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Childhood

My Countries

When I am asked what country I was born in, I often hesitate before answering: Am I supposed to name the country to which the city in which I was born belonged at the time I was born, or the country it belonged to when I left it? Or, perhaps, the country to which it belongs now? Or rather the country it belonged to just 12 years before I was born, the country where my parents and grandparents were born, the country of my mother tongue?

My problem is that these were four different countries; only within the fifteen years I lived there, the place where I was born changed “ownership” three times. This frequent, and for most of its citizens, tragic change is reflected in the following joke. Two people meet for the first time. After a few minutes of conversation they ask each other where they are from. It turns out that one of them is from Czernowitz. The other, who had never heard about Czernowitz asks: “Czernowitz, where is this?” “Sorry,” is the answer, “I am not sure, I haven’t read today’s newspaper yet.”

I happen to be born in that Czernowitz, the capital of Bukowina, a province situated in the Eastern part of Central Europe. The population of the Bukowina was of mixed origin: in the rural regions

lived Romanians, Ukrainians (in Austria-Hungary they were called Ruthenians), and in lesser proportions Jews, Germans and Poles. In the cities, and in Czernowitz in particular, the situation was quite different: In 1940 Czernowitz had a population of about 150,000 people, out of which about 60,000 were Jews. Here a parenthesis has to be made: When referring to Romanians, Ukrainians, Germans and Poles *origin* means nationality. For Jews this word has in the present context a different meaning, it means essentially religion.^a This is due to the fact that until the end of World War I, with the notable exception of Austria-Hungary, in Central and Eastern Europe Jews had no civil rights. Romania had in this respect a particularly (in)famous record. It was the last European country to grant in 1923, and that only due to the pressure of the West, Jews citizenship.

During the period 1775–1918, Bukowina was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and my parents and grandparents were Austrian citizens. Strangely enough, although I was born in 1930, when Czernowitz and the entire Bukowina belonged to Romania, and although I spent, over all, 37 years in Romania, I have always considered myself Austrian rather than Romanian. This was a fortiori true for my parents and grandparents. And now, as a holder of a German passport, I am happy to be able to consider myself first of all a citizen of Europe.

Most of the population of Bukowina, at least the German speaking part, felt like us. And German was *the* language of Bukowina and of Czernowitz in particular, because most people in Bukowina, even after 1918 when they became Romanian, spoke German. This period came to an end with World War II. Though, it might be interesting to mention that a few years ago German newspapers¹ and TV² discovered three survivors of this Austrian/German culture island, who still lived in Czernowitz. One of these three survivors, Mathias Zwilling, who died in 1999,

^aTo understand better this etymological difference it should be mentioned that Romanians and Ukrainians were in general Orthodox Christians, and Germans and Poles mostly Catholics.

happened to have been a youth friend and elementary school classmate of mine. Two years before his death I managed to get in contact with him with the help of the journalist Meyer-Timpe from *Die Zeit* who had interviewed him.

Bukowina has had a particular status within the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. It was a “crown-land”, which meant that it was directly ruled by Vienna. Unlike Tsarist Russia or Romania, in Austria the population of Jewish origin, like my ancestors, had full citizen rights. Jews occupied high-ranking positions in administration and politics. Czernowitz had Jewish mayors; Bukowinian Jews were deputies in the Vienna Federal Parliament, professors at the Kaiser Franz Joseph University of Czernowitz and at other Austrian universities, including that of Vienna, and played in Bukowina a major, if not dominating role, in commerce, liberal professions, and first of all in culture. And there was quite an active cultural life in Bukowina, not only before 1918, but also after that, until it took an abrupt end in the early 1940s with the physical extermination of most of the Jewish population and with the Diaspora of the few who survived. The man who is considered today as the greatest German post-war poet—according to *The New York Times*³ even the greatest post-war European poet, Paul Celan, was born in Czernowitz and spent the first 25 years of his life there, before emigrating via Romania to France. He survived the ghetto only because, due to a curfew, he did not sleep at home the night preceding the deportation of his parents. The poet Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, with whom I was remotely related, perished in the camps of Transnistria at the age of 18. She continued to write even in the camp. Joseph Schmidt, born in (the neighborhood of) Czernowitz also found a tragic end during the war. In 1942 this famous tenor, dubbed the German Caruso, was fleeing from the Nazis. He asked for and was refused asylum in Switzerland. He then crossed illegally the French-Swiss border and was interned in a camp, where he died, at the age of 38, because of an inadequately treated cold. His fate had impressed me in particular, not only because I liked his voice very much, but also because he was a cousin of a Czernowitz

schoolmate of mine, Ari Rosenbach, who used to tell me in the 1930s about him and his musical career. I met Ari again, incidentally, after about 40 years, in Sao Paulo. Here I also met Martha Radsprecher, another former Meisler schoolmate of mine. Both Ari and Martha had managed to escape from Romania shortly after 1945. Two other Meisler schoolmates I met after war are Margot Gottesmann-Ringwald who lives now in Basel and Friedel Sonntag, who lives in Tel Aviv. Friedel managed to escape from Romania in 1951 already and has been the first PhD of the Weizmann Institute.

The Diaspora list of German language poets and writers coming from the Bukowina is much longer. All of them spent the rest of their life abroad. To mention just a few names and the countries they went to: Moses Rosenkranz — Germany, Gregor von Rezzori (who wasn't Jewish) — Germany and Italy, Alfred Gong — USA, Klara Blum — China, Manfred Winkler — Israel, Immanuel Weißglas — Romania, Alfred Margul-Sperber — Romania (he had been a friend of my father), Rose Ausländer — Germany, Alfred Kittner — Germany, Ninon Ausländer-Hesse (the wife of Hermann Hesse) — Switzerland. Last but not least, I should mention also that the famous scientist Erwin Chargaff, the discoverer of the DNA formula, was born in 1905 in Czernowitz. He worked and spent most of his life in the USA, where he died in 2002.

My Languages

Although in 1918 Romanian was spoken by part of the rural population, for the rest of the population of Bukowina it was a foreign language. An appreciable proportion of the rural population spoke Ruthenian, while in Czernowitz and most other smaller cities (like Storojinets, where my father's parents, brothers and sisters lived) most people spoke German. Until the end of the First World War in 1918, German had been both the official language and the language of culture, and it maintained its dominating role, both in

commerce and in culture, also under Romanian rule, in the period 1918–1940.

In Czernowitz appeared five daily German newspapers and in the cafés one could find every day not less than 150 newspapers, mostly in German, from all over the world. In the libraries and bookshops German books dominated. Some of the newspapers published in Czernowitz circulated all over the Europe, and in particular in Austria and Germany, even after World War I, when Bukowina was attributed to Romania. The following quotation from Friedrich Thorberg, one of the most important Austrian writers of the 20th century, is quite significant from this point of view: “The real and definitive end of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire happened with Hitler’s entry in Vienna, that is twenty years after its political dissolution in November 1918. The curtain was drawn only when the *Prager Tageblatt* and the *Czernowitzer Morgenzeitung* were not anymore on the tables of the Viennese cafes.” That explains why, although I was born in 1930, when Czernowitz belonged to Romania, my native language is German. In the elementary school I attended in the period 1936–1940, at the Meisler School, German was taught from the very first year.

I mentioned the cafés. Like its big brother, Vienna, the pre-war Czernowitz I remember was a city of *Kaffeehäuser*. The Austrian cafés were a kind of extension of offices and flats, where people spent an appreciable part of the day. My father and the brothers of my mother frequented them quite often; my father used to play chess in cafe *Bellevue* situated on the *Ringplatz*, between *Rathausstrasse* and *Herrengasse*, and I sometimes accompanied him to kibitz. I found this café reproduced on a 1905 photograph of Czernowitz in the book by Florence Heymann: “Czernowitz, Etincelles de Mémoires,” published in 2003. *The Ringplatz*, where the city hall was located, was the central place of the city, its *Times Square*, and the *Herrengasse*, with its elegant fashion shops, its *Fifth Avenue*. My two uncles from my mother’s side Mendel and Moritz Haber used to go to café *l’Europe* on *Herrengasse*. They were businessmen exporting wood among others to Holland, for the construction of dams. Bukowina produced and exported all over Europe a lot of

wood, in particular beech. The name Bukowina comes probably from the Slavic word *buk* or the German word *Buche*, which both mean beech. In German Bukowina is also called *Buchenland*.

But Czernowitz was first of all a city of culture. According to some historians, at the beginning of the 20th century there were in Czernowitz more bookshops than bakeries. No wonder Celan called Bukowina the land populated by people and books. In Czernowitz there was a big theater hall, where regular performances of theater, opera, and classical music by local and renowned visiting companies and soloists took place. In 1847 Franz Liszt performed there, and in 1867 the famous singer Adelina Patti did too. The crown prince of Romania specially came from Bucharest to attend her concert. More recently, the renowned opera star Viorica Ursuleac who was born in Czernowitz and who would become Richard Strauss' preferred soprano, creating many of his compositions, performed in Czernowitz in the period 1923–1924. In the 1930s the famous German actress, Ida Ehre, acted there.

As far as I remember, in the cafés one would mostly hear German. At home we spoke German. My parents spoke also a little Ruthenian; they used it when they addressed the maid (until 1940 there was always a maid in our house, although my parents were not really wealthy; thus we never had our own house or flat) or when they wanted to say something that was not for my ears; at that time I did not understand Ruthenian at all. I had to learn Ukrainian and Russian in 1940, when the Northern Bukowina (and Bessarabia, which had also belonged between 1918 and 1940 to Romania), were occupied by the Soviet Union. That I had to learn simultaneously two Slavic languages, Ukrainian and Russian was due to the fact that Bukowina was integrated into the Ukrainian Republic of the Soviet Union, but Russian was the official language of the USSR. These two languages differ only slightly. That made it for me quite difficult — I was ten years old — to assimilate these languages, the more so because I did not have the opportunity to practice them. The local population continued to speak the languages they were used to. I refreshed in my mind the little Russian I had learned from 1940–1941 during my university studies in Bucharest, since in Post-War

Romania, like in all Soviet satellite countries, Russian became an obligatory foreign language. While I never reached a level in Russian sufficient to read poetry for example, I managed eventually to read physics textbooks and papers and later, in the 1960s, I gained my existence by translating these into Romanian.

Part of the Jewish population in Bukowina also spoke Yiddish. Since Yiddish is essentially a German dialect (Mittelhochdeutsch), except that it is mostly written with Hebrew characters, I understood roughly this language, too, in particular after I attended the Yiddish school in 1940–1941. Under the Soviet rule German or Romanian schools did not exist anymore. However I never really succeeded in speaking Yiddish. When somebody spoke Yiddish to me, I used to answer in German. Besides my one-year Yiddish school there are a few more circumstances when I heard Yiddish which left an impression in my memory. In chronological order they are: before the war an employee of my father used to read the Yiddish newspaper *Heint* (in Yiddish *heint* means today), which appeared in Warsaw. *Heint* was considered a very serious newspaper, something like the Jewish *The Times*. One day I visited my father in his wine cellar where I found him listening to a quotation from this newspaper, in which a very pertinent analysis of the political situation was made, with particular emphasis on the imminent danger Hitler-Germany represented for peace in Europe.

Another contact with Yiddish that comes to my mind is that of the Yiddish Theater. In 1945 when Czernowitz was again part of the Soviet Union, the famous Yiddish theater of Moscow led by Mikhoels gave a few representations there. I was much impressed, not only by the exceptional quality of the artists, but presumably also because that was the first time after the war that I went to a theater (like many other prominent Soviet Jews Mikhoels was killed by Stalin during the anti-Jewish campaign at the end of the 1940s).

In the ghetto I had the first contact with English and I fell immediately in love with this language, probably because it represented for me the language of freedom. A former Oxford student gave me a few lessons and after that I continued on my own,

with the help of the Eckersley manuals. After 1945, when we were again allowed to own a radio set, I became a regular listener of the BBC broadcasts (this habit has continued until now, except that now I watch the BBC on TV) and that essentially completed my English “studies.” I started to practice it in the 1950s, writing my physics papers (with the exception of my first two papers, which appeared in Romanian, all my physics papers and books were written in English) and then in talks and conversations, at first with foreign colleagues who were visiting Bucharest or during my first visit to Dubna in 1958, and later, after 1969, when I moved to the free world. In 1970–1972, in the USA, I gave my student courses in English and even after 1974, in Marburg, I often lectured in English, because we frequently had foreign visitors, collaborators and graduate students. Most recently I even ventured to write fiction in English and it happens quite frequently that I express myself more easily in English than in German, my mother tongue. In the first years after I moved to Paris I used English with my French colleagues, since my physics French was not yet adequate. Actually, most physics keywords used in French are anyway English, which makes the use of English often unavoidable.

The language problem was particularly serious for people with certain professions and my father belonged to that category: he had studied law at the German University in Czernowitz and Business at the Vienna Academy of Commerce, and because of the change in 1918 of the official language from German to Romanian, he could not exercise in Czernowitz his law profession. This was probably one of the reasons why he spent, after 1918, several years in Prague, where he kept a bookshop. I realize now that, given his passion for books, that has probably been for him the ideal profession. At the end of the 1920s he returned to Czernowitz, married and opened a wholesale wine cellar. He had two or three employees and this gave him enough time for reading. His interests covered most fields of intellectual activity. Dr. Max Weiner was among others a recognized expert on old languages like Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. I remember that we had, among others, frequent visitors from the

Theology Department of the University of Czernowitz, who came to consult my father on certain unclear points in the translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek and Latin. Later he learned also Romanian and eventually was even able to translate Romanian poetry into German. My mother, Pepi, called Pupzia by her family and friends, although she had lived under Romanian rule for twenty-five years, did not speak Romanian at all.

My Family

My father's family lived in Storojinets, a small city about half an hour by car from Czernowitz. It was a big family composed of my grandparents, four sisters of my father with their families and four brothers; only one of these brothers was married and had a family. The fifth brother was living in Toulouse. He had studied there in the 1920s electrical engineering and had then settled down in France. I never met him; he died in the fifties, before I came to the West. In the late thirties I met, however, his wife Alma and their two year-old son Guy, when they visited the family in Storojinets. During the war this branch of the Weiner family survived, hidden in Southern France. I would meet again my aunt and my cousin 35 years later, when I went to Paris for the first time, during my London stay. In 1941 my 75 year-old grandmother (my grandfather had died before the war) and my father's four brothers were deported by the Soviets to Siberia. With the exception of the grandmother, who died of exhaustion on her way to Siberia, they somehow survived. I saw this part of my family only many years later. Actually, I met my cousin Rosi again only in 1989, when she, together with her family, managed to come out of the USSR. She was at that time a grandmother already. (When we had parted in 1941, she was 13 and I was 11.) In 1942 the four sisters of my father and their families were deported to Transnistria, this time by the Romanians, who during 1940–1944 were the allies of Germany. Three of them lost there their husbands and one lost there her six year-old only child.

My memories of my mother are much more reduced, because I lost her at the age of 13; she died in 1942 at the age of 43 because of inadequate medical treatment in the ghetto. I remember her as a beautiful woman who was very much loved by my father and by her (and my father's) family. She had one sister and two brothers. The sister lived in New York since World War I. I never met her or her family. She died in the late 1940s, soon after we had re-established mail contact. The younger brother, Moritz Haber, lived in Czernowitz and the elder, Mendel had moved, during the twenties to Czechoslovakia, where he married, and then he moved to Poland. At the end of the thirties he returned with his family to Czernowitz. My uncle Moritz and his wife Rosa committed suicide in 1942, when they were about to be deported to Transnistria. From a neighbor of theirs we learned that the police, who came in the early morning to fetch them, gave them fifteen minutes to prepare themselves. They went to the bathroom where they took both potassium cyanide. My mother knew that they had obtained this poison, some weeks before, from a befriended pharmacist. They had no children. I still remember my mother's desperate look when she returned from their home, where to the police had called her, to take care of the burial arrangements, so that their flat could be immediately at the disposal of some German or Romanian official. They lived on the same street — Wassilko Street — as Paul Celan's family. Paul Celan's parents were deported on the same day and perished in Transnistria. A plaque in the house where Celan's family lived reminds us about this most famous son of Czernowitz.

Menziu, his wife and their daughter survived the ghetto, but their son, in trying to escape from a labor camp in Romania, died in 1943, at the age of 19, when the boat, which was supposed to bring him to Palestine, was scuttled.

While my grand parents were religious, my parents were not. Nevertheless, presumably to please our grandparents, important Jewish holidays were kept in my parents' house. Even the religiousness of my grandparents has to be qualified. When at the beginning of the First World War my father was mobilized

into the Austrian army, his father accompanied him to the railway station. Recruits were supposed to bring with them food that would resist the heat for several days (it was summer). On the way, my grandfather, who was aware that my father didn't care about religious prescriptions, stopped at a grocery's and bought for my father some smoked ham. For a practicing Jew who was not allowed to eat pork, that was a sin. My father, who had been very much impressed by this gesture, told me this story to illustrate how parents' love overcomes religious prescriptions. Unfortunately, this does not always happen.

Czernowitz had a big and beautiful temple and very many synagogues; the Nazis destroyed most of them in 1941, including the temple. However, before the war my father used to take me more often to a Catholic Church — the Polish Church — which was in our neighborhood, to listen to the organ music, which he, and later on I too, enjoyed very much. (He was also a great lover of classical and opera music, in particular that of Wagner, and my mother told me that he had chosen my first name as a tribute to this composer). The liberal attitude of my father towards religion was also reflected in his frequent contacts with Christian theologians. He remarried in 1945 and lived in Focșani, in Romania, where he worked as an accountant, a boring and badly paid job. After Vienna, Prague, and Czernowitz, the small city of Focșani was quite a change for him. Among many other things, he missed very much his books, which he had to leave in Czernowitz, and the atmosphere of the Austrian cafés, which had survived in Czernowitz also during the Romanian period of 1918–1940. My father died in 1962 in Bucharest at the age of 72.

After leaving in 1945 I visited Czernowitz once more, in 1958, with the occasion of my trip to Dubna, to meet some members of my father's family who had returned from the deportation in Siberia. I spent only two days there, but that was enough to realize that this was not the city I had known. Except for some buildings, which had survived the war, it was for me a strange Soviet city, but which triggered in me terrible memories. In the last years, due

primarily to the growing interest in Celan's poetry, Czernowitz has become for Westerners a place of cultural pilgrimage; regular trips are organized, among others, from Berlin and it appears that the city has profited from these developments. Although this cannot revive what is gone forever — the city of people and books — this process is to be welcomed as a tribute to the heritage of European civilization.

My Schools

Between 1936 and 1940 I attended in Czernowitz the elementary Meisler School. This was a private school where all students and teachers spoke German, although the official teaching language, as demanded by the regime, anxious to romanize the Bukowina, was Romanian. Besides German and Romanian, from the second year on one taught also French. That I have an excellent remembrance of that school is presumably due to the outstanding level of its teachers (I remember in particular Herr Löwy and Frau Singer) as well as to the fact that the four school years I spent there were the only ones in my whole school life when, despite what happened in the world, I had no other worry but just to go to school and to learn.

In the year 1940–1941 under the Soviet regime, all children of school age in the “liberated” territories of North Bukowina and Bessarabia had to repeat the school year because, from one day to another, the teaching language had changed. Instead of Romanian one had the choice between three teaching languages: Russian, Ukrainian or Yiddish. In all schools, however, the study of Russian and Ukrainian was obligatory. Although the majority of the population still spoke German, despite the fact that according to the Molotov-Ribbentrop treaty the non-Jewish Germans had left for the third Reich, German was not taught anymore. The same applied to Romanian despite the fact that a large part of the rural population was Romanian. What concerns Romanian this arbitrary political decision had to do with the creation in the former territory of

Bessarabia of a new Soviet Republic, the Moldavian Soviet Republic, the official language of which was Moldavian. Moldavian was nothing else, except by name, than Romanian, but the rulers made a point to consider it a different language so that they could justify the creation of the new republic in occupied Bessarabia. To make this artificial distinction more believable, they decided to change the alphabet of the language from Latin to Cyrillic.

While the annexation of Bessarabia by the Soviet Union is easier to understand, because before 1918 Bessarabia was part of Tsarist Russia, for Bukowina this does not apply; this region had never belonged to Russia. According to the same imperialistic logic of the Communist regime, children in Bukowina had to study in school Russian *and* Ukrainian as main languages. To make this sudden transition easier for me, my parents sent me to the Yiddish school. Although I understood many of its words because of their German origin, I could neither speak, write, nor read Yiddish, although I knew the Hebrew alphabet used in Yiddish. (As a concession towards my grandparents, I had had before 1940, private Hebrew lessons). Still, at home, we, like the majority of the urban population, continued to speak German.

There are two things which I remember from that school year: I came in contact with the Yiddish literature and in particular with the writings of Shalom Aleichem, which I liked very much. However my Yiddish was not good enough and in order to really understand them I ended up reading them in German translation. The humor of this writer roused in me the interest for good jokes. It is perhaps at the root of the fame of Jewish jokes, which, like Shalom Aleichem's writings, very often leave you with a taste of bitterness and sadness.

The second thing which I remember of that school year, was that the teachers told us that God does not exist and that religion is an invention of the exploiting class. Although my parents were not religious, I hadn't heard before such radical statements, neither at home nor at the Meisler School, and the first thing I did was to ask my father whether this was true. My father gave me then my first lesson of philosophy. According to him, the statement "God

doesn't exist" was quite primitive and essentially meaningless, as long as the concept "God" was not defined. For my father the most satisfactory definition of God was that due to Spinoza, which can be summarized by the equation: *God = Nature*. In this sense God does exist because who would deny the existence of nature? To support his point of view my father quoted some famous names like Goethe and Einstein who were adepts of this pantheistic philosophy. These names were familiar even to me. At the age of seven my father had taken me to my first Opera performance, Faust, by Gounod. To understand the story I was given to read Goethe's play, which my father knew by heart. My mother rightly objected that it was too early for me to understand this deep philosophical work.^b In fact, I was not so much impressed by the philosophical meaning of the deal between Faust and Mephisto than by the magic tricks of Mephisto, by the ballet of the opera and by the beautiful hall of the Czernowitz theater, a vestige of the Austrian past, which I visited for the first time. Goethe's name came up, of course, also in the German class of the Meisler School, when we read some of his poems. Whether Einstein's name was also mentioned in school I do not remember. It was, however, mentioned in politics discussions among adults at home, as an example of the absurdity of the Nazi regime, which had forced his greatest scientist to leave.

Philosophy was not the only subject my father introduced me to. As a matter of fact, almost my entire education in the period 1941–1945 was homemade and due to my father. I also benefited from my father's marvellous library of several thousands books, mostly in German, which miraculously escaped the war events until 1945, when we left Czernowitz for good. The only book of his library, which my father took with him and which I still have, after so many "changes of residence," is a very old — the printing date is 1609 — edition of the Bible in four different Latin translations, one from Hebrew, one from Greek, one from Aramaic and one from

^bMuch later I would also understand Goethe's statement "He who has art and science also has a religion, but those who do not have them better have religion."

literary Latin in everyday Latin. My father had used this bible in his comparative translation studies. For me this book has of course much more than bibliographical value and I hope that our daughter Diana Free will continue to keep it. Among the other books of my father's library I remember of, besides the complete works of classic German writers and many volumes of English and French literature in German translation, are his chess books (he was a passionate chess player) and the complete edition of *Die Fackel*. *Die Fackel* was a famous Austrian literary journal, which appeared in Vienna between 1911 and 1936. Its founder, editor, and, from 1911, sole author was Karl Kraus, one of the greatest Austrian writers, critics and authorities of German language. My father who had spent several years in Vienna had known him personally and was a great admirer of his. I have been reminded recently about this unique personality of Viennese culture reading the autobiography of Erwin Chargaff, who had also been strongly impressed by Kraus. Last but not least I also found in my father's library a book by Moczowski on Einstein's theory of relativity. It was a popularization book with very few formulae and served its purpose very well; it made me curious and avid to learn more about this fascinating subject. It opened for me a new horizon, that of the ever expanding frontier of human knowledge. I was first of all surprised — shocked is the proper word — by effects like contraction of length, dilatation of time, twin paradox, which sounded like science fiction. Among these strange effects there was one in particular, which impressed me most: the equivalence between mass and energy. And quite soon, I would have a concrete opportunity to guess what it really meant.

In 1943 the Jewish community of Czernowitz attempted to organize a private school with Jewish teachers. My father had taught me some Latin, German and Math, so that I was accepted into the third grade of lyceum,^c which, however, I never finished, because the Romanian authorities closed the school after only two months. In 1944, after the reoccupation of the Bukowina by the Soviets, I

^cThe Romanian secondary school "lyceum" was based on a eight year system, which ended by a final Examination, the "baccalaureate."

did not attend school either, because children of my age (I was 14), as well as women (men were mobilized to the army), were taken to work in the coalmines of Donbas. For a few months I kept hidden and did not go out on the street, because there were raids and women and children were sent directly from the street to the labor camps. For this reason, when we moved in 1945 to Romania, our first stop was Suceava, a small town in Southern Bukowina, where I passed, in two months, some equivalence examinations, which entitled me to enter the sixth grade of the lyceum. In Suceava I also had an experience which would play a decisive role in my future life.

In 1941 the Soviets, before leaving Czernowitz, had requisitioned and then burnt all the radio sets to insulate the population from any contact with the outside world. (After the war this Soviet disinformation policy would continue by jamming Western broadcasts). During the following ghetto period under Nazi-Romanian rule Jews a fortiori were not allowed to possess or even listen to radio broadcasts. The first time we had again this opportunity was after war in 1945, when we moved to Romania. During the two months spent in Suceava we started to listen again to the BBC news broadcasts. In the small pension where we lived there was a radio set in the sitting room, where guests used to gather. One evening, it was on the famous August 6, 1945, the broadcast was interrupted and the speaker announced that the US Air force had dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. There were not many people in the room who understood what this meant, but everybody was shocked. My father explained to me that this had to do with the relation between mass and energy of Einstein. This impressed me very much, and since I could not follow the details of this explanation, it remained recorded in my mind as one of the (many) things I would like to understand in my future studies.