

Gregory Grossman, 1921–2014

Our dear friend and colleague Gregory Grossman passed away on August 14, 2014, at the age of ninety-three. Greg was a towering figure in the study of the Soviet economy. He was a polymath who understood the political, ideological, social, and cultural underpinnings of economic life in the USSR; a polyglot who commanded five languages; and a piercing analyst who identified the key mechanisms driving economic behavior in the Soviet Union. He was also an unusually generous and cordial colleague, mentor, and friend.

Grossman was born in Kiev on July 5, 1921. In early 1923, the family fled chaos and famine, escaping to Harbin, Manchuria, after a month-long journey on the Trans-Siberian Railway. After completing British Grammar School in 1937 in Tientsin, China, he headed to San Francisco aboard a Japanese ocean liner en route to attend the University of California, Berkeley. He received his undergraduate degree in economics from UC Berkeley in 1942. Then he joined the United States Army and served in combat within the European theater during World War II. Following the war, Greg enrolled in graduate work at Harvard University, receiving a PhD in economics in 1952. He then returned to Berkeley as a faculty member, where he spent his entire career. He formally retired in 1993 but remained active in scholarly activities on campus for years thereafter.

In the late 1950s, Grossman cofounded (with H. Franz Schurmann) a faculty seminar on the comparative study of communist societies. This proved to be the longest-running faculty seminar in the history of UC Berkeley, disbanding only in the early mid-1990s. In the 1960s, Greg served as chair of the Center for Slavic and East European Studies at UC Berkeley, and in 1981 he served as president of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (now ASEES).

But the Slavic studies field will principally remember Greg as an eminent and path-breaking scholar. His work set the agenda for generations of scholars who sought to understand the dynamics of the USSR's economic system. In 1960, he published *Soviet Statistics of Physical Output of Industrial Commodities: Their Compilation and Quality* (Princeton University Press), a seminal book that showed the field how to get beyond Soviet censorship to use statistics published by the regime in revealing ways. In a landmark article in 1963, he coined the term *the command economy* and analyzed its dynamics, thus teaching generations of scholars how to think about a Soviet-type economy and how to understand its predominant mechanisms. In another landmark article, in 1977, he coined the term *the second economy* and demonstrated how interactions between the formal and informal economies would lead to spreading black markets. (Many students use these terms today, perhaps unaware that Greg Grossman coined them, as he also coined the evocative term *the solidary society* to depict the philosophical underpinnings of the command economy.) Greg worked with Professor Vladimir Treml, of Duke University, and others to conduct more than a decade of research on all aspects of the second economy, gathering massive amounts of data based on both documentary evidence and interviews with émigrés from the USSR. At one point, Greg could tell you the going price for purchasing an official position in one or another region of the country! As his colleague and contemporary Benjamin Ward observed, "There was a period in the Cold War of maybe twenty years in which Greg was the most knowledgeable person in the world about the Soviet economy, as several Soviet economists said after the fact"—that is, after Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms al-

lowed them to speak freely. For these varied works, in 1991 Greg received a lifetime achievement award from AAASS.

Now let me turn to features of Greg Grossman's personality, for they were as meaningful to his colleagues as his scholarship was to the field at large. One such feature was his generosity. He was the consummate colleague, always ready to provide requested feedback on one's work. I never heard him say he was too busy to help. And the number of times that authors of important articles thanked Greg for his comments on earlier drafts is legion. But his generosity extended as well to his efforts to assist émigrés in need—as when his intervention made it possible for a disabled Alexander Wat to compose his massive memoir, *Mon siècle: Confession d'un intellectuel européen* (1989), through interviews with UCB colleague Czesław Miłosz. A similar generosity of spirit informed his invitation to a group of student Trotskyists in the early 1970s to come to his home repeatedly to discuss their views on the Soviet Union. He found them interesting and willing to discuss ideas.

As important as Greg's generosity was his lack of pretension. He was the consummate gentleman at all times. He never took himself too seriously. He never tried to put anyone else down. He wasn't envious of others' success. In this vein, he was never aggressive when presenting his scholarship in a faculty seminar. He just let the logic and the evidence speak for itself. And with the passage of time he was almost always proven right. Greg's unpretentiousness also shone through late in life, when he was asked what explained his successes. His response: "Luck . . . luck . . . and luck." The three crucial pieces of luck he referred to were his immediate family's escape from famine, pogroms, and deadly political persecution in Ukraine in 1921; his surviving WWII with his life, despite very nearly being taken out by errant rifle fire and a grenade; and a fatal heart disease diagnosis in 2005 that, several months later, was proven to have been incorrect.

Greg was also a great wit. He loved to play with words and phrases. My personal favorite was his summing up of the debate "Was Stalin Really Necessary?" regarding the USSR's modernization. Combining a pithy summary of the area studies debate with the broader methodological distinction between "necessary" and "sufficient" conditions for causation, Greg asked, in just eleven words, "If Stalin was not really necessary, would Bukharin have been sufficient?" His wit could also be self-effacing. Despite enjoying serious conversations with Trotskyist students, he did not enjoy disruption and tumult that suppressed free speech. When asked why he taught his classes at 8 a.m., he responded, "The revolutionaries do not get up until noon!"

But while unpretentious, gracious, and witty, Greg could never have achieved what he did without his enormous determination and self-discipline. I recall all those Soviet newspapers he read on a daily basis for decades on end. One vignette poignantly illustrates this feature of Greg's personality. It was an October afternoon in 1989. I was participating in a faculty seminar held at the Berkeley City Club for a visiting team of Japanese specialists on the USSR. Greg was presenting on the current state of the Soviet economy. And then the Loma Prieta earthquake struck! The building was swaying and trembling. Some of us ran for shelter in the doorway. Others got underneath the long seminar table. When I reached the doorway, I looked back to see what was happening, and there was Greg, still in his chair and still presenting!

Greg Grossman was an original. He will be missed but never forgotten.

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 September 2013