



Once upon a time (In 1968) Erol (Gelenbe) met Korez (Hayri Körezlioglu, 1930-2007), who worked at the Laboratory of Cybernetics of METU in Ankara. They met again in 1975 in Paris: Korez was teaching at ENST and Erol was at IRIA (which now is known as Inria). Korez introduced François to Erol for an initiation to research. Thus, François has a double Turkish origin, which is quite unknown!

This link with Korez and his wife Jale, the Italian connexions of the parties, music, stochastic sciences created a link which has been kept over time. But the partition had other themes: optimal checkpoint, re-sequencing, QMIPS!

François had a Phd twin: myself! What can I say? I was just impressed by François ability to dive deep into complex mathematical theories (at that time, it had to do with complex variable analysis, along with strange equations coming from... simple queuing systems). He had this ability to leave the intuition bank, the reality attach, and let him go into complex derivations with Guy Fayolle and others... Wandering around into incredible blackboards and hermetic mathematical transformations.... where François was willing to take anybody with him! ... as far as I was concerned, my own taste were more on the modelling side, but, at that time, I knew for sure that Francois was a genuine scientist.... and, the question was on my side, was I also a science person? From that time, François has always been somebody I can count on from the scientific, but before all, for friendship ...

Francois has this deep conviction that research is a matter of meeting people, exchanging ideas with people, again and again... He likes travelling around the world to meet people with other points of view, other perspectives... until a solid thread he can hold on appears...

This vision of research makes him incredibly open-minded, willing to listen to anybody, refusing any barriers (“plafond de verre”) or hierarchies, which are unfortunately so common within our academic world.

But Francois is also into scientific competition... In his research group, when the deadline for INFOCOM is approaching, you can feel the excitement growing... It is the time for the last corrections, the last convincing figures, the time for measuring the importance of each word, the time for cheating to get within the 9 or 12 pages limit... Even if the selection process could, sometimes, look more like a loterie than a consistent scientific ranking, François really

likes to put all his energy to convince his colleagues of the importance of the work which was performed in his research group.

François is an incredibly hard worker... days and nights! He is not the kind of person to neglect a problem: every scientific question has its importance to him, and is running in his head... until a bootstrap of a solution appears, and until a satisfactory mathematical development is written and published!

He is a kind of “Maitre”, in the asiatic sense, he is a leader; many of us have tried to follow his example: but « la barre est haute » as we say in French...

### **His students**

With François, they were directly initiated to the passion for science, all sciences! They all remember the light which invades his eyes when, in front of a dusty blackboard, when a new idea was possible... just like a little boy seeing a new fireman truck under the Christmas tree !!! (quote)

These students are deeply convinced also that, as an advisor, one cannot dream better! (quotations)

- He is just an exceptional advisor, devoted to its students, willing to share his tastes for science, proposing challenging research subjects and encouraging autonomy.
- He wants to teach technical matters, but also the scientific context. Learning how to do research is like learning to speak, learning to demonstrate in math, learning to set a good problem, learning how to conduct a global scientific approach... all this can be learnt by imitation... and, we were/are numerous to have benefited from François's example!
- He is, of course, brilliant, knowing how to pinpoint the difficulties and how to suggest directions and to let you solve the problem...
- He is deeply human, understanding personal difficulties, and very careful not to hurt and very cautious with his advices... because they are not criticisms!
- He always wants to teach, as he is always willing to learn. François thinks that the advisor is serving his student... and not the opposite! Of course, he knows that the benefit of a joint work is shared!
- He would send his students quite early during their work to visit his collaborators and to attend conferences in order that they build their own network...

He is the kind of person who figures out for you a scientific destiny. When a brand new Phd students arrives, he can tell him : I would like you to become the key person in the GROUP (Meval or Mistral or else) for THIS SUBJECT . And you understand that being the expert in the group, will also be a worldwide expert! The student would just believe it because he sees François's trust in his/her capacities. This trust would just boost your capacities... but the difficulties come after!

This scenario happened, for example, to Bruno for Stochastic Petri Nets. So, at the beginning, Bruno was working hard to understand the dynamics of these Petri Nets... until one morning, Francois came and told him "I thought about your problem last night, and I think there exists a tree representation of the computation front line for a Petri net..."

The first thing Bruno understood was not « tree representation » but « last night »...

- Last night?
- Well... one has to do something during his sleepless night, said François!

Thes tree representation was a real good and gave Bruno the opportunity of his first published paper !

At the end of the thesis, when a student sends him a mail during nightly hours writing his thesis, a mail with an entire chapter... at 8 o'clock, you're sure to get answer from François!

## **Life**

But, don't worry... François is not only interested by stochastic geometry or information theory, or telecommunication networks... He is just curious about everything and willing to share his opinions with his friends and colleagues. He can also be deeply concerned, and spend a whole lunch talking about the history of indo-european languages, the harvesting of olives, the blossom of orange trees, or about his deep disappointment when "France-Musique" changed name, and many more fundamental topics..

Story 1 : the Chevrollet Impala ;

Once upon a time, I decided to spend some time at the University of Maryland, and François was just there before me; he offered to sell me his car: a marvellous Chevrolet Impala, an egg yolk yellow, 3 seats at the front, 4 at the back... a fifties' jewellery. I just noticed a crush at the front and ask him if he got it like that... he replied with a story:

François : I was working... one day late, very late (so... it was at night), and I took my car to go back home ; while driving, I was thinking about the problem I was just working on. Suddenly, I heard a big noise, the front of my car jumped. When I tried to pull the accelerator the wheels were turning in the air! I got out of the car and discovered that I had climbed over a pole in the middle of the campus road and that my front wheels were not touching the ground anymore. I had to go back to non mathematical reality and find some garage help in the middle of the night... Equations were of no help!

Story 2 : Apparently, it was not the only time

One day in the early nineties, we received a call from François, who explained that he had a "small problem" with his car. He was asking if somebody could go to the train station to welcome a visitor. As he explained later, he departed from the lab to go to the station while thinking about a difficult research problem. Still absorbed by the problem, he had a traffic accident, luckily with only material damage. At that time, François drove a Toyota minivan, small but large enough to fit his family! The minivan also survived the incident.

First conclusion: François is always ready to welcome personally visitors; this attitude gave such a friendly ambience to the Meval and Mistral projects at Inria Sophia.

Second conclusion: beware of the dangers of (max,+)!

Third conclusion : Now, François has chosen : to drive or to think!

Story 3 : Francois Baccelli and the punk-rock, Inria-Sophia, the self, 1995

Francois: Jean (Mairesse) , you tell us often about music bands with strange names that you like : “Raymonde et les blancs-becs”, “La souris déglinguée”, “Bernadette Soubirous et ses apparitions”. My cousin was part of a band, maybe you know it? Well... I doubt you know it, it’s probably confidential...

Jean: Do you know the name of the group ?

Francois: “Les Béruriers noirs” or something like that; he was saxophonist under the name of Masto.

Jean (very excited): it’s a cult band, a cult band!blah blah blah ... "Salut à toi" ... blah blah blah ... "l'empereur tomate ketchup" ... blah blah blah

2 weeks later :

Francois : What you told me about my cousin has changed considerably my family life! Our family tradition is more on classical music. My cousin did offer us all his records but we

never listened to them! Since I told my kids that it was a cult underground band, my kids started to listen to the records, and the fame of their uncle has reached the top!

### **What they say**

- I had the opportunity to work with François a long time ago (too long to be more precisely mentioned). Even though this collaboration was short, a striking image of François remains in my mind: the thin smile and sparkling eyes he would display when presenting a critical lemma or trick in a demonstration. You could perceive the joy of maths in him, as well as the pleasure to disclose his discoveries. Recently, I met him again after years not seeing him: he still has the same smile and eyes...
- François has always been a dear friend, and I've always had a great admiration for his sensibility and his loyalty.
- François entered in Stochastic science as others enter in Faith!
- He is passionate, when you know him, sometimes, you just can't believe it!
- He always has many problems running in parallel to be solved ; but, he is always available for a new scientific question. His capacity to integrate new scientific questions is infinite !

Now, the rest of this meeting will be just another opportunity to live together this François' scientific story. Before finishing, I would like to say how we all know that, more important than his scientific life was his family life... But that is another story !

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