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20 years of death

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The regretted A. Corciovei, professor of Theoretical Physics in Magurele-Bucharest, left us in 1992. He was a prominent personality of Physics in Magurele. There were also others who were prominent in Magurele. But they built in matter, and matter is perishable, little remained behind them and even less will remain in the times to come.¹ Corciovei built in spirit, and the spirit is eternal. Therefore, today, 20 years after he passed away, he continues to live in our hearts.

He performed scientific research between 1950-1970. He was the first and among the few Romanian physicists who created the Physics in Romania. Those few physicists before him and the many who subsequently emerged, learned Physics, each one according to his individual capabilities. Corciovei was creative, he brought new, original, fruitful and relevant ideas in Theoretical Physics. His scientific originality was decidedly uncommon. Not to mention his natural talent for physics and also his thorough knowledge of the fundamental principles of physics. He did not know too many things but he knew much Theoretical Physics. He will remain in the history of physics for his original theory on thin-layer quantum magnetism. No one interested in this wonderful scientific phenomenology will be able to ignore Corciovei's publications which include anisotropy field, the quantum equations of motion for the magnetization, double time-energy Green functions, the famous condition of double-cyclic chain. Though, all these are, perhaps, small and belong to a small Physics ("die schmutzige Physik", as Pauli called the Solid State Physics), they have the perfect sound of the genuine Theoretical Physics. After all, Koh-i-Noor is for surely boors. It is the small diamonds that have the power to scatter the darkness through their unmatched dazzling light. If it did not reveal our ignorance and limits, the surprising mystery of this world, Theoretical Physics would be useless and dangerous. In the 60's, the tape recorder was already available on the market and the advent of magnetic tapes arouse people's curiosity and interest. Since, back then, Romania did not have access to High Energy Physics or to Nuclear Physics, the young Corciovei decided, prompted by his peculiar, practical intelligence to deal with a physics that was more accessible, more at hand.² He clearly knew and often stated the principle according to which a great thing does not make a man great, it is a great man who makes a great thing.³ I admired him a lot for this belief. Furthermore, he distinguished the hierarchy in the science of Physics and

¹Present day renowned physicists in Magurele build in concrete, wall tiles, sandstone tiles, plature and other sands.

²Romania is a „great power” in the expensive Nuclear Physics, Spatial Physics, Astrophysics, Cosmology and lately Lasers. It could have been a great power in the cheap Solid Physics, Materials, Electronics, Theoretical Physics but did not like it: better to be stupid and bumptious than clever and happy. This was and still is the „philosophy” of Romanian politicians in Physics, in Science.

³To be compared with the dangerous lunatics of today and of all times, who believe that if they have their offices in the building of the Department of Theoretical Physics they are automatically and right away theoreticians.

saw that the Statistics is the queen. His entire life he was obsessed with the irreversibility with respect to mechanical motion.

During the 70's, Corciovei abandoned his own Physics researches and decided to devote himself to organizing the research of Theoretical Physics in Magurele. He probably felt that, as concerns his level of knowledge of Physics, he was alone; he probably felt that if he had continued he would have marginalized himself, would have become useless. He had the vocation for "building up" people. He was generous, he wanted for others to know, to also perform wonders like those he had seen, made and practised himself in Theoretical Physics. This was his second big principle, this huge generosity in sharing his professional knowledge and experience. Of course, it was doubled by a good and high self-esteem, as it is normal. Objectivity is nothing but the subjectivity of great people. Animated by this lofty ambition, he started to put his new decision into practice. He succeeded with difficulty in being accepted to give lectures (otherwise admirable) of Solid-State Physics at the Department of Physics, University of Bucharest. He insisted and succeeded with difficulty in being accepted as an associated member of the Romanian Academy. Why with difficulty? Simply, because he was valuable and arouse envy, because he wanted to build something for the good of others and thus arouse hatred. He succeeded with difficulty to get the academic title of Docent.⁴ He was devoid of vanity, though he was acting a lot in this respect. He was telling me that all of the aforementioned achievements helped him, in his view, to consolidate an elite group in the Romanian Theoretical Physics. Nevertheless, his clame to fame of which he was, by right, very proud was that of Head of Department of Theoretical Physics of the Institute of Atomic Physics in Magurele-Bucharest.⁵ He held this position from around 1969 till 1990 when he was brutally removed by violent revolutionaries. Anyway, in this nucleus of Theoretical Physics he did not feel alone. Between 1965-1975 he gathered at Magurele about 15-20 researchers, all of them having formal, certified, legitimate studies of Theoretical Physics. This group was an intellectual, scientific elite. Personally, I learned tremendously from them since they began, from about 1972, to accept me among them. They knew how to teach others and they enjoyed doing it. They made up a real School of Theoretical Physics in Romania; a school established and managed by Corciovei, a fact unanimously and unreservedly acknowledged. Corciovei's scientific authority was indisputable: all of us accepted and considered him as a maestro in Theoretical Physics.⁶ He collaborated with us and was genuinely interested in our professional progress; moreover, he assumed the responsibility for every young researcher to advance in his career, according to his own intellectual resources, to not remain a scientific stooge at the mercy of one or another and most of all to build his own self-respect. This was a huge accomplishment of Corciovei, one of a trully high loftiness and which, as Physics is concerned, characterizes only those who are indeed great physicists. Corciovei required the members of the Department to strive to obtain scientific results, namely new and correct things in Physics. If those results were also relevant, so much the better. If the researchers did not succeed in achieving them it would have been no problem! But, of course, they were neither promoted nor awarded a prize. Corciovei accepted the rejects in Theoretical Physics, when it came to people. But he did not accepted, under no circumstance, the scientific rejects. The members of the Department had an absolute freedom in the researches they performed. But Corciovei kept reminding them that this freedom involves responsibility and has consequences. Each and every scientific result was discussed in the Seminar of the Department,

⁴Title that was soon to be abolished at the time because it was coveted by all mediocrities and quasi-learned individuals.

⁵To be compared with the former and the present day heads of this Department.

⁶To be compared with the former and the present day political leaders. No one acknowledge the latter as such, they alledgedly are just „good managers”; we do not need professionals as leaders but only „good managers”. After the 1990s, Theoretical Physics in Magurele had solely „good managers” illegitimately occupying the position of head of the Department.

chaired by Corciovei.⁷ The presentation did not continue if the author were not able to answer all questions raised by the participants in the Seminar.⁸ Back then, a Seminar held at the Department of Theoretical Physics amounted to a serious exam. The attendance at the seminar was not compulsory but all of us felt the need to submit ourselves to these exams. The Seminar did not grant approval for publishing the results, their publication was the author's sole responsibility. It took about 15 years to complete a doctorate supervised by Corciovei (if it was ever completed, because many of the PhD students, after long years of study, though obtaining good results, decided to no longer continue).⁹

This scientific rigour and professional seriousness created competencies and selected the values. We owe this to Corciovei.

After this almost incredible accomplishment: laying the foundation of a high quality Theoretical Physics in Romania starting almost from nothing, black clouds were gathering above Corciovei's head and ours as well. Theoretical Physics in Magurele began to stir up envy, hatred, disgusting and filthy cravings. The situation became more complicated with the arrival in the Department of the son of the great political leader who was, back then, at the helm of our country. After this event, the "experts in politics" forbade others to be employed in this Department, particularly to put us in a bad light so as to be considered a charmed circle full of airs and graces and therefore, completely unacceptable in an eminently democratic, comradely and laboring society. Shortly thereafter they also dissolved the Department of Theoretical Physics at the University so as to remove any possible future trace or seed of theoretical physicists. We had already made a compromise and we were pushed to make another and many others besides. There was a mounting pressure on the Department to employ people with no training in Theoretical Physics. The third big principle of Corciovei was, until then, not to accept into the Department of Theoretical Physics in Magurele but graduate students specializing in theoretical physics who were toppers in their batch. A principle whose demise was near, it "survived" till 1972. Eventually, Corciovei was compelled to abandon it. He did this, reluctantly, with much difficulty and a great amount of suffering. His suffering was almost physical, he became nervous and irascible when mediocrities with political power forced him to accept into the Department their son, nephew, father-in-law, spy, agent, lackey or bootlicker. Corciovei started to feel defeated. He began to make compromises, he seemed like a captain desperately trying to save his ship. Impostors and wannabes with heavy political recommendations, capitalizing on the hatred and envy the scientific research administrators felt towards us,¹⁰ exerted tremendous pressure to be accepted into the Department. In general, we put no obstacle but they were impossible to live with. Would you let cockroaches sitting on your kitchen table? I, for one, would not! I would build a nook and cram them all in there, where they belong. But they shook their heads: nay, no way Jose! Either you give us the reins of Theoretical Physics or else we will shoot you all! They were nothing but a bunch of bumptious giddy-heads - brought up in an ivory tower by the commie mother and the commie father of the party, incurable babblers whose vocation was superficiality and who did not want to know that Theoretical Physics is done with hard work; and this work might be useless if it were not doubled by a natural gift. All they wanted was to satisfy their vanity of spoiled children. In other words, where the boyar put his boots, all the stablemen were to put their dirty shoes. During the

⁷To be compared with those who chair today the seminars held at the Department of Theoretical Physics in Magurele.

⁸To be compared with the applauses ringing nowadays in our seminars, with the ludicrous festive atmosphere, with the coffee bottles on the table.

⁹To be compared with the doctorates in Physics nowadays. Question for the reader: getting a PhD in theoretical physics nowadays can be equated with one obtained in those times?

¹⁰Those of today nurture the same feelings galore towards the few of us who have left and who, to their nightmare, are still alive and hold seminars in Magurele.

1980s, the Department started to decline; slowly but surely, discouragement, disgust, bitterness and sadness began to settle in. Corciovei made mistakes after mistakes, in a desperate struggle to keep the helm and maintain a straight course. Since then, the madness of having many publications so-called scientific has already started to wander around the world.¹¹ All political leaders in the scientific research insisted on listing their names as co-authors in the papers of their subordinates. The fourth big principle of Corciovei was that a researcher should write alone his scientific paper - hence, to be the sole author on the publication - to discuss it in the Seminar of the Department, he should not make serial publications and if there were many co-authors each one should have his distinct contribution.¹² At the time, he started to abandon this principle too. Sometimes, he put himself in embarrassing situations, insisting on the inclusion as co-authors of one or another. However, his insistences were aimed solely at those open to compromise. For example, he never pressured me into doing this. He said that all political leaders were doing such things and he was afraid that if he would not do the same the party will remove him and all his accomplishments will perish. The impostors and wannabes around us worsened further the situation by volunteering for this intellectual prostitution.

The major blow was delivered to the Department in 1977. The enemies got it into their heads to destroy Theoretical Physics in Romania and, in general, everything that seemed valuable in the scientific research. Therefore, they concocted a plan that was politically backed and start to put it into action. We escaped, through political subterfuges, but on bended knees. And with swollen eyes. They did not dissolve us but they forced us to accept into the Department about 20 impostors and wannabes who had neither studies nor any training in Theoretical Physics. They only had the vanity to be the members of this Department. Until then we had been around 25. After that we numbered approx. 50 together with a few woozy physicists who joined us somehow. The newcomers immediately grabbed the power: they became party secretaries, members in all sorts of committees, seminar chairpersons, etc. etc. They made the law in the Department. The neutron mass was established by democratic and universal vote. This motley crew was a part of the pest who made the revolution in the '90s. In forms even more virulent all these disgusting practices are still carried on and promoted by the current management of the Department. Corciovei was definitely defeated as well as his principles. Are you telling me of bullet, of rope, of poison, of pest? Let me tell you about humiliation, derision and hatred!

Corciovei, our fellow being, was killed by us, people, in 1992. He knew many things, he saw through things, he understood that we will not have a future here and decided to let himself killed. We, the physicists, his comrades were ready to do that. This is how we reward anyone of us who rise to prominence and put his work, seriousness, talent, vision, inspiration in our service instead of keep them for himself. For Romanians, doing good is not well regarded.

Now, in the general disaster, when there is no Romanian Physics, when criminals have joyfully, healthy, cheerfully won, there is a pharisaic and hypocrite word that great people such as regretted professor Corciovei would no longer exist. But if they still are, we had better kill them too. Thus, we would redeem our souls a little.

(Translated from Romanian apr183 by Iulia Negoitza).

¹¹The specialists called them pseudo-scientific. The public at large, unacquainted with scientific terminology, called them stinky bumf. Landau called them Pathological Physics and sanitized his hands with alcohol when it happened to touch them. Corciovei did the same thing after shaking hands with some paranoid politician of Physics or some "infested" physicist.

¹²To be compared with Romanian scientific authors of today who come with ready-made serial publication from their German friends or other American teutons. They made them, they publish them: akin to the honest, sincere, delicate and intimate act of personal hygiene that we all make at the toilet.

