

Cornelia Paunescu



This is my wife, Cornelia Paunescu, in her office, reviewing her lecturing plan before going to class. The photo was taken in Bucharest, in February 1952. Cornelia was born in 1911, in Bucharest. She wasn't Jewish. My wife was the daughter of some veteran social democratic militants. I wanted to talk to her parents, to ask them about their memories of the old, pre-World War I social democratic movement, the way I'm telling you things from my past right now. Her parents were well-known people; both her mother and her father had their picture in Atanasiu's 'Istoria socialismului' ['History of Socialism']. Her father, Paunescu-Paltin, was already dead. There's a street in Bucharest named after him - a small, pretty street, in the neighborhood where we used to live. Her mother was a militant of the socialist women's group. I went to talk to her, and it was on that occasion that I met her daughter. She told me, in her turn, some of her memories of the social democratic movement. It was 'love at first sight'. And we got married. We were both middle-aged by then, in our forties. We got married in Bucharest, in 1957. There was only an official ceremony at the 3rd District Town hall - neither her, nor I was religious. Both my family and hers agreed to this marriage. I wasn't a child anymore, I was confident I could choose what was right for me, and it turned out I made the best choice. She was very gentle and kind and she only had one flaw: she trusted people too much. She was a scientist and she lectured at over thirty international conventions. She was the only Romanian docent with a PhD in pediatric otolaryngology - that was her specialty. As a physician, she attended the Korean War [Ed. note: 25th June 1950-27th July 1953] against the Americans and was the personal physician of Kim Il Sung [Ed. note: (1912-1994), president of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from 1948]. She fluently spoke French, English and Italian. She had a nice humanistic culture. She used to go to the hospital or to the Medical School, to lecture, while I used to go to the publishing house or the institute. We both retired in the same day, in 1973. She died in 2000.