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**MEMORY LANE MILESTONES: PROFESSOR WOLF BEILIS,
AN OUTSTANDING UKRAINIAN ARABIST**

At the beginning of September of 1966, when I was a first-year student of the Department of History and Philology of Luhansk Taras Shevchenko Pedagogical Institute, I first met Wolf Mendel'yovych Beilis. In those days, the academic year of first-year students started with agricultural work on the kolkhoz fields, and our group was not an exception. On September 1st, we participated in an all-Institute convocation, where we were congratulated on joining the family of students and, then, came home to prepare warm clothes for the forthcoming agricultural work. In a day, prospective historians, as well as many other students, went to the kolkhoz by open trucks. During that month, we had to pick tomatoes, onions, carrots, watermelons, and other bounty of nature. A faculty member was assigned to each group of students. It was Wolf Beilis who supervised our group of about fifty students.

Hardly could we imagine that Beilis was a famous Soviet arabist, who knew ten languages, graduated from Kyiv University, was a student of the outstanding scholar Taufik Havrylovych Kezma, and a Candidate of Historical Sciences. Shortly before the described events, in 1964, he moved to Luhansk on a competitive basis from Chornobyl, where he was a school principal. From the very beginning, we noted his intelligence, care and respect for students. Somehow seamlessly and gently organizing our work, staying with us during the entire day (it should be noted that he was a disabled war veteran of second degree), he came to know each student and soon had an accurate picture of the entire freshman class, as well as of the relationships that were established in the field.

As soon as we came back from the kolkhoz and started our classes, we found out that Wolf Mendel'yovych (students and colleagues called him Volodymyr Mykhailovych) was the supervisor of our academic group, remaining in this position until our graduation. As such, he communicated with us not only in class, but during extracurricular time as well; after all, he was a true supervisor, the one who took his duties seriously. He was a remarkable professor, whose lectures on Ancient Eastern History, History of Greece and Rome, as well as Medieval History were of great interest. For two years, he was giving these immense courses of lectures almost without using his notes. He also held discussion sessions on these courses. Later on, Wolf Mendel'yovych confessed, though, that Ancient Eastern History was the only discipline he was good at. But we admired his encyclopedic knowledge of the slavery in Greece, the Roman Empire, Teutons and Franks, Arabs and crusades. His eloquent speech was adorned with Arabic proverbs – a storage of human wisdom.

Such lectures inspired us to prepare seminar tasks to the best of our ability to avoid embarrassment in front of Wolf Mendel'yovych: we read the most recent scientific literature, would many times consult the multivolume *Vsemirnaya Istoriya (World History)*. The colloquiums that were held by Wolf Beilis on the most interesting books, for example, a well-known *Bogi, Grobnitsy, Uchyonyye (Gods, Tombs, Scholars)* by K. Keram, were remarkable. This said, it was a fundamental professional training. Wolf Beilis also gave two examinations: Ancient History and Middle Ages. As the exams were conducted properly (they were oral), we had to answer both the exam card questions and some additional ones to show our knowledge. And I am proud that I had only excellent grades in the disciplines, taught by Beilis.

Being our supervisor, Wolf Mendel'yovych attended with us November and First of May rallies, as well as various university events; he also held so called political classes. These classes, aimed to our political education, were obligatory and were conducted every week in all groups on the topics, approved by the Party Committee. Wolf Mendel'yovych organized these classes delicately. He understood

that this “moulding” is boring for students and tried to find a challenge in a topic that seemed to be uninteresting, even primitive, for historians.

In February of 1969, I was placed in school No. 36 for my teaching practice. My instructor was Vitaly Ovsiyovych Puns’kyi, a well-known in Ukraine history teacher, innovator, and an interesting person. I was also a supervisor of a class led by Eugenia Markivna Beilis, a Russian Language and Literature teacher. This is how I met Wolf Mendel’yovych’s wife, a nice and amiable woman. Many times I visited them in their modest apartment full of books; they understood that it was difficult for a student living in a dorm to organize his household chores, so they often treated me to a meal.

At the end of April of 1970, Wolf Mendel’yovych gave a speech during our commencement ceremony, and we applauded him loudly and just would not allow our beloved professor to leave the stage. In the evening of June 30th, in the gym, we had the tables laid and our professors, led by Vsevolod Hryhorovych Pichuhin, Rector of the Institute, congratulated us on our graduation in an informal way. And already in September we became colleagues.

In those days, the Department of History was on the 4th floor of the only academic building the Institute had. The conditions were rather challenging. As the Institute lacked classrooms, the Departments of History of the USSR, History of the Ukrainian SSR, where I worked as an assistant, and the Department of World History, chaired by Wolf Mendel’yovych, were in the same room. We saw each other almost every day; he was interesting to talk to. Although, in as little as a month, I had to leave the Department as I entered a Ph.D. program, we remained in touch through the School’s party organization, to which we both belonged. At different times, Wolf Mendel’yovych was a Secretary, a Member of the Politburo (he joined the party in 1957 while he was an assistant principal of a comprehensive school and remained its member until 1991). Now we met during party meetings, every month I would pay my membership fees to him, and he would ask me about my dissertation. In December of 1973, after I had defended my thesis in Kyiv University, he came to our Department to congratulate me. To tell the truth, I was flattered.

Wolf Beilis, on the other hand, never made his research ambitions public. When working on his doctoral dissertation, he did not take research leaves and, despite a great amount of various tasks and immense teaching load, he prepared dissertation and, in June of 1975, successfully presented it to the Joint Council of the Department of Social Sciences of the Academy of Sciences of the Azerbaijan SSR. In May of 1978, Wolf Mendel'yovych was awarded professorship and, in October, became Chair of the Department of World History. The following year, I became Chair of the Department of the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. We began communicating as department chairs and members of the Institute's Academic Council. The only difference was that the Department of World History was School-affiliated, whereas the Department of the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was an all-Institute department. And yet again, Wolf Beilis supported me as a young colleague.

During our meetings, we discussed both scientific and everyday problems. He took a lively interest in my academic and personal life. In his turn, he was proud of his only son Mark, or Marik, as he lovingly called him. In 1978, Mark graduated with distinction from the Department Physics of our Institute. He was a talented mathematician. His student research was awarded the first prize on an all-Ukraine competition. Right after graduation, he became a member of the All-Union Symposium on the Theory of Semigroups.

Working as a math teacher in school and, simultaneously, as an assistant of the Department of Algebra and Mathematical Analysis, Mark participated in *Hertsenovskiye Chteniya* (Readings in Herzen State Pedagogical Institute in Leningrad). He was noticed there and invited to enter a Ph.D. program in 1980. However, a tragedy occurred that summer. While studying for the examination and preparing for his wedding, Mark started jogging, which was popular at that time. He jogged in the center of the city, on the 16th Lane Street, where Wolf Mendel'yovych had a new apartment in a multistoried building. One day, he had cardiopulmonary arrest during his exercise. The ambulance, called by passers-by, came to the young

man, who fell on the lawn, only to pronounce him dead. It was a crushing blow to Wolf Mendel'yovych, from which he never recovered until the end of his life.

Son's death got Wolf Beilis down. He stopped caring about his health, started smoking, and he smoked a lot, any words of condolence were inappropriate, and his work became his refuge. Until April of 1989, he chaired the Department, supervised post-graduate studies, and published in the leading scholarly journals. His articles devoted to the Arabic historical sources and the information they give on the Eastern Europe, Caucasia, as well as the connections of the ancient Slavonic people with the East were highly valued in the scholarly world. He authored a considerable number of encyclopedic articles in *Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsyclopediya (Great Soviet Encyclopedia)*, *Sovetskaya Istoricheskaya Entsyclopediya (Soviet Historical Encyclopedia)*, *Ukrayins'ka Radyans'ka Entsyclopediya (Ukrainian Soviet Encyclopedia)*, and *Kratkaya Literaturnaya Entsyclopediya (Brief Literary Encyclopedia)*. In a series of publications titled *Pamyatniki Pis'mennosti Vostoka (Eastern Literary Texts)*, which was an outstanding achievement of Soviet oriental studies and was commended by the entire scholarly world, the Arabic texts and Russian translations of the books by Al-Zahrawi *On Surgery and Instruments* and al-Nasawī's *Biography of Sultan Jalal ad-Din Mingburnu* were edited by Wolf Beilis.

Wolf Mendel'yovych was a member of the association of the Institute's faculty and staff members in January of 1989, which elected me as Rector of the Institute. He endorsed me because he was sure that I could, better than other two candidates, lead the Institute in times of economic, social, and political turmoil. Later, he supported the course of democratic reforms in the university that we implemented, provided valuable guidance, gave speeches during meetings and conferences of the association of the Institute's faculty and staff members. His authority and knowledge were widely recognized.

Unfortunately, he had to leave the chairmanship of the Department, but recommended a worthy candidate for this post. Viktor Hryhorovych Kryukov was his student, an arabist, who is now Doctor of Historical Sciences, Full Professor. Wolf

Beilis's health continued to deteriorate, his age (he was 66) and four war wounds were beginning to take their toll on him.

At the end of 1993, labor contracts were introduced in higher educational establishments and, in March of 1994, Wolf Mendel'yovych signed one too. It allowed me to help him when, in September of 1995, he had to take only half of his usual teaching load for health reasons. Soon thereafter, he was sent to the specialized cardiology hospital, and his family almost lost its income. Salaries were extremely low, his professorship rate was less than 9 million karbovanetzs, a misery amount of money in those days. There were no special academic pensions, so his allowance was modest. Eugenia Markivna came to see me (Wolf Beilis did not know about this visit) to tell about his poor health and financial hardship. To support the scholar, I altered the terms of his contract: despite the fact that the highest allowed bonus was to be no more than 25%, I found means to double his salary using the extrabudgetary funds that were just made available to the Institute.

In June of 1997, I left rectorship and became the Chair of the Department of the History of Ukraine. And, yet again, Wolf Mendel'yovych was with me. I do remember his encouraging words, his support, our meetings on the 4th floor of dormitory No. 1, which housed the Department of History, and how difficult it was for him to come upstairs.

I am not an expert in Oriental studies like Wolf Mendel'yovych, who was an authority in Ukrainian Oriental studies, prominent arabist known all over the world. In my opinion, our warm, trusting relations, which spanned about 35 years, were based on something else. It is possible that he had regard for me believing that I had significant academic potential. Some events of my father's life were similar to his: in July of 1941, being a student, my father was conscripted for military service; in the autumn of 1944, he was badly wounded in Riga and became a disabled war veteran of second degree. Maybe, it was because of the tragedy that we both experienced: in 1989, I lost my 19-year-old son to cancer. It is hard to say.

In general, Wolf Beilis was reserved and prudent. I think it was the consequence of the war, which he told me a lot about. Wolf Mendel'yovych was a

first-year student when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Drafted in the army, he was sent to Tomsk Artillery School, where he completed officers' accelerated training and was awarded a rank of second lieutenant. Being a platoon commander and, then, an artillery battery commander, since July of 1942 he fought near Voronezh, the Don River, and in Donbas. In February of 1943, during German counter-attack against our army, which started to liberate Ukraine, he was wounded in the stomach in a fierce battle near Pavlohrad. His parents, who were evacuated from Kyiv to Kuzbass, received an official statement on his death.

Survived battery soldiers saved him from the imminent death and, then, members of the underground provided medical care and sheltered him in a house in the suburb of Pavlohrad. When several German soldiers entered the house, he could not move. He was in a distant room and was ready to shoot back. Fortunately, they found a basket of eggs on the table in another room. Having taken it, they left the house without searching it. However, in August of 1943, when the Soviet army came, Wolf Beilis was sent to NKVD camp No. 258 for special background check. An order "to prove his fighting qualities" followed, which sent him, essentially, to death: Wolf Mendel'yovych was appointed commander of an anti-tank unit of the storm battalion of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, the soldiers of which were in the forefront of breakthrough operations.

For all the horrors of war Wolf Beilis had to endure, including participation in the Jassy-Kishinev Operation, despite his three wounds, he ended the war as the artillery battery commander, the position he held at the beginning. This was because, when wounded, he stayed on the occupied territory. During the army discharge in 1946, he received so-called "negative" reference. For this reason, upon graduation from the university in 1950, he was sent to Kyiv Oblast' as an ordinary teacher, notwithstanding his excellent academic preparation. Working in Chornobyl', he, nevertheless, completed his part-time postgraduate studies in the Institute of History of the USSR Academy of Sciences and defended his candidate of sciences dissertation.

In the last years of his life, I met Wolf Mendel'yovych and Eugenia Markivna quite often. Every day, they would take walks not far from their house, always side by side and always good-spirited. Together, we discussed news, exchanged impressions and opinions.

For the last time I saw Wolf Mendel'yovych in his house at the beginning of January of 2001. I was working on my book featuring a collection of biographic essays about the professors of our university and wanted him to share with me some details of his life. Wolf Mendel'yovych was already terminally ill, of which few people knew, and there was not much hope that I would be able to speak to him. However, when I called, he invited me and said that he and Eugenia Markivna would be glad to see me.

Sitting at the old round table, Wolf Mendel'yovych and Eugenia Markivna, together, were telling me about their life, about what was important for them, and what they had to endure, and I, once again, applauded his extensive knowledge, the depth of his thought and wisdom. Conversation and having to sit at the table soon exhausted Wolf Mendel'yovych, but we were talking for a long time, and they just would not let me go. Deep inside me, I had a feeling that his end was near, and Eugenia Markivna told me that, during one of their walks, they had their picture taken by a professional photographer. "Just in case", she said with sadness. Leaving their house, I was heartbroken.

At parting, Wolf Mendel'yovych gave me an issue of the journal *Shidny Svit* (Eastern World) published by the Institute of Oriental Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, where he was a member of the Editorial Board. This journal contained his last article "A. P. Kovalivs'ky in Search of the Methods of Historiographic Research". Wolf Beilis wrote the following on it: "To Anatoliy Oleksiyovych as a kind keepsake and with best wishes for health and well-being". On February 15th, he passed away.

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Климов А. О. Закарбувалося в пам'яті моїй: спомини про видатного українського арабіста професора Вольфа Бейліса

Автор спогадів – професор Луганського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка Анатолій Олексійович Климов – майже 35 років був знайомий з відомим українським сходознавцем-арабістом Вольфом Мендельовичем Бейлісом, який працював у цьому університеті в 1964 – 2001 рр. У споминах ідеться, що автор уперше зустрівся з ученим у 1966 р., ще студентом на осінніх сільськогосподарських роботах, у яких тоді брали участь студенти під керівництвом викладачів. Автор ділиться своїми враженнями від викладання Вольфом Мендельовичем курсів історії стародавнього світу і середніх віків, розповідає про особливості його взаємин зі студентами.

У спогадах міститься матеріал про найбільш цікаві моменти спілкування з ученим, коли автор почав працювати викладачем вишу, про його уважне ставлення до молодих викладачів, скромність, наукову компетентність, високий професіоналізм, підтримку демократичних перетворень, що здійснювалися в навчальному закладі наприкінці 80-х – на початку 90-х рр. минулого століття. Наведено також деякі подробиці особистого життя Вольфа Мендельовича, зокрема про його участь у бойових діях під час Великої Вітчизняної війни Радянського Союзу, про останню зустріч з ученим незадовго до його смерті у 2001 р.

Ключові слова: Вольф Бейліс, українські радянські учені другої половини ХХ ст., сходознавець, історик-арабіст, Луганський національний університет.

Климов А. А. Запечатлелось в памяти моей: воспоминания о выдающемся украинском арабисте профессоре Вольфе Бейлисе

Автор воспоминаний – профессор Луганского национального университета имени Тараса Шевченко Анатолий Алексеевич Климов – почти 35 лет знал известного украинского востоковеда-арабиста Вольфа Менделевича Бейлиса, который работал в этом университете в 1964 – 2001 гг. В своих воспоминаниях он рассказывает, что впервые встретился с ученым в 1966 г., еще будучи студентом, на осенних сельскохозяйственных работах, в которых тогда принимали участие студенты под руководством преподавателей. Автор делится своими впечатлениями от преподавания Вольфом Менделевичем курсов истории древнего мира и средних веков, от общении со студентами.

В воспоминаниях повествуется о встречах с ученым в период, когда автор стал преподавателем этого же вуза, о внимательном отношении Вольфа Менделевича к молодым преподавателям, его скромности, научной компетентности, высоком профессионализме, поддержке демократических преобразований, осуществлявшихся в учебном заведении в конце 80-х – начале 90-х гг. прошлого века. Приводятся некоторые подробности личной жизни Вольфа Менделевича, в частности, об участии в боевых действиях во время Великой Отечественной войны Советского Союза, о последней встрече с ученым незадолго до его смерти в 2001 г.

Ключевые слова: Вольф Бейлис, украинские советские ученые второй половины ХХ в., востоковед, историк-арабист, Луганский национальный университет.

Klymov A. O. Memory Lane Milestones: Professor Wolf Beilis, an Outstanding Ukrainian Arabist

The author of the memoirs, Anatoliy Klymov, Full Professor of Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University, for about 35 years personally knew Wolf Beilis, a famous Ukrainian orientalist-arabist, who worked at the University since 1964

through 2001. The author recalls that he first met the scholar in 1966, when, as a student, he participated in the fall semester agricultural work under the supervision of the faculty, prominent among who was Professor Beilis. He is sharing his impressions of Wolf Beilis's courses on Ancient and Medieval History, as well as his interactions with students.

The memoirs also feature the most fascinating moments of the author's communication with the scholar during the period when he became a member of the faculty of Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University. Professor Beilis always cared for young professors, was modest, highly competent as a scholar, and professional. He enthusiastically supported democratic changes that were implemented at Luhansk National University at the end of the 1980s – beginning of the 1990s.

Some details of Wolf Beilis's personal life are given, including his participation in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union. The last meeting of the author with the scholar shortly before his death in 2001 is covered as well.

Key words: Wolf Beilis, Soviet Ukrainian scholars of the second half of the 20th Century, orientalist, historian arabist, Luhansk National University.

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