FOUR DECADES AGO

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At one of the last lectures of the Analytical Spaces course at the Faculty of Mathematics, 40 years ago, during the fifth year of specialization in Mathematical Analysis, Professor Martin Jurchescu came accompanied, and he told us he had decided that Cartan's theorems A and B (whose proofs were the aim of the course) should be presented to us by the young mathematician Mihnea Colţoiu. Professor Jurchescu's gesture was that of a conductor handing over the baton to a young, future great conductor. That's how I met the presently renowned mathematician, corresponding member of the Romanian Academy, Mihnea Colţoiu. I didn't know back then that in one year we would be colleagues at the Department of Mathematics of the *National Institute for Scientific and Technical Creation* (INCREST), that we would collaborate for almost four decades on joint research projects, on the organization of conferences and many other activities of the institute, and at the doctoral school. Mihnea gradually took over the baton from his professors: Constantin Banică (PhD supervisor), Cabiria Andreian Cazacu, and especially Martin Jurchescu, becoming the leader of the team of Several Complex Variables at the Institute of Mathematics. He accepted the position of head of the Complex Analysis and Potential Theory Department at the institute, continuously strengthened this group, recruiting and training young people whose doctoral theses he coordinated, and he was proud of their achievements.

Romanian mathematics loses an elite member, in full creative activity, recognised as such in the country and abroad. If I am not mistaken, he is the first Romanian mathematician, affiliated with a Romanian institution, who published an article in the Annals of Mathematics after 1990. Mihnea never lowered the bar of the scientific level and knew how to correctly assess the results of others, being able to avoid the traps of scientometric criteria. I don't know anyone who asked for Mihnea's help and did not get his support, sometimes offered with too much discretion. I was among those whom Mihnea listened to and consulted with before making delicate decisions, even in recent years, through the courtesy of my colleague Cezar Joiţa. Mihnea was giving the impression that he was feeding on mathematics, and with his characteristic discretion he exuded a kind of fragility in front of other worldly problems.

Seven or eight years ago, before retiring from her activity, madam Cabiria read me from her famous notepad a short list of fellow mathematicians that she asked me to protect whenever I could, at the top of which it was Mihnea. His disappearance leaves a void that cannot be filled in the institute and in the mathematical world.

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