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### **In memory of Oleh Havrylyshyn**

#### **The broken mirror and the beginning of a beautiful friendship!**

Oleh Havrylyshyn was one of the few people who were at the same time: an academic scholar par excellence, a practitioner in transition economies (as a Deputy Minister in Ukraine) and a gentle and warm human being. Some might call it an impossible trinity, paraphrasing the famous concept from international economics. But he somehow managed to achieve it all simultaneously, naturally and with grace.

I do not intend to mention all his academic achievements, the numerous papers and books he wrote, the professorships he held, his work at the IMF or work with the Ukrainian government after 2014. Instead, most of my memories about Oleh are linked to the Dubrovnik Economic Conference. The first one is connected with the very first conference, called: "Macroeconomic stabilization in transition economies" and Oleh was a prominent participant. It took place in early June 1995. It is important to know that at that time parts of Croatia were still occupied and the Old Town of Dubrovnik was being randomly shelled by enemy forces. The only hotel operating in Dubrovnik was the Hotel Argentina. Needless to say, after four years of war, the hotel was not in the best shape. With a total disregard for his own safety, Oleh and his wife Natalia flew to Dubrovnik to participate in the conference. Upon his arrival, he came to me, as I was one of the organizers of the Conference, and with a grave voice told me: „Marko, you are a Slav and you will understand. We (meaning his wife and him) cannot stay in the room we were given because the mirror is broken.“ For those less informed about Slavic superstitious beliefs, a broken mirror brings bad luck for seven years. Of course, Oleh was not superstitious but we did give them another room nevertheless. The broken mirror became an annual joke between us.

Since then, during subsequent conferences we would regularly sit together on the terrace of the hotel during breakfast or lunch. He was always very curious, intellectually hungry to learn more about Croatia, the transition we were in, or just discuss some economic problems. He was a much focused interlocutor and an excellent listener. Having lunch with him would always remind me of the old saying: There is no such thing as a free lunch. Oleh would require all of one's intellectual attention to engage in a discussion with him. This usually meant not paying attention to the food.

I will always remember that during every conference, and he attended more than 20 of them, in the course of almost every lecture (and there were more than a hundred in total) he would sit in the first row in the conference room. He always had a printout of the paper that was being presented in his hands with his comments written on them. He always came prepared. Usually he was among the first to ask very pointed questions. Even in the last few years, when he had trouble walking and was using a stick, he would be among the first participants in the conference room, and after the lecture would

usually leave the room vividly discussing some point from the paper with the author. I was always impressed by his knowledge and keen interest in economics.

I know that generations of young researchers benefitted greatly from his active work on the „spin-off“ from Dubrovnik conferences, the annual Young economist seminars - YES. He not only selected papers, listened and commented but was also a true mentor to many of today's researchers and economists at the Croatian National Bank and from all over Croatia .

Oleh was always a very kind, caring and gentle human being. This was maybe because of his Ukrainian origins. I remember on one occasion, while staying in Washington D.C., he invited me to his home. I was treated royally with lobsters smothered in melted butter, which he had skillfully prepared.

In spite of Slavic superstitions, it turned out that the broken mirror in the room of the Argentina hotel in June of 1995 was a stroke of luck. For me, it was the beginning of ( ) a beautiful friendship which lasted not just seven years but a quarter of a century. In the end, I can only say, thank you, Oleh, for your modesty and sharp intellect because your active participation at Dubrovnik conferences made us all not only better economists but better human beings.