

REMEMBERING ANDREI MIRONOV



27/05/14 Written by Colin Peck



RPT Associate Colin Peck remembers fixer and human rights defender Andrei Mironov (pictured left), killed in Slavyansk alongside freelance photojournalist Andrea Rocchelli (pictured right) on Saturday.

Andrei Mironov with Andrea Rocchelli were killed on Saturday in the Ukraine. The OSCE media representative, Dunja Mijatovic has demanded an investigation into their deaths, and it seems they were targeted.

Whether or not Andrei was personally targeted, a broad autocratic section of Russian society will breathe a collective sigh of relief. Andrei worked to document Russian forces and agents committing atrocities, breaking conventions and walking over human rights in Abkhazia, Georgia, Tajikistan and Chechnya. Another voice has now been silenced.

Andrei was born in 1954 and one of the last political detainees of the Soviet prison regime. Olivia Ward, Foreign Affairs Reporter for the Toronto Daily Star, [writes](#): 'Andrei dodged so many bullets in his decades of battling impunity that it is hard to believe he is gone. It would be harder still if the truth were buried along with him.'

Andrei was a slight and slightly scary person; he had wild-bird eyes. He had an unusual courage that forged physical oblivion with intellectual circumspection. During a siege of Grozny, walking along the middle of a street he became entangled in the wiring of an anti-tank bomb: the more entangled he became the worse it got. The separatist operator of the bomb lurked in a nearby doorway and we both screamed at Andrei to stop kicking the detonator. Freed from the contraption, we walked on somewhat embarrassed. Three minutes later he was berating cornered Russian troops for obeying too many orders.

In Dushanbe I became seriously feverous having recommended the delicious hotel tap water; he had grimly declined this joy and stuck to a sickly soda bottle. On my apparent death-bed he explained that the city reservoir was the first stop for police to dump their victims.

Later on the same trip I had the great honour of sharing a cell with him having got us both into trouble. Rather than discussing our exit-strategy he went into a trance: "No this window is not the regulation height from the floor. Look at this: the width is wrong too". A terrifying glimpse into gulag hell and the resistance of turning imprisonment upon itself. Andrei had great tales of befuddling prisoners with their own regulations: he held them up to their own ridiculousness.

After Rory Peck was killed there was a Muslim service held for him in the Hindu Kush. Oddly there is a Russian chapel in the cellars of our Irish home, a seldom visited throwback to an exiled community. I had the great honour of knowing Andrei Mironov; and just for him, lighting a candle in a far off chapel.

Colin Peck is an Associate of the Rory Peck Trust, and works as a journalist and lawyer. He is the brother of Rory Peck.