

Alexandru Froda- as I remember him.

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When such a man is no more, what lingers for a while is his image, as mirrored in the minds of those who had the privilege to know him. His appearance was deceptively that of a massive man but when he moved he seemed weightless. His face radiated distinction and fitted into our idea of what breed and nobility should lead to. Incidentally, nobility was there. In spite of his amused, even ironical smile he showed his true nature when approached: Alexandru Froda was kindness itself.

In my learning years, there was a tendency to mistake mathematical machinery for mathematics. As a professor, Alexandru Froda represented the antithesis of this line. He showed us how difficult problems were attacked in the history of mathematics and - on a modest scale - how they should be in the material at hand. How slow and painful can be the road to solution.

I was fortunate enough to be exposed to his first year course in algebra and to his seminar on set theory. I feel that they influenced me for life, out of any proportion with the space they occupied in the curriculum. Out of many, here are a few examples that come to mind. First is his attitude when faced with a difficult problem. The way he used to turn, mentally and physically, around the problem- alternatively taking a close look or taking distance, and making a detour if the direct way appeared fruitless. Until a crack was found, which could be further exploited.

A healthy respect for logic and the conviction (somewhat inaccurate) that often in mathematics one can get something out of nothing.

The idea that apparatus is necessary, but not crucial. I often passed to young statisticians his message in his own words: "Research can begin at any level".

It is impossible to sum up Alexandru Froda, the mathematician, the teacher and the man. But if I had to do it, I would say that Alexandru Froda had what few in his generation or since have shown: he had class.