

# *Kolyma: The Arctic Death Camps* by Robert Conquest Review by Chris Caskie

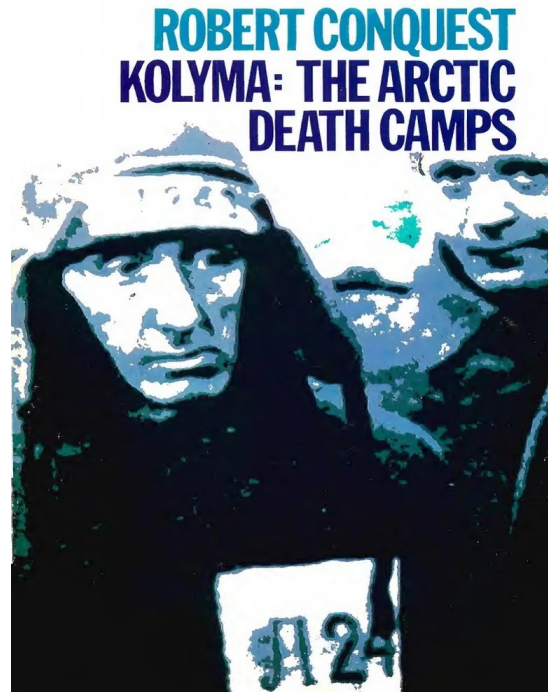
## A Study of the (Jewish-run) Death Camp Network in Kolyma, Russia

30 July 2023

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**4 stars** for its importance as a case study.  
The book could've been longer (it's 231 pages) and it loses points for ignoring Jews.



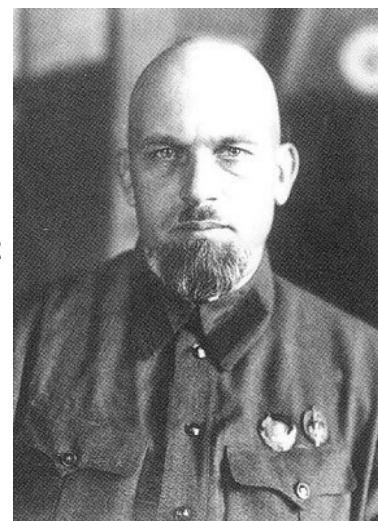
*Kolyma: The Arctic Death Camps* by Robert Conquest (originally published in London by Macmillan in 1978; my version published by Oxford University Press in 1979) seems to be the best account of the Kolyma death camp network in Siberia. Conquest's sources were former ex-prisoners; other Soviet writers; reports published in the West or the Soviet press, and new unpublished information. Conquest's prose is good and clear. However, this book is a gloomy read. In this review, I will highlight what I thought were the best parts and the shortcomings.

The USSR (so-called 'Union of Soviet Socialist Republics': 1917–1991) is infamous for its vast network of Gulags (Gulag is an acronym that stands for "Chief Administration of Corrective Labour Camps"). **A mendacious title since the camps were veritable death camps that nursed criminality and offered no educational work.** Many people are vaguely aware of what happened, but aren't conversant with any details. To this day, university courses, publishers, and writers still understate the horrors of Gulags. In my opinion, the reason for the censorship is a Jewish fifth column in publishing and media who have a vested interest in narratives that are whitewashes of history, designed to prop up Jews, neglecting far more genuine victims. It is no wonder this book is now out of print.

Already in 1921—some 4 years after the Jewish takeover—the Jews had built the Kholmogory death camp in the arctic, where prisoners were routinely killed and replaced. Mikhail Kedrov (Jew), head of the military section of the Cheka, was an important administrator. The 1930s marked an increase in the institution of Gulags. People were sent to these camps for the most trifling offences. The prisoners included farmers, intellectuals, writers, artists, dissidents, and criminals. **In the Gulags, prisoners were killed for any dissent whatsoever. If they refused to work or said aloud that the work was harsh; disagreed with a guard; criticised the government; or kept quiet while the crowd of prisoners yelled “long live Stalin!”, they were shot.**(p. 53)



**The appeal of the Kolyma region in Northeastern Siberia (refer to the map above), is that it contained Russia’s largest known gold deposits.** Most of the slave labour was mining. In addition to gold, prisoners mined for lead, tin, and coal. Other labour included road-building and logging. The Kolyma Gulag network was established by the organisation Dalstroy, **whose first director (from 1931–37) was, of course, a Jew, Reingold Berzin (right).** Conquest briefly discussed the feared administrators, but not much is known about them. They likely wanted their criminal legacies erased.



Conquest captured the bone-chilling atmosphere and conditions of Kolyma, which were atrocious and often unsurvivable. **The official work day was 10 hours,** however it was raised to 12 hours in 1941 due to the war, and less officially it was often 16. No holidays were permitted.(p. 63) Most work was unpaid, and any allowances were very meagre. **In winter time, prisoners were forced to work in -65°C of frost.**(p. 136) They were provided with totally inadequate clothing and accommodation. An ex-prisoner recounted—“Prisoners were not dressed for the

climate in the Kolyma region. They were given third-hand clothing, mere rags, and often had only cloth wrapping on their feet. Their torn jackets did not protect them from the bitter frost, and **people froze in droves.**”(p. 134) Some camps had barracks; others only had makeshift tents. Conquest quoted a prisoner who described the camp at Shturmovoy—“The tents were full of gaping holes through which blew the cold winter air. The broken iron stoves were not lit. The filth was unbelievable. The beds had neither mattresses, blankets, nor pillows. Only here and there dirty rags lay strewn about.”(p. 58) **Rationing was very strict. Sometimes, prisoners were given ‘soup’ consisting of water with a small amount of flour.**(p. 131) Hygiene conditions were horrendous and prisoners were afflicted with lice and typhus epidemics. A typhus epidemic in 1938 claimed tens of thousands of lives.(p. 22) Prisoners were rarely allowed to bathe. In some camps they bathed every six months.(p. 136) **In 1938, the administrators imposed the *Katorga* system where prisoners worked in special camps, in chains, and without blankets or mattresses at nights. None survived.**(p. 60) Conquest told stories of prisoners who would purposely get ill or creatively self-mutilate to try to escape their misery.(p. 141) Conquest quoted a camp doctor called Major Vostokov, who told a prisoner—“Before being a doctor, I am a *chekist*, and as such I must tell you that you are not brought here to live but to suffer and die. If you live . . . it means that you are guilty of one of two things: either you worked less than was assigned you or you ate more than your proper due.”(p. 64) Conquest accounted no heroic escape stories since escape was virtually impossible, especially without suitable clothing, food, or directions.

*Right:* Butugychag Tin Mine  
—part of a Gulag camp in  
the Kolyma region—now in  
ruins.



*Right:* Construction of the bridge through to Kolyma  
(part of the ‘Road of Bones’ from Magadan to  
Jakutsk).



Conquest estimated 5–6 percent of people imprisoned at Kolyma were women.(p. 176) Conquest noted that—**“Rape was, of course, regularly practised by urkas [criminal prisoners]. A twenty-one-year-old girl about to become a school teacher, but arrested for being of Polish descent and given ten years, was on cleaning duty at the Magadan men’s camps. One day, the guard to take her back to the women’s camp had not arrived when a brigade of men returned from work. They were, as it happened, urkas, and invited her into their barrack where twenty of them raped her. She caught both syphilis and gonorrhoea. A prisoner who worked with her comments, “Her experience was not unique in Kolyma.”**(p. 182)

As with all of Conquest’s books, he did not account for the significance of Jews, or their interests. For instance, according to the Jewish researcher and publicist Arkady Vaksberg in *Lubyanka* (Stockholm, 1993), **eleven out of twelve chiefs of camps in the Gulag were Jews**. The most infamous of them were Naftali Frenkel and Matvei Berman (who are credited as the inventors of the Gulag system), Aaron Soltz, Yakov Rappaport, and Lazar Kogan. Obviously, it wouldn’t make sense for Russians to be so cruel to each other. In my view, **the Jews in Russia had an animus against Russians**, which is reflected, for example, in Jewish literature about pre-‘Soviet’ Russia. **Conquest, subservient to mainstream discourse, mentioned Auschwitz-Birkenau as a similar death camp system. Conquest was totally blind to the cornucopia of amenities at Auschwitz, now laughed at by revisionists as a “horror Disneyland”**. Conquest was disgraced by the lack of publicisation of the mass killings in the West, but he did not understand that the censorship was Jewish.

Another shortcoming of this book is that Conquest did not account for the raw materials, particularly gold, that were extracted at Kolyma. Conquest cited an estimate that every ton of Kolyma gold cost about a thousand human lives.(p. 110) The Jews in Russia had an appalling record of economic theft and mismanagement. For example, the historian Igor Bunich in his book *The Party’s Gold* (1994) mentioned that (the Jew) Lenin had collected 400 million roubles in gold from Kiev, 500 million from Odessa and 100 million from Kharkov, but he felt absolutely no inclination to give any of it away to the starving. He announced—“We have no money!” Jewish Chekist thugs also stole jewelry during house searches.

Conquest reflected on the Kolyma death camps and how they encompassed the ‘Soviet’ (i.e. Jewish) attitude towards ‘goyim’—**“The vast death factory of the Kolyma camps is, in fact, to be attributed flatly and directly to the political system which created it. It was, by its sheer scale, by the petty murderousness of such regulations as the banning of felt boots, by its whole attitude and method, more than a mere negative attribute of that system. On the contrary, it was that system, carried to its logical end. Kolyma—the threat and actuality of Kolyma—was the way the Soviet government imposed itself on its subjects.”**(pp. 230–231) Conquest estimated that the Kolyma death camp system cost 3 million lives—a conservative estimate.(p. 227)