hand, and in its glorious success he has no share."

Liberia, founded by American slaves with the support of the American government, was presented as the only westernized and independent country in Africa. The underlying message was that white Americans could take some credit for Liberia's own cultural traditions.

Women fared somewhat better. Initially excluded, they immediately began to lobby for inclusion. Two groups emerged—the Women's Department, or Women's Auxiliary Executive Committee (a large apolitical group looking for participation but not challenging women's traditional roles), and the Queen Isabella Association, advocates of women's suffrage, who wanted an equal role with men.

The conflicts between these two groups, who worked together in the Board of Lady Managers, generated an intense debate over the "women question" of the late nineteenth century. The Isabellas wanted women's work exhibited alongside men's, while the rest of the Board of Lady Managers obtained permission for a separate building. They did, however, succeed in gaining recognition for women's work in the main exhibition halls in cases where women were the actual producers—and were given credit for making the product. One woman, for example, displayed refrigeration machinery.

Still, the Women's Building was filled with traditional women's work. But it also showcased newer achievements—works by women artists, a library of women's writings, and sociological documentation of women's conditions around the world. There

was competition among women architects for the building design, and the winner was Sophia Hayden, one of the first women to graduate from MIT. Artist Mary Cassatt painted an enormous mural inside.

"All the exhibition halls had interiors like railroad stations, but the Women's Building was very domestic, very residential in character, a place where women could meet by themselves without being chaperoned by men," notes de Wit. By sharp contrast, elsewhere on the fair grounds the objectification of female beauty and eroticism was evident in such presentations as allegorical sculptures, beauty pageants, and belly dancers.

Less than forty years after the Civil War, the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition sought to manufacture a national identity. Because they recognized that this fair would map the future, leaders of the African American community and leaders of the women's movement sought to use the fair as an instrument for charting alternative routes that would afford greater political and economic rights for women and racial minorities, according to consultant Robert W. Rydell of Montana State University. Consequently, the fair became an arena for have-nots to struggle to overcome their "otherness."

The final part of the exhibition examines the impact of the fair and its role as a historical force and institutional idea. As a model for the future, the fair was later used as an important urban model. The City Beautiful movement has been long understood as a direct offspring.



*"...architects began to redesign the American city with regard to both showcasing architecture and space."*

*Women's Building with Ferris wheel in background; opposite, the interior of Machinery Hall.*

As part of this early-twentieth-century trend, civic-minded people and architects began to redesign the American city with regard to both showcasing architecture and space. "Originally cities were built on a very strict grid, but now they were cut through with big avenues, creating a hierarchy within urban space," explains de Wit. "Important buildings, like civic centers, were built during this time, up to the 1930s. Many cities, like Cleveland, Chicago, Pasadena, and Denver, were redone as part of this movement."

Architect/planner Daniel Burnham played an important role. After he recognized the success of the fair design, he applied the concept to the city. He found business people who supported him, who liked the idea, for example, of more glamour. Burnham's

"Plan for Chicago" of 1909 and plans for other cities exemplify the inspiration of the neoclassical architecture and the unified city design. The fair, writes William Wilson in *The City Beautiful Movement*, "suggested how a benevolent reform might reshape cities based on existing possibilities rather than utopian formulas."

The fair inspired other familiar American institutions, such as the amusement park, subsequent world's fairs in cities like Buffalo and St. Louis, and the now-common trade fairs and public relations campaigns around virtually any theme. It also led to the creation of the Field Museum of Chicago and the Commercial Museum of Philadelphia.

In fact, the 1893 exposition inevitably led to planning for a 1992 world's fair in Chicago for the 500th

anniversary of Columbus. Architects saw themselves as the new Daniel Burnhams and Stanford Whites, according to the historical society's curators. Even the Chicago business community was stirred with prospects of the magnificent success of the 1893 venture. However, the effort died in a collision of contemporary forces, a battle that demonstrated the magnitude of changes in societal thinking that has occurred in 100 years. "The power of interest politics and the lack of deference for traditional elites have made it even more difficult to mobilize an entire city behind one idea than it was a century ago," the curators concluded. The money wasn't forthcoming, nor was the support across all political and social groups.

Notes de Wit, "The world has become much smaller in the sense we can travel anywhere and see whatever we want in one place. We also have huge exhibitions and convention halls in many cities. You see all the products there. Plus, foreign cultures are very familiar because of television."

The Chicago Historical Society's panoramic journey into the past does not conclude in these exhibition halls either. The society invited three other Chicago museums to collaborate on related programs. And, in meetings in Chicago in 1993, five national and international organizations are examining the impact of the World's Columbian Exposition on American cities and seeking ways to revitalize urban centers. "We are looking back 100 years—and forward 100 years—to see what needs to be done with our cities," de Wit observes.

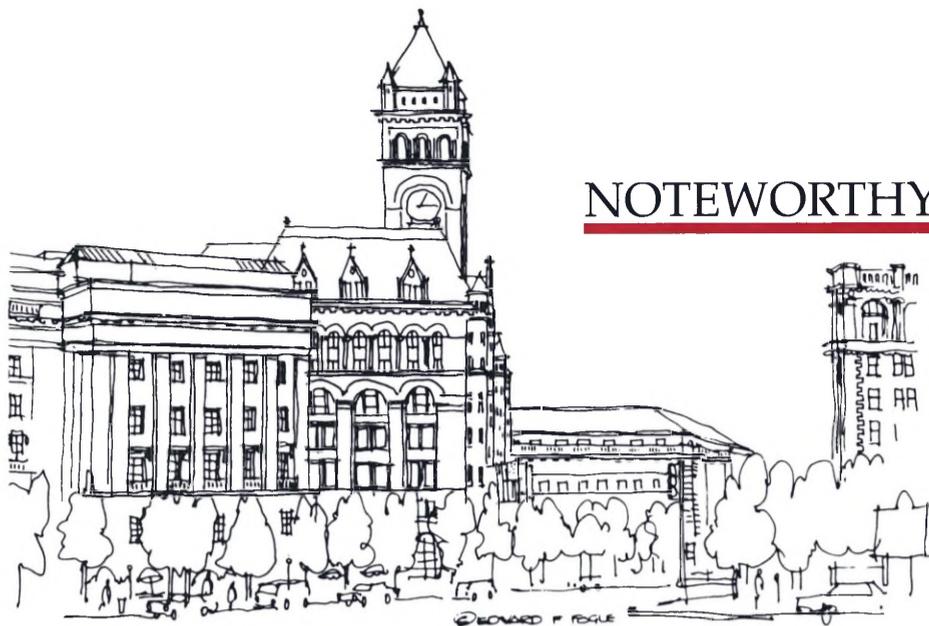
With more than fifty thousand convention visitors expected, in addition to the thousands of other viewers for the centennial exhibition, observes de Wit with a hint of irony, "This will be the year of the world's fair (of 1992) that didn't happen." □

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*Janis Johnson is a free-lance writer in Alexandria, Virginia.*

*To support this exhibition, the Chicago Historical Society received \$250,000 outright and \$75,000 in matching funds from Humanities Projects in Museums and Historical Organizations of the Division of Public Programs.*





## NOTEWORTHY

### Sound Stage

While plays such as *The Iceman Cometh* and *Long Day's Journey Into Night* have frequently made it to Broadway, twentieth-century playwright Eugene O'Neill's lesser known *Lazarus Laughed* has never received a professional production. A radio dramatization by Bay Area Radio Drama (BARD) in Berkeley will therefore be the premiere of the play about which O'Neill wrote, "Certainly it contains the highest writing I have done."

Eric Bauersfeld, BARD's executive director and executive producer of the play, described the challenges of producing such an elaborate script. "It's very complicated, and probably has never been produced because it would be too expensive."

Set in antiquity, the play portrays a messiah whose message to purge oneself of fear and detrimental illusions brings destruction.

"It's a wonderful opportunity for acoustics mastery," Bauersfeld noted. "Lazarus laughs, and this laughter is a laughter of death, and it conjures up a very strange, acoustical image. The audience can also hear the complicated chorus resounding in the background without it overshadowing what is being said."

BARD will also produce *Hughie*—another of O'Neill's last completed works—in which a small-time gambler desperately invokes the attention of an indifferent night clerk. "With radio we can hear the night clerk's thoughts without any disturbance. It's almost as if we were in his mind," said Bauersfeld.

BARD has also produced four of O'Neill's one-act sea plays, as well as *The Hairy Ape* and *The Emperor Jones*.

—Nadine Ekrek

### Medicine and the Humanities

In his inaugural lecture of 1879, Thomas Huxley, laying the blueprint for medical education in the future, stressed the equal importance of "the two great sides of human activity"—humane as well as scientific studies.

Through a series of projects and lectures, the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions Office of Cultural Affairs has revived communication among humanists, physicians, and the general public with a program entitled *Medicine and the Humanities: A Symbiotic Dialogue*. The series has been extended through June to complete a film/discussion series on mortality with a symposium, *Changing Perceptions of Aging and the Elderly*. This interdisciplinary dialogue will give an overview of changing conceptions of the aging process and the place of the elderly and the issues that affect them.

—Nadine Ekrek

### Hopi on Paper

*yàapa n. 1. (yaa-t) mockingbird. sòosokmuy hiituy tsiròotuy tutut-skyaynangwu. The mockingbird mimics [the sounds of] all kinds of birds. 2. (met.) (yaa-m) an imitator. Hopi yaw-niiqe oovi pas sòosokmuy hiituy lavayiyamuy naat tuuqaytani. It is said of the Hopi that he is a "mockingbird" and therefore will yet speak the languages of all races.*

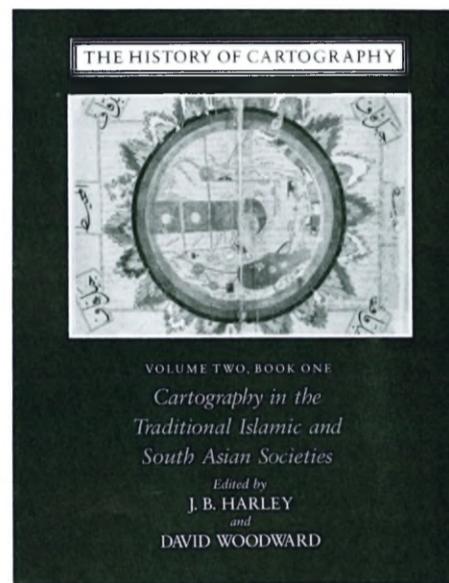
This entry comes from the first comprehensive dictionary of the Hopi language being developed at the University of Arizona, Tucson. Because the dictionary is organized in a style similar to the *Dictionary of Spoken Russian*, where the emphasis is on how words are used in context, native-speaking Hopis work with linguistic

scholars to provide authentic sentence examples for the entries.

Director of the Hopi Dictionary Project, Kenneth Hill, says there are "two focal audiences for the dictionary—the Hopi community, and the scholarly community. We plan to make the dictionary available on software, which will be helpful for research. But if we lose focus on the needs of the Hopis, much will be lost in the future for the language," says Hill.

According to Hill, 85 percent of Hopi high school students in 1986 were unable to speak or understand Hopi—yet it is the official and legal language of the tribe. "The availability of a dictionary and grammar of Hopi will be an important step in providing resources for bilingual education and teacher training," says Hill.

—Amy Lifson



### Kudos

*Cartography in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies* has received the R. R. Hawkins Award for the outstanding professional, reference, or scholarly work of 1992, presented by the Association of American Publishers, Inc.

This is the second book of a six-volume series on *The History of Cartography*, which covers mapping from prehistory to the present in Western and non-Western cultures. The volumes are edited by J. B. Harley and David Woodward. □

—Amy Lifson

# Calendar

MAY ♦ JUNE



—PBS

"George Marshall and the American Century" airs on May 14 on PBS. This documentary examines Marshall and his role in the shaping of American foreign policy.

## Conferences and Exhibitions

- ♦ "Women and Literature in Ming-Qing China" is the topic of a conference at Yale University, June 23 through 26.
- ♦ Scholars will discuss "Russian Religious Thought" at a conference at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, June 4 through 6.
- ♦ "Shared Spaces, Separate Lives" opens June 25 in the Wickham House of the Valentine Museum in Richmond, Virginia. The exhibition uses video and audio installations to explore race relations in antebellum Richmond.

During the heyday of Teotihuacan in Mexico (B.C. 150-750 A.D.), the city was as populous as Athens and covered a larger area than its contemporary Rome. "Teotihuacan: City of the Gods" will be shown at the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco, May 26 through October 31.

—National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City



"Elijah Pierce: Woodcarver" continues at the Columbus Museum of Art through May 16 and then travels to the Studio Museum in Harlem, June 13 through August 22. Pierce, a long-time resident of Columbus, Ohio, was a woodcarver, barber, and preacher, whose work as a folk artist began to gain national recognition in the 1970s.

—Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio



*Dancing* is an eight-part series that begins this month on PBS. Two episodes, "Dance at Court" (May 10), and "The Individual and Tradition" (May 24), are funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.



—Photo by Geoff Dunlop

What caused this book to have such an impact on Western opinion, where previous revelations had been discounted? First, there is the mastery of the evidence it displays. An enormous amount of reading went into the book, and this was deployed with clarity and logic. Conquest is never at a loss to illustrate a telling point with an apt quotation. He follows the records of iniquity with a trained eye for contradiction or hesitation. Nor has he been faulted on detail, despite prolonged attempts from some quarters of academia to do so, particularly as concerns his estimates of the number of those who perished in these events. Indeed, Conquest's estimate of some thirty million casualties has been raised by Russian researchers to forty million. His testimony before the U.S. Senate's Committee on the Judiciary on *The Human Cost of Communism* (1971) adds a further 500,000 victims under Lenin. His display of factual knowledge was combined with a refusal to go beyond the necessarily limited information available on the political evolution of the Soviet Union. As he pointed out in his essay *In Defense of Kremlinology* (1962), "We can all predicate, more or less, the choices open to the Soviet government in a given field, but we have little idea of what will decide the final real action."

Extensive knowledge of the subject and caution in interpreting it carry conviction. But another quality is to be found in *The Great Terror*: a moral concern which is all the more powerful for being underplayed. The facts narrated there can hardly be read without shuddering, but they are largely left to speak for themselves. Conquest does not incarnadine the blood stains, though his scorn for the brutes and sycophants who made themselves the tools of tyranny emerges at every word. So, too, does his compassion for the people of the ex-Soviet Union—the intellectuals, peasants, and workers who were subjected by their dictator to an experience so appalling as to have few historical precedents. So it is not surprising that recent Russian reviews of *The Great Terror* have noted the author's sympathy for the "sufferings of the Russian people," the absence of *schadenfreude* over their humiliation by their terrible ruler.

A command of fact, a capacity for ordering it, restraint in speculation, moral authority, and, it should be added, a clear and cogent prose style—these are gifts which the historian requires and which are abundantly present in Conquest's work. They serve to explain the success of the book and how facts, which to many seemed incredible, came to compel belief. The task of explaining to a Western audience, which has no personal experience of totalitarianism, what it is like to live under a regime whose guiding spirit "recognized no limitations either moral or intellectual, in his methods of securing power" is enormously difficult. Conquest, to the benefit of us all, succeeded in it.

*The Great Terror* forms the centerpiece of a wider panorama of communist rule in the Soviet Union. Conquest has written some fifteen books on the same subject, the last of them a biography of Stalin, *Stalin: Breaker of Nations* (1991). It would be otiose to list them all here, but some titles should be mentioned. His first book, which forms a methodological introduction to his work, was an exposition and demonstration of the techniques of "Kremlinology": *Power and Policy in the Soviet Union: The Struggle for Stalin's Succession 1945-1960* (1961). This is a detailed examination of Soviet politics during the postwar era, whose conclusions are gathered from the minute indications provided by a political culture of concealment. Such detective work has been attacked by those who have accused Conquest of leaving out broad economic and social changes in the Soviet Union, but first, as he pointed out in a swingeing demolition of a British ex-ambassador to Moscow, he was writing specifically about Soviet politics and, secondly, using the only evidence available to anyone interested in how and by whom Russia was governed. Over the years there have been undoubted signs of power struggles and policy disagreements in the Kremlin (for example, the numerous eliminations of leading politicians). To ignore this is to suggest that political leadership is of no importance in the governance of nations—a conclusion to which, unfortunately, some economists and sociologists leap only too happily.

Others of his books deal with aspects of Stalin's reign which were left out from, or indicated in less detail in, *The Great Terror*. These include *The Nation Killers* (1970), an account of the deportation and decimation of such people as the Chechens, the Crimean Tartars, the Kalmyks and others; *Kilyma: The Arctic Death Camps* (1978); *Inside Stalin's Secret Police: NKVD Politics 1936-1939* (1985); and *Stalin and the Kirov Murder* (1989). There is also a biographical study of Lenin and a collection of essays, *Tyrants and Typewriters* (1989), significantly subtitled *Communiqué in the Struggle for Truth*. Another major historical work to be set beside *The Great Terror*, and which too has been published in Russia, is *The Harvest of Sorrow*



Stalin in a tsarist police register.

—Hoover Institution

(1986), which recounts the sufferings of the Soviet peasants from famine and communist persecution during collectivization and the "liquidation" of the kulaks. This is another story of man's inhumanity to man, which even well-qualified Western observers quite failed to notice at the time. It is an epic of torment, and it is appropriate that it should take its title from the oldest Russian poem: "A harvest of sorrow came over the land of Russia."

These books have the same qualities as *The Great Terror*. In addition, there is *Russia After Khrushchev* (1965), which discusses the future of the country and its communist rulers. In 1965 Conquest was a qualified optimist: "Russia, that sleeping giant, is already straining half-consciously at the bonds that hold her." The stagnation presided over by Brezhnev lasted some two decades—longer perhaps than was expected—but the break came with Gorbachev. Now the grip of the party machine has relaxed, and the Soviet Union itself has fallen apart. The nationalities have had their revenge on the nation killers, even if some of the latter still squeak and gibber in the wings of history.

Conquest realized the atrocious character of Soviet communism; he saw the fatal weaknesses of the system and predicted its doom, though not when that would come about. Why was he able to do this when so many were blind to the reality, either bemused by propaganda or obsessed by a myth that appealed to their own weaknesses? Part of the explanation lies in his wide knowledge of history and his refusal to consider the Soviet Union as a special case, set apart from the general flow of human events. In *Russia After Khrushchev* he writes:

We cannot be too careful in emphasizing to ourselves at all times that the Soviet leadership in action is not simply something deviating from, but still not essentially distant from, the norms of our own politics. If one wishes to avoid this almost unconscious aberration, to which we are all naturally subject, one needs the broad perspective of political possibilities and attitudes that a regular reading of the historians of other epochs—Tacitus and Abulfeda, Gibbon and Clarendon, Finlay and De Sismondi—affords. I make no apology for quoting such writers; if any, theirs is the true "comparative politics" for the Soviet era.

In the same book points are illustrated by comparisons drawn from Byzantine history, Chateaubriand's verdict on the later Roman empire, and James Farley's account of American ward politics.

The possession of a wide historical culture enables a writer to recognize the symptoms of tyranny, occurring

perhaps in a different context and disguised under the label of "socialism" or by the opaque generalizations of Marxism, but promising the same consequences in the toll of death and suffering. Already, in the sixteenth century, Giles Fletcher, Elizabeth I's ambassador to the court of Ivan the Terrible, illuminated what he saw by such a comparison:

The manner of their government is much after the Turkish fashion: which they seem to imitate as neare as the countrie, and reach of their capacities in polittique affayres, will give them leave to doo.

Conquest's historical knowledge allowed him to escape the myths and messianic promises of Communism and to refute special pleading in the name of the "revolution" or

"progress." It was more difficult to correct the tendency of liberal intellectuals to find something to be said for every side of a debate. Like Honor Tracey's Irish priest, who exhorted his congregation to walk the straight and narrow path between good and evil, liberals tried to find a compromise between opposing versions of the facts, not realizing that one of them was totally invented. Reports of inhuman conditions in labor camps were countered by Soviet sources with the claim that these were simply institutions for the reform of criminals or, as one British Communist put it, "Soviet imprisonment stands out as an almost enjoyable experience." The liberal intellectual is tempted to conclude that, disagreeable though the camps may have been, they were not as bad as the prisoners—"anti-social" elements, after all—had reported. History, however, shows that the actions of tyrants are frequently as bad as they are

Painted. Supported by the experience of history, it was but realism for Conquest to believe the worst that the evidence showed about Stalin's Russia.

The role of telling truth about power is not a popular one. Conquest's merciless stripping of illusions about the Soviet Union made him enemies. Along with others, he was denounced as a "cold warrior," a "professional anti-Communist," a "provocateur" and a "warmonger." Long after the nature of Soviet communism was all too apparent, he was subject to academic niggling from those who, enclosed in their impenetrable specialities, resented his appeal to common sense and the general lessons of history. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the availability of Russian archives, the attacks dwindled and the critics fell silent. Many ingenious theories were heard no more. What price convergence now? Meanwhile there were some exchanges that showed Conquest as a skillful controversialist. Connoisseurs of polemic should read his review of the anthol-



A 1951 parade in East Germany features Stalin's image.

—National Archives, Washington, D.C.

ogy *Stories from Modern Russia*, edited by C. P. Snow and Pamela Hansford Johnson, which ends with the sentence, "On any barricade I can think of, there is many a communist I should prefer to have on my side than Snow."

This protest was made in defense of Russian writers, and it brings us to another side of Conquest's achievement. For he himself is a talented poet and literary critic, who has published many volumes of verse, an anthology *New Lines* (1956), which introduced a new generation of British poets, and a collection of translated East European poetry, *Back to Life* (1958). Linking the two sides of his writing are *Courage of Genius: The Pasternak Affair* (1961) and his verse translation of Solzhenitsyn's *Prussian Nights* (1977). A friend of Philip Larkin and Kingsley Amis, he shared their mistrust of mere "English Lit" and has fought against "deconstruction" and the other vain polysyllables that infest contemporary criticism, and whose originators often appear determined to revenge their sterile selves on the creative artist.

Conquest's own poetry strikes a note of nobility, tempered by an underlying irony. His subjects are the big ones—love, landscape, man in history. His poetry is romantic in its feeling of transience, but there is no self-pity here, only a stoical determination to make the best of a passing moment, a sunset, or the suddenly perceived curve of a woman's body. Irony is the defense against a potentially harsh reality, whose existence can be sensed beneath the bright imagery, the flares of sensuality, and the carefully classical forms. There is a vein of melancholy that runs through these poems, however it may be disguised by a shifting subject matter. Conquest deals with rumors of wars, rumors of love, rumors of human vulnerability. A commitment to humanism denies shabby orthodoxies and Pecksniffian moralizing. There is something enjoyably pagan about Conquest as a poet. It is entirely typical of him that he should recall a line from Aeschylus on a guided missile range, but typical too that he should recall Lamartine's presence at Philippopolis and feel pity for him, ignorant of the future, "the tyrant's pension and the poem's defeat."

Passion is there as well as irony, specifically a passion for poetry:



Conquest and Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Zurich, 1975. —Courtesy of Robert Conquest

*Body and mind's a fracture it can heal  
In such a rush of luck and liberation  
As grips a gambler when the dice are hot.*

The image, so unexpected and so apt, imparts to the reader that sense of a sudden mental avalanche, which anyone who has composed a poem will instantly recognize. To make a beginning on any creation of the imagination is, in a sense, a gamble, where assured achievement comes in a precipitous rush. There is both accuracy and humility in this description of the poetic process, whose ambiguity parallels the instinctive pleasures of the body.

So what conclusions are we to draw from the achievement of a man who has grappled with the inhumanities and idiocies of the twentieth century, who has fought when others were unwilling to fight and seen success in the end? First, there is the point that has already been made above. A broad culture helps to improve the judgment, if it is accompanied by skepticism and a sense of proportion (that is, a sense of humor). A creative mind makes it easier to keep one's eye on the individual and his freedom—the values represented by Thomas Jefferson. In defense of these Conquest has never wavered, drawing his ammunition from the whole spectrum of history, quick to detect oppression and the cant that would conceal it. What he has done has been conditioned by his wide cultural interests and an unwearying intellectual curiosity.

Secondly, there is courage, the condition, so it has been said, of every virtue at its testing point. The exposure of the reality of the Soviet Union and the fallacies of communist dogma was not an easy achievement. When Conquest began to write, he met with opposition, not only from politically motivated adversaries, but also from the lukewarm, whom Dante placed in limbo. Among these can be numbered large sections of Western governments, politicians, and officials, who considered the Soviet regime as merely a fellow government and found too total a condemnation of it inconvenient or unfitting. Even where there was no sympathy with Communism, there was fear of its power. To revert to the image used above, unlike C. P. Snow, Conquest has been staunch in his defense of freedom's barricades.

And now? It was a wonderful moment when the Soviet Union collapsed and the Communist Party was dissolved.

Now there remains a new, but also old, Russia where liberty is provisional and perhaps struggling. Conquest's name is honored there, and his writings continue to have their liberating effect. *The Great Terror* is a memorable work of history, and it is hard to think of a historian who has resurrected the past and also been involved in the contemporary political process in quite the way he has been. To adapt a phrase of Karl Marx, he has understood the world and helped to change it as well. There remains no more fitting tribute to his career than this feather, plucked from the enemy's panoply. □

*Anthony Hartley was the editor of Britain's Encounter magazine and is now contributing editor/Europe of The National Interest.*



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# DEADLINES ♦ DEADLINES ♦ DEADLINES

## DIVISION OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS *James C. Herbert, Director • 606-8373*

Area code for all telephone numbers is 202.	Deadline	Projects beginning
Higher Education in the Humanities • <i>Lyn Maxwell White 606-8380</i> .....	October 1, 1993	April 1994
Institutes for College and University Faculty • <i>Barbara A. Ashbrook 606-8380</i> .....	October 1, 1993	Summer 1994
Science and Humanities Education • <i>Susan Greenstein/Deb Coon 606-8380</i> .....	March 15, 1994	October 1, 1994
Core Curriculum Projects • <i>Fred Winter 606-8380</i> .....	October 1, 1993	April 1994
Two-Year Colleges • <i>Judith Jeffrey Howard 606-8380</i> .....	October 1, 1993	April 1994
Challenge Grants • <i>Thomas Adams 606-8380</i> .....	May 1, 1993	December 1, 1993
Elementary and Secondary Education in the Humanities • <i>F. Bruce Robinson 606-8377</i> .....	December 15, 1993	August 1994
Teacher-Scholar Program • <i>Annette Palmer 606-8377</i> .....	May 1, 1993	September 1994
Special Opportunity in Foreign Language Education .....	March 15, 1994	October 1994
Higher Education • <i>Elizabeth Welles 606-8380</i>		
Elementary and Secondary Education • <i>F. Bruce Robinson 606-8377</i>		

## DIVISION OF FELLOWSHIPS AND SEMINARS *Marjorie A. Berlincourt, Director • 606-8458*

	Deadline	Projects beginning
Fellowships for University Teachers • <i>Maben D. Herring 606-8466</i> .....	May 1, 1993	January 1, 1994
Fellowships for College Teachers and Independent Scholars • <i>Joseph B. Neville 606-8466</i> .....	May 1, 1993	January 1, 1994
Summer Stipends • <i>Thomas O'Brien 606-8466</i> .....	October 1, 1993	May 1, 1994
Faculty Graduate Study Program for Historically Black Colleges and Universities <i>Maben D. Herring 606-8466</i> .....	March 15, 1993	September 1, 1994
Younger Scholars • <i>Leon Bramson 606-8463</i> .....	November 1, 1993	May 1, 1994
Study Grants for College and University Teachers • <i>Clayton Lewis 606-8463</i> .....	August 16, 1993	May 1, 1994
Summer Seminars for College Teachers • <i>Joel Schwartz 606-8463</i>		
Participants .....	March 1, 1993	Summer 1993
Directors .....	March 1, 1993	Summer 1994
Summer Seminars for School Teachers • <i>Michael Hall 606-8463</i>		
Participants .....	March 1, 1993	Summer 1993
Directors .....	April 1, 1993	Summer 1994

## DIVISION OF PRESERVATION AND ACCESS *George F. Farr Jr., Director • 606-8570*

	Deadline	Projects beginning
Library and Archival Preservation Projects • <i>Vanessa Piala 606-8570</i> .....	June 1, 1993	January 1994
Library and Archival Preservation/Access Projects • <i>Barbara Paulson/Charles Kolb 606-8570</i> .....	June 1, 1993	January 1994
National Heritage Preservation Program • <i>Richard Rose/Laura Word 606-8570</i> .....	November 1, 1993	July 1994
U. S. Newspaper Program • <i>Jeffrey Field 606-8570</i> .....	June 1, 1993	January 1994

To receive guidelines for any NEH program, contact the Office of Publications and Public Affairs at 202/606-8438. Guidelines are available at least two months in advance of application deadlines.

Telecommunications device for the deaf: 202/606-8282.

# DEADLINES ♦ DEADLINES ♦ DEADLINES

## DIVISION OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS *Donald Gibson, Director • 606-8267*

Area code for all telephone numbers is 202.	Deadline	Projects beginning
Humanities Projects in Media • <i>James Dougherty 606-8278</i> .....	September 10, 1993	April 1, 1994
Humanities Projects in Museums and Historical Organizations • <i>Marsha Semmel 606-8284</i> .....	June 4, 1993	January 1, 1994
Public Humanities Projects • <i>Wilsonia Cherry 606-8271</i> .....	September 17, 1993	April 1, 1994
Humanities Projects in Libraries • <i>Thomas Phelps 606-8271</i>		
Planning .....	May 7, 1993	October 1, 1993
Implementation .....	September 10, 1993	April 1, 1994
Challenge Grants • <i>Abbie Cutter 606-8361</i> .....	May 1, 1993	December 1, 1992

## DIVISION OF RESEARCH PROGRAMS *Guinevere Griest, Acting Director • 606-8200*

	Deadline	Projects beginning
Scholarly Publications • <i>Margot Backas 606-8207</i>		
Editions • <i>Douglas Arnold 606-8207</i> .....	June 1, 1993	April 1, 1994
Translations • <i>Richard Lynn 606-8207</i> .....	June 1, 1993	April 1, 1994
Subventions • <i>606-8207</i> .....	March 15, 1994	October 1, 1994
Reference Materials • <i>Kenneth Kolson 606-8358</i>		
Tools • <i>Helen Aguera 606-8358</i> .....	September 1, 1993	July 1, 1994
Guides • <i>Michael Poliakoff 606-8358</i> .....	September 1, 1993	July 1, 1994
Challenge Grants • <i>Bonnie Gould 606-8358</i> .....	May 1, 1993	December 1, 1992
Interpretive Research • <i>George Lucas 606-8210</i>		
Collaborative Projects • <i>David Wise 606-8210</i> .....	October 15, 1993	July 1, 1994
Archaeology Projects • <i>Murray McClellan 606-8210</i> .....	October 15, 1993	April 1, 1994
Humanities, Science, and Technology • <i>Daniel Jones 606-8210</i> .....	October 15, 1993	July 1, 1994
Conferences • <i>David Coder 606-8210</i> .....	July 15, 1993	April 1, 1994
Centers for Advanced Study • <i>Christine Kalke 606-8210</i> .....	October 1, 1993	July 1, 1994
International Research • <i>Christine Kalke 606-8210</i> .....	April 1, 1994	January 1, 1995

## DIVISION OF STATE PROGRAMS *Carole Watson, Director • 606-8254*

Each state humanities council establishes its own grant guidelines and application deadlines. Addresses and telephone numbers of these state programs may be obtained from the division.

## OFFICE OF CHALLENGE GRANTS *Edythe Manza, Acting Director • 606-8361*

	Deadline	Projects beginning
Applications are submitted through the Division of Education, Research, and Public Programs...	May 1, 1993	December 1, 1993

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