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My family roots were in the Bukovina, a small region at the foot of the Carpathian mountains. Before the 1914–18 war life was good there… but I was born in 1914 and unfortunately arrived too late to taste the good life in the Bukovina. Primarily because my grandfather needed an operation that could only be carried out in Hungary, the entire family moved to Budapest which is where I was born. My father found work there at the pawn and so settled there for good.

We were Jews but of the highly assimilated variety and our 'Jewishness' did not mean that much to us. True, on feast days my father would go to the synagogue but not with any particular enthusiasm, but my mother preferred avid reading of German literature. Moreover, Hungary in those days was very tolerant and we lived well.

Things began to change in 1920 when we were deported because of our nationality; in fact my father was an Austro-Hungarian citizen, but once the war was over, our native city of Czernowitz was annexed to Rumania and we became Rumanian nationals.

The situation in Rumania was far from tragic however; indeed the Rumanians had done away with the social laws and labour laws bequeathed by the Austrian Empire, laws that were very forward-looking for their times. And so, at the age of 14, I started work in a

textile plant which is where I first heard workers talking and striking poses, so much so that I was keen to know more and to educate myself. So I read the works of Marx, Bakunin, Engels, Proudhon, Tolstoy, Babeuf and lots of others; all in the German language of which I had a good command.

Remember also that Czernowitz was still feeling the impact of the October revolution and the sizeable Jewish community was leftwards-looking, thanks to its being made up largely of workers: 80,000 of the city's 120,000 inhabitants were Jews and at least 15,000 of those worked in the city's factories. In 1931 when I was 17, I made the acquaintance of an extraordinary 50 year old possessed of universal learning: he used to chat with me about the Kabbalah, Descartes, Nietzsche and the Talmud. It was through his teaching that I began to understand anarchism rather than through its history of barricades, riots and bloody revolutions or through the enunciation of abstract theories. No; he used to speak to me of a classless society where every man would be responsible and where no one would have any power over his neighbours; I had finally stumbled upon the libertarian outlook for which I had long been blindly groping.

1933 was a crucial year, what with Hitler's advent to power and we youngsters were traumatised by what was going on in Germany; we saw Germany as our main cultural reference point and German anti-Semitism created a rift between many of my comrades – forced to rediscover their own Jewish roots, which drew them towards Zionist positions – and those who, like myself, were left cold because the whole idea of fatherland played no part in my internationalist anarchist outlook. I wanted to feel like a citizen of the world. In 1934, after the republic was declared in Spain, I made up my mind to leave but they would not issue me with a passport because I had my military service to do. So I decided to leave clandestinely for Poland, but I was picked up and sent back to Rumania where a court martial convicted me of desertion. In January 1937 I was released from jail and assigned to my naval

fusilier unit in Galatz, but in June that year I deserted again and spent four months crossing Europe until I arrived in Paris where I discovered that things in Spain had gone sour; the anarchists were losing ground to the Stalinists and the CNT-FAI was no longer looking for volunteers. So I was left an onlooker far removed from the Spanish tragedy. But in 1939 when France was attacked by the Germans I promptly joined the first foreign volunteer unit. However, I was demobbed the following year and things took a turn for the worst for me and my wife Golda, both of us being political activists and Jewish. We stayed in France, living in hiding, having no papers. When in 1941 the police started to round up all the Jews in the 11th arrondissement, it was blatantly obvious that the time had come for us to clear out, but Golda was arrested at a checkpoint because of her identity card's being so obviously a forgery. She was sentenced to ten months in prison in Caen and so I went to ground in Paris.

After the war I reestablished contact with the anarchist movement and along with other militants we decided to publish a Yiddish language newspaper to communicate with the new influx of Jews coming from eastern Europe and who could not, as yet, speak French. This was born in 1949 *Der Freier Gedank* (Free Thought). I had difficulties with this because my knowledge of Yiddish was poor, but we were greatly helped by Rudolf Rocker and the editors of the US newspaper *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*. It was an exciting experiment that lasted until 1966 when we decided to shut down the paper because by then the children of our immigrant readership preferred reading French or English, which means that our paper had outlived its usefulness.