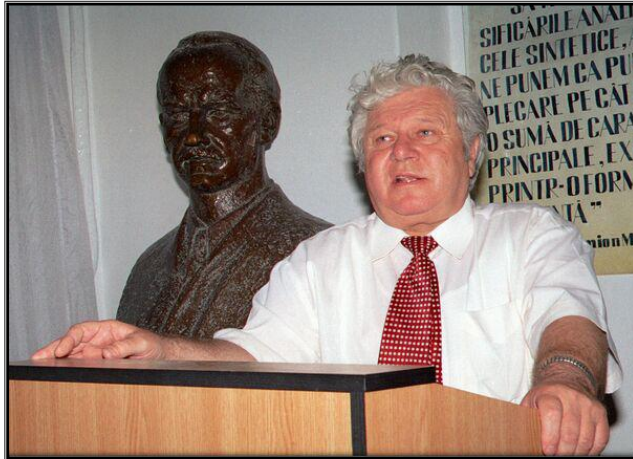


Professor MIHAI IELENICZ (1941–2017)

An outstanding geographer and researcher



How unpredictable and fragile, however, Lord, are the paths of life! For us, not for You, who likewise cut and give to us with the first whine of the gush in the light under the name of fate or destiny. I say this because, three months ago, Professor Mihai Ielenicz honoured me here in the amphitheatre of Geography Napocensis, with his splendid, imposing and always appealing attention and interest, in one of the 12 doctoral commissions I had him beside me. A man who worn with dignity and youth the weight of an age in which the number of years began, sneaking into an invisible raid, slowly gathering. But a teacher and researcher in the most perfect creative hypostasis in which the experience gained over five decades of geography and a balanced way of thinking coexisted wonderfully. I had no way of knowing then that this would be his last presence among Cluj geographers at their home, because I would have told time to put, as masterly suggested Lope de Vega in one of his lyrics, "obstacles to the wheel ", to cling to its inexorable running, leaving him among us still and still. Moreover, I could not know at that moment that the religious tourism (the subject of the thesis in question!), about which he has long been glossed, with original arguments detached from the realities of the previous pilgrimages in which he participated, will become a strange coincidence for the circumstances of his passing beyond, into a fairer and better world.

Certainly, about the scientific researcher, as well as the mentor of dozens of generations of aspirants in the mysteries of geography, the dean or chairman of

the chair, Mihai Ielenicz, as a skilful and devoted to the manager institution, will be written a lot. Because his activity and his work were and are all prodigious. That is why we will be limiting to emphasize, in these beginning lines, written in tears in the day when we say goodbye to his worldly incarnation, the aspect that seems to me the most representative in defining his personality. An aspect deriving from the position of Professor Ielenicz in the "golden triangle" of Romanian Geomorphology, an idealized construction prefigured several decades ago by Master Grigore Posea at the Geography Faculty of Bucharest and imposed with aplomb in the scientific circles and the local bibliography. And not only. One of the peaks of this triangle belongs to Mihai Ielenicz, the author, among many other interesting studies, of the monumental construction of paradigms, theories and ideas dedicated, in a consistent series of volumes, to Romania's relief, to its genesis, evolution and regionalization. The physical geography of Romania as a whole, but also the remarkable tourist potential of the country, which he loved from all his heart of an active and responsible citizen, were also the subject of profound and productive reflection themes of the teacher and his collaborators .

Professor Mihai Ielenicz, through his skill, his exigency and frankness, has chipped characters and shaped behaviours, inspired students, masters and, in particular, his doctoral students, the urgent need for field research, the only arena where the visions of any qualified scientific introspection are tested and materialised. The doctoral theses focused on the problematic of hydrographic basins of the Carpathian rivers are illustrative models of punctual morphogenetic analyses, in which the tradition of the geographic school and the modernity of the approach harmoniously intertwine, in a fruitful cohabitation, yielding often surprising results.

In the over two decades of close and friendly ties, I had a lot of talk with Mihai. As long as we both led as deans, the two faculties of geography in Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca, we shared openly our opinions, we consulted in moments of difficulty, we sought together and found together solutions to the various problems with which we confronted. I think the collaboration between the two institutions has never been more harmonious, but even more effective.

Certainly, from time to time, over his towering, leonine face, the shadow of disappointments left by some, happily not many of his disciples, passed. Men whom, as sadly he confessed, he spread, not once, a helping hand, to whom he may have marked, whether or not they realise it, the destiny. I do not know if I had comforted him by telling that we are all suffering the same, that the flower of gratitude and respect is, in this crazy, mad world, a rare *Leontopodium alpinum*. But I did not spend much time in this disconcerting existential diverticula for both; there were so many wonderful things that Geography and life offer, so naturally I approach them with more effervescence and ardour.

The departure of the university professor Mihai Ielenicz from us leaves an endless void, which the geographic movement in Romania, whose destiny he led to

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the last moment, with laborious abnegation and chosen balance, as president of the Romanian Society of Geography, will be felt for long time. A void which his valuable scientific work, generosity of spirit and the perfect academic behaviour will try to attenuate, at least in part, the dimensions. Offering, at the same time, to those who had him near as a long-distance companion, as a devoted friend, always ready to help, to put his shoulder to the needs of others, an eternal recourse to memory, a permanent encounter with the face and way of being of a chosen soul, true Man.

Eternal rest, Mihai Ielenicz, much esteemed colleague and friend; in this perishable world, so contradictory in all, you have done your full duty!

Pompei Cocean