

Encounters with Mischa Cotlar

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I first heard of him from a friend and fellow-student of mine Jan Odhnoff who showed me the issue of *Rev. Mat. Cuyana* 1, containing remarkable results by Mischa, that had just reached our library. Then I must have seen Mischa at a distance somewhere. Could it have been ICM58 Edinburgh? I have not been able to establish that he took part there. But for sure he was a member of ICM60 Stockholm. Again I saw him at a distance, to wit in the yard of the Mathematics Department KTH talking to somebody. I was too shy to approach him. Years later – it was during my retirement conference in Lund in 2000 – when I reminded him of this incident, he instantly answered. “Oh yes, I was speaking to Norbert Wiener.”

So I met him – and Yanny – for sure during a brief visit to Buenos Aires. He then gave me lecture notes by him, from which I learnt a lot of Harmonic Analysis. Our continued contacts were on correspondence. In 1990/91 I was the leader of a program devoted to Hankel operators at the Mittag-Leffler Institute in Djursholm outside Stockholm, to which I had invited both Yanny and him. Then Yanny went alone to Moscow to see relatives, some of which she maybe had not seen after the Revolution. One Sunday afternoon Eila and me took the Cotlars to a visit to the Stockholm Medieval Museum. This was about our last face to face contact. Several invitations to Caracas we had to turn down.

Later he engaged me in his bold *Proyecto para la Preservación de la Unidad Ciencia-Ética*, however without ever telling me what it really was about. At some stage I even got an invitation to the inauguration in Buenos Aires, which, however, never took place. Now that Mischa has passed away there seems nobody to be left to shoulder his burden.