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Remembering Andrew Gregorovich (1935–2022)¹

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On 26 February 2022, Andrew Gregorovich, my long-time colleague, the renowned editor of the popular magazine *Forum: A Ukrainian Review*, passed away in Toronto at the age of 87. He had been ill for some years, suffering from a progressive form of dementia, which slowly cut him off from his colleagues and prevented him from witnessing the tragic events of early 2022 that culminated in the horrific Russian attack and war against Ukraine. This timing of his passing was a kind of blessing, of course, as Andrew was a convinced Ukrainian patriot, who would have been devastated by these events. He would have well known that they were a game-changer that would forever alter the political and cultural landscape of his beloved Ukraine, of which he was so proud.

¹ This is a longer version of the obituary that appeared in *Novyi shliakh/New Pathway* (Toronto) no. 12, 24 Mar. 2022, p. 12; no. 13, 31 Mar. 2022, p. 12.

This great concern for his ancestral European homeland is especially remarkable as Andrew had been born in Canada of the eldest or “pioneer” wave of immigrants to this country from eastern Europe. By 2022, his family had been in Canada for well over a century, yet it clearly retained this concern for its ancestral homeland and maintained its hereditary local Bukovinian traditions quite assiduously. Andrew was born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, a wheat-growing province in western Canada. Saskatchewan is one of the prairie provinces of Canada that had been settled largely in the 1890s and early twentieth century by country folk from eastern Europe. Ukrainians formed a large part of this immigration, in fact, the largest, and most of them settled along the northern rim of the Prairies, the so-called poplar belt, from Manitoba, through Saskatchewan to Alberta.

Andrew’s father, “Oleksander” in Ukrainian (Alexander in English) managed to acquire some higher education and was a schoolteacher during World War I and afterwards. He was also a Ukrainian patriot and travelled across the Prairies quite a bit, selling, for example, the books of the great Ukrainian historian, Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi, the head of the revolutionary Ukrainian Central Rada or parliament of 1917–18. Oleksander personally corresponded with Hrushevs'kyi, who relied on him for financial support for the Ukrainian Sociological Institute that he set up in Vienna in the early 1920s, after the historian was forced into exile by the Bolsheviks.

Andrew was always very proud that his family had this personal association with the first president of independent Ukraine during the Revolution. At the same time, Andrew never forgot his Prairie roots and in later years he developed a keen interest in Canadian and American ethnic history, to which he contributed by editing *Forum: A Ukrainian Review* and compiling copious bibliographies in the field of ethnic studies. In fact, he was one of the very few prominent Ukrainian scholar/enthusiasts in North America, who was able to make significant contributions to both North American studies and to Ukrainian studies in Europe.

In later years, Andrew’s family moved to eastern Canada, and he studied at McMaster University in Hamilton, of which he was a proud alumnus. He had always been interested in Ukrainian history and seriously considered doing graduate work (perhaps a PhD) under the famous Yale historian, George Vernadsky, who was of Ukrainian origin. Vernadsky, in fact, was at that time just about the only such Ukrainian-origin historian of Russia who held a university-level position in the United States. But for some reason, Andrew did not carry out this project and chose to do his graduate work in Library Science. He quickly got a position at the University of Toronto Library and remained there throughout his professional career, eventually rising to become a Department Head, primarily interested in new acquisitions.

During this career as a librarian, Andrew maintained his strong interest in Ukrainian history and was instrumental in building up the University of Toronto collection in that field. He became part of a small coterie of professors and university staff that promoted Ukrainian history, literature, sociology, theology, and other studies at that institution. Eventually, the University of Toronto became the foremost centre of Ukrainian studies in Canada and one of the field's best in the entire Western world.

I first met Andrew in 1976, during the first academic year of my PhD studies in history at the University of Toronto. I had come to Toronto to do Russian and eastern European history with an emphasis on Ukrainian topics, but none of my professors specialized in Ukrainian history or even knew much about it, being either specialists in Russia or Poland. So, meeting Andrew, with his strong Ukrainian interests, was quite a break for me. True, he was a librarian and only an amateur historian, but by that time, he was already editing *Forum* and contributing in his own way to Ukrainian historical studies.

I met him in the Saint Vladimir Institute Library, which is a private Ukrainian cultural institution near the university. Andrew was a founder of that library and oversaw its development across the initial years of its existence. I consulted him for an article that I had written about Alexander Herzen, a nineteenth-century Russian liberal who (unlike most of his fellow Russian intellectuals of that time) was willing to concede the existence and possible independence of Ukraine. I had translated Herzen's essay on this subject for possible publication and was astounded to learn that Andrew had beat me to it and published the most important parts of that essay in *Forum*. He modestly offered me a copy, which was a translation that I thought paralleled my own, and I used it to improve my work, finish it, and publish with a lengthy introduction and notes in the newly-founded *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, which, like *Forum*, was edited in Toronto, though published by an institution based elsewhere.

Thereafter, I began contributing to *Forum* itself and did pieces on Ukraine's contacts with the Middle East, on the Great Famine of 1932–33 (now usually called the Holodomor), and on the historians Volodymyr Antonovych, Mykola Kostomarov, Dmytro Iavornyts'kyi, and others. Andrew was always open to accepting my articles and willingly published them, even though his interpretations of Ukrainian history, I thought, were usually more nationalistic than mine. At times, this led to some tensions between us, as he was in the habit of changing the texts to something closer to what he believed I should write. But this did not stop us from collaborating, and over the years, if I am not mistaken, I became the most prolific of all contributors to *Forum*, excepting only Andrew himself.

Andrew also helped me on occasion by providing me with rare or unpublished materials useful in my historical work. So, when I was working

on my PhD thesis, he loaned me his personal file on Hrushevs'kyi, who was the topic of my thesis. The file contained his dad's correspondence with the great historian, and many of Hrushevs'kyi's hard-to-get open letters to the Ukrainian Canadian and Ukrainian American press during the 1920s, when he lived in exile in Vienna. Many years later, I passed on copies of most of this material to Lubomyr Wynar of the Ukrainian Historical Association in the USA, and upon his death, I believe that they were transferred to the historical institute at the University in Ostroh in Ukraine, where they are probably preserved to the present day.

One of Andrew's major historical interests was the collection and publication of western European and American materials about Ukraine. It was an interest that we both shared: he, probably because during most of his life materials from Ukraine itself were very much censored and suppressed by the Soviet authorities, and me, because I had come to Ukrainian studies without the language, only learned it in university, and could then read those materials in English, French, and German much more easily than those in the Slavonic languages. After trips that I made across the Iron Curtain to Eastern Europe in 1975 and 1981, I shared some of my acquisitions with Andrew, and he was quite glad to see them. These included books, prints, and maps, as well as some school atlases used in the Ukrainian SSR, in which Andrew was quite interested.

Andrew also did the same for me. For example, when I was preparing my Hrushevs'kyi manuscript for publication, I collected many pictures and photographs of Hrushevs'kyi to be included in the volume. But I was unable to get a good picture of the Central Rada Building in Kyiv where that Ukrainian parliament had gathered. Even when I visited Kyiv in 1981, getting such a picture proved difficult as I was closely watched by the Soviets and kept busy with other things. Moreover, there was a rumour in the city that the Central Rada building would be torn down after the new Lenin Museum that was then being constructed was finished. So, I came up with a blank on that score, and like the local intelligentsia, was quite disturbed about the muted destruction of that historic structure.

But I eventually learned that Andrew Gregorovich had already printed an excellent photo of the Central Rada Building in his *Forum: A Ukrainian Review*, which he had taken on one of his rare visits to Soviet Ukraine. I asked him if I could use it in my book. He agreed but stipulated that I should not credit either him or *Forum* as he was dependent upon the Soviets for much of his material and did not want to see his sources compromised.

I did so and published the photo with a vague credit to a "Private Collection, Toronto," as he requested. Of course, Gregorovich, who in a non-political magazine like *Forum* then walked a slippery enough tightrope between promoting authentic Ukrainian culture and yielding to unsavory Communist influences, had to be careful in what he published. In general, he

simply ignored the existence of the Communist dictatorship, its idols, and its crimes. Shortly before the end of the Cold War, he once told me how proud he was that till then he had hardly ever mentioned either Lenin or Stalin on the pages of *Forum*.

Another personal anecdote about Gregorovich is relevant here. In the 1970s, while already the long-standing editor of *Forum*, he told me of his trip to Soviet Ukraine less than a decade before, that is, during the Shelest thaw, but still, at a time when most Ukrainian intellectuals in the West were unable or unwilling to do so. Wanting to establish contact with Ukrainian historians and get materials on Ukrainian history for his magazine, he visited the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences Institute of History in Kyiv and there met the Ukrainian historian, Volodymyr Holobuts'kyi (1903–93), who was the distinguished author of a major Soviet history of the Zaporizhian Cossacks, which, however, he had to publish in the Russian language. As that history used many of the Stalinist concepts then incumbent upon Soviet historians, it was largely panned in the West as Communist propaganda. But it was still consulted by non-Ukrainian Western historians who could read Russian, but not Ukrainian, and wanted to know something about the subject.

Holobuts'kyi and a small group of other members of the academy greeted Gregorovich warmly. But to speak freely about their mutual interests, Holobuts'kyi and a few of the others spirited him away to a private room deep in the building, where they were not watched, and where there were no microphones. Gregorovich spoke to me respectfully of Holobuts'kyi, who, of course, in the West was generally seen as simply repeating the Party line on Ukrainian historical questions. However, even limited opportunities, such as that afforded to Holobuts'kyi prior to Gregorovich's visit to Ukraine, almost completely disappeared after the fall of Shelest in 1972. For example, about the same time that Gregorovich visited Soviet Ukraine, the Academy announced that it would be publishing a great but carefully selected four-volume edition of Dmytro Iavornyts'kyi's *Collected Works*. Iavornyts'kyi was a respected Ukrainian historian who in the 1890s had published an important *History of the Zaporizhian Cossacks* in three volumes. He had managed to survive the revolution and lived on to do some further important work in the 1920s. He was never outrightly condemned by the Communist authorities, but he came under suspicion in Stalin's time and died in relative obscurity in the 1940s. Under Shelest's protection, those Kyiv historians hoped to fully "rehabilitate" Iavornyts'kyi and give Ukrainian Cossack history its due. Gregorovich himself was quite excited by the news and at that time published a full-page notice about the project in *Forum*.

However, the fall of Shelest put an end to this project as well. That four-volume edition of Iavornyts'kyi's works never appeared. But about fifteen years later, the Gorbachev reforms reached Ukraine, historians and other scholars were given more freedom, and Iavornyts'kyi's great *History* was one

of the first monuments of Ukrainian history-writing to be republished. At that time, it came out in both the Russian language of the original edition and also a new and beautifully illustrated Ukrainian edition. Both appeared in three volume sets. The first contained some original illustrations by Ilya Repin and others, and the second augmented these with many exquisitely selected additional drawings and illustrations taken from various sources and many of the works of the very best Ukrainian artists and illustrators. Andrew himself once told me that he had managed to acquire the entire original Iavornyts'kyi edition (dated back to the 1880s) for his private library during his time as acquisitions librarian at the University of Toronto. But in general, these types of scholarly altercations around politics were unavoidable during the Cold War.

In later years, of course, Ukrainian independence and the progression of democratic reforms opened many new vistas for Ukrainian scholars in the West, and Andrew became more active than ever in his favourite publishing fields. These included reprinting rare antiquarian maps of Ukraine, old prints, and excerpts from older books in English that described things Ukrainian. These varied from old prints depicting the Zaporizhian Cossacks to extracts from Mark Twain's book titled *Innocents Abroad* describing his voyage through Russia and Ukraine to the Crimea in the nineteenth century.

About photographs and pictures, Andrew himself was an intrepid photographer. He tried to attend as many conferences as possible and could often be seen with camera hanging from his neck taking pictures of speakers, lecturers, and participants in these conferences. I clearly remember how active he was at the great conference on Ukrainian-Polish relations held at McMaster University in the late 1970s. The photos were excellent and documented the conference quite well. Later, Andrew published some of the best in *Forum*.

After retirement from the university library, and indeed, even after the closure of *Forum*, Andrew continued to write and publish. During this last period of his life, he published small books on the Sultana Roxelana of the Ottoman Empire and Queen Anna of France. The former was the Ukrainian wife of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, who was called "Roxelana" by Europeans and "Hürrem Sultan" (the "cheerful" one) by the Turks, though Ukrainians seem to like the spelling "Roksolana" best. Queen Anna was one of the daughters of Iaroslav the Wise of Kyiv, who was noted for marrying his daughters off to Western monarchs.

But I believe that his most beloved project of these later years was his *Cossack Bibliography*. In a way, this book was the culmination of his lifework, for he had been collecting Cossack materials, books, articles, prints, and paintings throughout his long career as a librarian and as a private scholar/enthusiast afterwards. This volume was particularly rich in citations from Western sources, which had always attracted his attention. It also

contained numerous images on the Cossack theme including the title pages of many books, and depictions of the Cossacks by various engravers and painters. The bulk of the book dealt with Ukrainian Cossack history, and Andrew clearly distinguished between Ukrainian and Russian Cossacks. He did, however, list books that treated both subjects and a few that were primarily directed at the history of the Russian Cossacks. Unfortunately, this book was marred by several embarrassing printing and other errors. Andrew seems not to have had a literary editor to correct his mistakes, and these mistakes were perhaps in part a result of the dementia from which he suffered towards the end of his life. This *Cossack Bibliography* remains, however, a useful and interesting volume, and a real contribution to the literature.

Across his life, Andrew was involved with both of the older big Ukrainian organizations in Canada. These were the institutions associated with the Orthodox Church such as Saint Vlad's (loosely linked to the Ukrainian Self-Reliance League of Canada, which was largely oriented toward Liberal Party) and the non-religious/secular Ukrainian National Federation (UNF, whose first president had been his father), which was openly nationalist and oriented toward the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. On the one hand, this might have reflected his background coming from an Orthodox family from Bukovina, and, on the other hand, his clearly nationalist beliefs, which accorded well with the tone of the UNF.

At various times, Andrew had held certain honorary/administrative positions such as president of the Ontario Library Association, member of the Governing Council of the University of Toronto, and the president of the Taras Shevchenko Museum in that same city. He was also awarded the Taras Shevchenko Medal from the Ukrainian Canadian Congress for his contributions to the Ukrainian community in Canada.

All the above put together are achievements that are rarely found in one person. There is, however, little doubt that he deserved them. A professional librarian, an amateur but prolific historian/publisher, a skilled photographer, and an untiring collector of Ukrainian memorabilia, he made a clear and lasting impression upon the Ukrainian communities in both Canada and the USA. His literary legacy remains in his many articles, books, printed maps, reprints, bibliographies, and files of unpublished materials. It is to be hoped that not only these, but also other parts of his voluminous and precious archives, will eventually be ordered, housed, and properly preserved for the use of future generations. That would, indeed, be an appropriate monument to his life of devotion to the Ukrainian cause.

Select Bibliography of Works by Andrew Gregorovich

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Figure 1. Andrew Gregorovich (left) with the Welsh historian of Europe, Norman Davies, at the Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre, Toronto, circa 2003. Photo by Frank Sysyn.

