

Gavril Marcuson And Cornelia Paunescu At The Pyongyang Zoo



This photo was taken at the Pyongyang Zoo, on 11th June 1974. In the center are my wife, Cornelia Paunescu (wearing sunglasses), and me, Gavril Marcuson, holding a camera. We are accompanied by an interpreter and the official photographer. My name is Gavril Marcuson [the initial name, Marcusohn, was shortened to Marcuson in 1968]. I was born in Bucharest, on 28th October 1913. I graduated from the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy in Bucharest in 1935. I was a researcher at the Communist Party History Institute. I had some books and articles published. I retired while I was working for the Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House, in 1973. My wife, Cornelia Paunescu, was born in 1911, in Bucharest. She wasn't Jewish. Cornelia went to the Medical School in Bucharest. 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]. There were doctors from all the other socialist countries there - East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, China. One day Kim Il Sung got sick and he asked who the best doctor was. So my wife treated him, and Kim Il Sung invited us to North Korea twice. Each time, we stayed there for a month, and we lived where Ceausescu had been accommodated before us. North Korea is a very beautiful country. Pyongyang had been bombed by the Americans and the South-Koreans, so they had had to rebuild it and everything looked new. They made theaters, conference halls. All that was left of the old city was an entrance gate. We walked the streets of Pyongyang, with an interpreter with us, of course. We made the way from Bucharest to North Korea in the Transsiberian [special train]. We saw the entire Siberia, and all the cities North Korea and China. Siberia is huge and confines fabulous riches that are yet to be discovered. It's splendid - from Moscow to the Chinese border, all you can see is birch trees. The first time we went, we took the Transsiberian to and from North Korea. [Ed. note: A one-way trip lasted for about eight days.] The second time, we took the Transsiberian to get there, but

we took the plane from Beijing to get back. Today, China looks different from what it looked like when we went there, because they started building. We went many places [together]: England, East Germany, Italy, Soviet Union, China, North Korea, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Turkey.