

In Memory of Margareta Nicolau 1945 - 2013



*Mon Dieu,
donne-moi la lutte!
Jean Jaurès*

A noble flame has vanished, Margareta Nicolau, PhD, Director of the National Research and Development Institute for Industrial Ecology – ECOIND, Bucharest.

Born in 1945 in a commune near Galati, Margareta Nicolau has graduated as an eminent student in organic chemistry, at Faculty of Chemistry within the University of Bucharest. She started to work as a junior scientific researcher in chemical research and development and both her dedication and passion for work produced their first notable results in the synthesis and characterization of acrylic compounds. A long series of published papers and awarded patents awarded set off immediately and, for her original research, Margareta Nicolau was awarded the prestigious “Gheorghe Spacu” Prize of the Romanian Academy in 1978. Methods and technologies devised by Margareta Nicolau were subsequently implemented in the industrial phase.

As a researcher in Pulp and Paper Industry or in the Romanian Army Research and Development Center, Margareta Nicolau proved the same enduring, imaginative fighting spirit and search for innovation and enlarging the Romanian chemistry horizon. Here again, her research and development work materialized in numerous technical papers and awarded prizes and patents.

From 1982 onward, Margareta Nicolau worked with the Romanian Institute for Research and Design in Wastewater Treatment (ICPEAR) – that after 1990 was renamed National Research and Development Institute for Industrial Ecology - ECOIND, Margareta Nicolau, leading a number of exceptionally gifted researchers, contributed decisively to the structuring of a brilliant team that became renown at national and international level.

Step by step, accumulating scientific, technical and economical expertise directly from solving practical problems and carrying out challenging tasks, Margareta Nicolau and the ECOIND team acquired the status and prestige that now accompanies the name of one of the best Romanian Research Development Institute. The scope of her work covered a vast area, from very specific pollution problems connected to petrochemical, organic/inorganic chemical industry, metallurgy, etc., to assessing large environmental disasters or to detailed long-term policy and strategy building activities associated to most important Romanian industries.

Again, her work at the head of the ECOIND team in carrying out hundreds of projects led to a vast number of scientific papers, patents and prizes awarded: over 230 technical publications (papers and communications at Romanian and International technical events), 24 patents awarded (plus 4 on the way to approval), 8 prizes awarded by the Romanian Academy, National and International Technical Fairs and the Romanian Chemical Society.

Starting as a laboratory scientific researcher, Margareta Nicolau climbed up the corporate ladder that finally led her, in 1990, to the position of General Director of ECOIND. Each step up to that ladder meant not only the acquiring of technical knowledge and professional know-how, not only won battles at the edge of scientific comprehension but it also gave her the opportunity to activate and implement her outstanding vision in the field of industrial ecology (an area known as multidisciplinary, complex, dense and difficult), namely: environment and ecology must become a part of every human

activity, must prevail over profit and economic advantages, must be learned by all specialists and become their way of thinking and their way of life. Caring for natural habitats and environment meant, for Margareta Nicolau, not only minimization of waste generation rate or waste neutralization but finding ways to turn waste into valuable resources by implementing very new paradigms (e.g., industrial symbiosis).

A vast number of projects financed by national and international entities (such as United Nations, United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, European Union, bilateral agreements) led by Margareta Nicolau as Project Director or having Margareta Nicolau in their team of renown and proficient experts, confirmed and substantiated the correctness and appropriateness of her vision. A special remark should be added related to the project led by Margareta Nicolau in the last years of activity: development of a new modern research infrastructure dedicated to industrial ecology. She left this legacy to the next generation of environmental researchers with the dream that will become a pole of excellence in environmental research at international level.

Margareta Nicolau was a very special breed of Romanian managers, an effigy that, though difficult and demanding, must be followed and emulated. She knew in the faintest detail every Project issued by ECOIND, be it in the field of chemistry, biology, ecology, sustainable development strategy, etc. Her very special skill, knowledge and love for the human nature enabled her to select, keep and lead a number of experienced specialists of very different character. Scientific researchers are generally known for being independent, self-governing, and difficult to accept to be members of a team. But the scientific researchers in ECOIND became, led by Margareta Nicolau a solid and robust group of specialists having complementary experience, acting together, sharing the vision and carrying out the mission devised by their leader. Margareta Nicolau quest for top quality and perfection preceded and went far beyond the ISO certifications obtained by ECOIND, becoming, practically, the ECOIND's and Margareta Nicolau's way of excellence and distinction. This very special way means looking for where the battle with mediocrity is, carrying out an unyielding fight with routine and complacency. To this, Margareta Nicolau added, unfortunately, her long and painful fight with a cruel disease.

Beside her comprehensive scientific, technical, economic and human touch experience and understanding, beside her relentless fight for being the best, Margareta Nicolau was a very religious person. She unabatedly and obstinately followed the teachings of the Fathers of our Church, believing that they instil that kind of discipline, control and mastery of body and mind that must lead, illuminate and help every human being in every moment of his life.

May God rest her great and good soul and teach us how to bear on and spread the flame of her spirit!

In Memoriam

Margareta Nicolau

1945 - 2013



*Domnul Dumnezeuul meu,
da-mi lupta!
Jean Jaurčs*

O flacara vie s-a stins, Margareta Nicolau, doctor, Director al Institutului National de Cercetare Dezvoltare pentru Ecologie Industrială – ECOIND, Bucuresti.

Nascuta in 1945 intr-o comuna de langa Galati, Margareta Nicolau a absolvit ca student eminent in specializarea chimie organica Facultatea de Chimie din cadrul Universitatii Bucuresti. Si-a inceput activitatea profesionala ca cercetator in chimie iar dedicatia si pasiunea sa pentru cercetare s-au concretizat intr-o serie de rezultate notabile in domeniul sintezei si caracterizarii compusilor acrilici. Pe baza acestor rezultate originale a realizat o serie de lucrari publicate in reviste de specialitate precum si brevete ce au condus la acordarea prestigiosului Premiu „Gheorghe Spacu” al Academiei Romane in anul 1978. Metodele si tehnologiile dezvoltate de Margareta Nicolau au fost ulterior implementate la nivel industrial.

Pe parcursul activitatii sale de cercetare in cadrul Industriei de Celuloza si Hartie precum si in cadrul Centrului de Cercetare Dezvoltare al Armatei Romane a demonstrat acelasi spirit combativ si imaginativ pentru inovare si largirea orizontului chimiei romanesti. Inca o data, munca sa de cercetare s-a materializat in numeroase articole, premii si brevete.

Incepand cu anul 1982, Margareta Nicolau a lucrat in cadrul Institutului de Cercetare si Proiectare pentru Epurarea Apelor Reziduale (ICPEAR) – redenumit Institutul National de Cercetare Dezvoltare pentru Ecologie Industrială - ECOIND, din anul 1990. Margareta Nicolau a condus echipe de cercetatori talentati, fapt ce a contribuit decisiv la structurarea unei echipe deosebite recunoscuta la nivel national si international.

Pas cu pas, acumuland expertiza stiintifica, tehnica si economica direct din rezolvarea problemelor practice si indeplinind cercetari dificile, Margareta Nicolau si echipa ECOIND au dobandit statutul si prestigiul de azi ale unuia dintre cele mai de succes Institute de Cercetare Dezvoltare din Romania. Obiectivele cercetarilor au acoperit un domeniu larg, de la probleme specifice de poluare ale industriilor petrochimice, chimice organice / anorganice, metalurgice etc. pana la evaluarea accidentelor de mediu sau dezvoltarea de politici si strategii pe termen lung pentru cele mai importante sectoare industriale din Romania.

Din nou, munca sa ca lider al echipei ECOIND in realizarea a sute de proiecte de cercetare a condus la un numar mare de lucrari stiintifice publicate, brevete si premii obtinute: peste 230 de publicatii (articole si comunicari in cadrul evenimentelor stiintifice din Romania sau internationale), 24 de brevete acordate (plus 4 in faza de aprobare), 8 premii acordate de catre Academia Romana, Societatea Romana de Chimie sau la diferite evenimente stiintifice nationale si internationale.

Incepandu-si cariera profesionala ca simplu cercetator stiintific, Margareta Nicolau a urcat scara ierarhica pas cu pas ajungand in anul 1990 in pozitia de Director General al ECOIND. Fiecare pas pe aceasta scara a insemnat nu numai acumularea de cunostinte tehnice si know-how profesional, nu numai castigarea de lupte in domeniul stiintific dar si oportunitatea de a activa si implementa propria sa viziune in domeniul ecologiei industriale (un domeniu cunoscut drept multidisciplinar, complex, dens si dificil) si anume: mediul si ecologia trebuie sa devina parte a oricarei activitati umane,

trebuie sa prevaleze asupra profitului si avantajelor economice, trebuie sa fie intelese de catre toti specialistii si sa devina modul acestora de gandire si de viata. Sa iti pese de mediu si de habitatele naturale nu insemna, pentru Margareta Nicolau, numai minimizarea ratei de generare a deseurilor dar si gasirea de solutii pentru a le transforma in resurse valoroase, prin implementarea metodelor moderne de abordare (de exemplu simbioza industrială).

Numeroasele proiecte finantate de entitati nationale si internationale (cum sunt Organizatia Natiunilor Unite, Organizatia Natiunilor Unite pentru Dezvoltare Industrială, Uniunea Europeana) si conduse de catre Margareta Nicolau drept Director de Proiect sau ca membru in echipa de lucru, au confirmat corectitudinea acestei viziuni. O remarca speciala trebuie facuta legat de proiectul condus de catre Margareta Nicolau in ultimii sai ani de activitate: dezvoltarea unei infrastructuri moderne de cercetare dedicate ecologiei industriale. A lasat aceasta infrastructura drept mostenire generatiilor viitoare de cercetatori in domeniul protectiei mediului cu visul ca aceasta va deveni un pol de excelenta pentru cercetarea de mediu la nivel international.

Margareta Nicolau a fost o figura speciala printre managerii din Romania, o efigie care desi dificila si solicitanta trebuie sa devina un model de urmat. Cunostea in cel mai mic detaliu fiecare proiect realizat de catre ECOIND fie ca acesta era in domeniul chimiei, biologiei, ecologiei, strategiilor de dezvoltare durabila etc. Priceperea ei speciala, cunoasterea si dragostea sa pentru natura umana i-a permis sa stranga in jurul sau, sa pastreze si sa conduca specialisti cu caractere foarte diferite. Cercetatorii stiintifici sunt in general recunoscuti drept independenti si reticenti in acceptarea altor membri in cadrul unei echipe deja formate. Dar, sub conducerea Margaretei Nicolau cercetatorii stiintifici din ECOIND au devenit un grup solid cu experiente complementare, ce actioneaza impreuna, impartasind aceeasi viziune, spre un obiectiv comun. Margareta Nicolau a cautat intodeauna calitatea de top si perfectiunea, mai presus de certificarile ISO ale ECOIND, aceasta abordare concretizandu-se intr-o noua cale spre excelenta in cercetare. Aceasta abordare speciala insemna lupta cu mediocritatea, rutina si suficienta. Din pacate, pe langa aceasta, Margareta Nicolau a mai avut de purtat o lunga si dureroasa lupta cu o boala necrutatoare.

Pe langa experienta stiintifica, tehnica, economica si in cunoasterea oamenilor, pe langa lupta neobosita de a fi cel mai bun, Margareta Nicolau a fost o persoana foarte religioasa. Ea a urmat neabatut invataturile Sfintilor Parinti ai Bisericii noastre, crezand cu tarie ca acestia ne insufla disciplina, controlul, stapanirea corpului si a mintii, care trebuie sa conduca, sa ilumineze si sa ghideze fiecare fiinta umana in fiecare moment al vietii sale.

Fie ca Dumnezeu sa-i odihnesca sufletul mare si bun si sa ne ajute sa invatam cum sa purtam si sa raspandim mai departe flacara spiritului ei!