

## Introductory Remarks to the Gelenbe 2015 Symposium

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London, 21st September 2015

Dear Erol,

This ceremony on your 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary offers me a good opportunity to reminisce pleasant memories that date back to the early seventies. More precisely, it was in October 1971 when I first met with a young Turk – and this was you, dear Erol, and this was over forty years ago! Let me recall some mutual souvenirs and also mention some other personal ones that I had never talked to you about.

In 1971, when colleagues of the University of Liège learnt about my trip to the States, they asked me to gather information about Erol Gelenbe, a young researcher who had recently applied for a professorship at the Department of Computer Science of Montefiore Institute of the University of Liège. The most interested among the colleagues was the late Danny Ribbens who was holding the then only chair of Computer Science in Liège.

The main purpose of my trip was my participation in the Allerton Conference, an annual conference well known to the specialists, mainly organized by the Coordinates Science Laboratory (CSL) of the University of Illinois, at Urbana Champaign. Prior to the Conference, I was invited by Professor Petar Kokotovic to visit CSL and deliver a seminar talk.

On my arrival in Illinois, on my request, Petar Kokotovic kindly went to his telephone in order to enquire about Gelenbe. He rapidly came back with extremely laudatory recommendations: undoubtedly, Gelenbe was a brilliant, top-level and very promising young scientist.

My duty to bring back to Liège the required information was thus accomplished. And while preparing my own presentations, I lost sight of Erol Gelenbe.

Some days later the Allerton Conference got started, as always in the Allerton House, an elegant mansion surrounded by gorgeous woods. However, I myself being a relatively inexperienced postdoc, I was fully absorbed by my session. So, I didn't have time to fully enjoy such charming conditions.

Nevertheless, while going around during the coffee break of the first day, I noticed a large group of participants surrounding a young researcher

and asking him many various questions. I was surprised by the lively tone of the conversations. But even more so, I was impressed by the reactions of the young fellow who sometimes would answer right away and some other times would say: "look, I only have two arms, two legs and no time left to explore further on this direction - at least for the moment". His enthusiasm, his ability to attract attention, his quick and brilliant reactions, the interest and even the respect shown by the audience were truly amazing and at the same time very refreshing!

My astonishment and interest dramatically increased when I learnt that this chap was Erol Gelenbe!

I thus went to him and introduced myself. His reaction was immediate: why wouldn't you come to visit us in Ann Arbor? I gladly accepted his invitation right away.

So, some days later, Erol came to pick me up at the bus stop of the Greyhound line; he took me for a tour of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and showed me the beautiful surroundings. Also, he invited me to his home for lunch on the next day. Meeting with his wife Deniz has been another marvellous happening. And her warm hospitality made me feel at home.

For the lunch, the Gelenbes had also hosted another guest, Dennis Tsichritzis that I had never met before. So, the lunch brought together two Turks and two Greeks. This also was yet another new experience to me. It took place under charming circumstances and has been an enjoyment throughout. Unforgettable memories....

This has been the beginning of a long-long friendship with Erol Gelenbe.

Ever since 1971, I have had many opportunities to see Erol in Liège, Paris, London or the States. This brought us closer to each other and gave me the chance to appreciate many admirable facets of his personality. Above all, Erol has kept intact his enthusiasm, his open-mindedness, his curiosity, his willingness to discuss others' problems and ability to shed light in matters not necessarily of his own areas of expertise. Unfortunately, he still has only two arms and two legs; fortunately, however, he has managed to broaden the time scale so as to accomplish in 24 hours tasks for which others would need over 48 hours. And his ability to attract young students, post-docs and researchers has been even enhanced.

Dear Erol,  
Once again let me express my pleasure for having had the opportunity to reminisce good memories.

Surely, many experts in your area of proficiency will be pleased to praise your professional achievements.

Yet another person would have loved to highlight your outstanding skills. Unfortunately, he is missing and we do miss him. But I trust that from where he may be, he joyfully cheers you.

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