

The University Of Leningrad



This is the University of Leningrad, The Twelve Colleges, where I went for my post-graduate studies. This picture was taken by me; it's really bad, but it makes a beautiful memory for me. The University of Leningrad is called Twelve United Colleges. A very long corridor with auditoriums, labs, collections. It was very nice.

I studied for 3 years in the Soviet Union. The University of Leningrad has a very long corridor with auditoriums, labs, collections. It was very nice. I lived in a hostel, in a room of five. They put me amidst Russian girls. I couldn't speak Russian at all. There were other Romanian girls there too, but in other colleges. One of them was Eva Ban, a student in History. Lili - I forgot her last name - was in History too, I think. We would have liked to live together and speak Romanian among us. But they didn't let us. The Russian girls kept talking in Russian until they got the language in my head. I happen to have a certain degree of talent when it comes to foreign languages. And, out of despair, I had to learn it. I wrote a thesis in Russian. The Romanian State paid us - we had a good scholarship, we lived well, and the food at the canteen was all right.

I got along well with the teaching staff. They appreciated the basic training I had acquired in college. I didn't just go there like a total idiot. They helped me a lot. The professor who coordinated my thesis was very demanding. When I introduced myself I asked him if he spoke French. 'Njet!', he said. 'German?' - 'Njet!' I couldn't speak any other language. I came back to my room and chatted with the Romanian girls: 'Who has ever heard of such a nitwit? He's a university professor, but he doesn't speak any foreign language.' This could not be said about our former professors in Romania, who did speak foreign languages. I later found out he spoke German better than I did. Russian is a language with a rather difficult grammar and tremendously rich. Its nuances can confuse you; add a prefix and the meaning of the word changes completely.

My first winter there happened to be a very harsh one. The cold was so intense that it made me cry, and the tears formed a small icicle. When I first tried to remove it, I pulled it together with my

eyelashes and the pain was excruciating. There was a Siberian man, a lad as big as a bear, who said: 'Now that's a real Russian winter!' I swore in my mind. This is where I had to put on some real clothes. I wore valenki, felt boots, with overshoes. It was after the war. We hadn't taken many clothes with us. I bought an overcoat with money from my scholarship. I could afford it. I also wore two shawls sewn together.

Those were nice years. Some of my fellow-students became great personalities after they came back. Many of them were ministers: Bujor Almasan (Ministry of Mines), Marinescu (Healthcare), Popescu (Forests or something like that). Some of them were rectors. They got very good positions when they returned.