

Arnold Leinweber



This is me, Arnold Leinweber, riding my bicycle in the Baneasa woods [in the outskirts of Bucharest], in 1937. Bicycles could be rented. The cap is part of the uniform of the vocational school. I was born in Bucharest on 12th August 1920. I liked to wander through the fields. I never played soccer, I didn't like it, but I played other kid games: marbles, 'arsice', 'capra' [leapfrog], 'cal de print si de imparat' [prince's and emperor's horse]. You had to throw the marbles in the hole. If you didn't miss any throw, you were the emperor. If you only managed to put five marbles in the hole, you were the prince. If you put four, you were the emperor's horse, and if you put three, you were the prince's horse. A fifth boy threw the balls, and the result could turn the emperor and the prince into horses and the vice-versa. The emperor and the prince were afraid of the result, while the horses

thrilled with anticipation. This was the whole game. I particularly liked 'turca' [tipcat]. There was a square piece of wood with a number on it that you fixed near a line. Then you threw a stick [the 'turca'] at it, and, according to the number on the wood, you had to throw it again, gaining ground or losing. These were the games that we played at school. The girls liked 'sotron' [hopscotch], or played with the ball and the jump rope. These were the innocent games of our childhood. Since we lived in the Aparatorii Patriei quarter, we would go to the Berceni Dr., which was full of caravans of carts loaded with vegetable and fruit. Of course, we, the kids, followed them and cried: 'Won't you give us a tomato or a pepper? May your horses live long! Won't you give us a water melon, Mister? May your horses live long! May you have a good sale at the marketplace!' The people were good-hearted and they gave us peppers, eggplants, tomatoes and water melons. We would eat the tomatoes and the water melons on the spot, in the ditch by the side of road. The drive was on higher ground, and there were bushes on the edge of the ditch. Everyone put down his 'harvest', and we didn't go home for lunch anymore. The first time I came back home with fruit and vegetable in my shirt, my mother was scared and astonished: 'What happened to you?' She was preparing to beat me. 'How could you beg?' - 'Well, all the other kids did it, so I did it myself!' This was part of the fun too.