# SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF MISCHA COTLAR
## By
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I first met Mischa Cotlar in the Department of Mathematics of the University of Chicago during the academic year 1950-51. I was a graduate student in this department working for my Ph. D. degree as a student of Antoni Zygmund. My professor had recently returned from a trip to Argentina. There he met Alberto Calderon and, also, Mischa Cotlar. It is well known that Professor Zygmund made arrangements for bringing Calderon to the United States and, not long after this, found a faculty position for him at the University of Chicago.

The situation of Mischa was quite different. He had no formal education. For example, he had not even received a high school degree. Despite this he attended (informally) many classes and lectures at the University of Buenos Aires. The mathematicians there quickly learned about his considerable mathematical talents and involved him in many research collaborations. In fact, if truth be told, in many cases, Mischa was responsible for the main ideas in some of this research. Since he did not have an academic position, he supported himself by playing the piano in some bars located in the neighborhood of the port of Buenos Aires. Among the considerable number of talents he had, he was an excellent pianist.

He attended the lectures that Professor Zygmund presented in Buenos Aires. From various discussions that Professor Zygmund had with Mischa it became quite clear that the latter had considerable mathematical talent. Because of this, Zygmund made arrangements for Mischa to come to the University of Chicago in order to obtain a Ph. D. degree.

When I first met Mischa and his wife Yanni, I was a young and rather inexperienced student. Mischa was a little more than ten years older than I was. I quickly learned about many of Mischa's wonderful qualities. He was the kindest and most generous individual I had ever met. I soon became a very close friend of him and his wife. At that time Mischa had already developed the mathematics that was represented by his Ph. D. thesis. Mischa had gone to Argentina as a refugee from his native Russia. When he arrived in the United States his English was not very proficient. Because of my friendship with him it became natural that I help him with the writing, in English, of his thesis. In doing so I learned quite a bit about Calderon-Zygmund operators and other material involved in his research. His thesis was entitled "On the Theory of Hilbert Transforms" and it was accepted by the Mathematics department in March, 1953. He returned to Buenos Aires after receiving his degree and became a member of the Mathematics faculty in that part of the University of Buenos Aires known as "Ciencias Exactas." I kept in touch with him after he left Chicago.

A few years later (in 1960), four years after I received my Ph. D. degree, I was invited to present a course in Mischa's department.. He and I decided that I give this course in Spanish and he would help me with this language. This reversal of roles was

most beneficial to me since I not only learned Spanish in this venture, but, again, learned more Mathematics from him through his advice on how to present my material. We became even closer friends.

I will not say much about Mischa's brilliant mathematical career in this brief commentary. His contributions to various branches of Analysis are described by others attending and contributing to this meeting in his honor. Nor will I give an account of the various events in Argentina (and other parts of the world) that affected Mischa's life during the past fifty years. He spent time in the academic world in the United States and, later, in Venezuela. Finally he returned to Buenos Aires. In each of these places he contributed a great deal to the scientific activity around him. His great generosity and knowledge affected all persons around him. I want to say, more explicitly, that this generosity was many sided; if someone needed financial help, he would immediately do all he could to relieve this need, even though Mischa was not wealthy. If help was needed to solve a mathematical problem, he would do all he could to solve it. In any other area he would do all he could to help an individual. I kept in close contact with Mischa throughout all this time. He contributed immensely to my mathematical activity and, also, most importantly, he was a guide in my relations with others helping them in various aspects of life and Mathematics. I miss him greatly and consider him to be one of the most wonderful persons I have ever known.