



Laura and Enrico Fermi

The Fermis' Party

Thus, early in December 1942, I gave a large party for the metallurgists who worked with Enrico and for their wives. As the first bell rang shortly after eight in the evening, Enrico went to open the door, and I kept a few steps behind him in the hall. Walter Zinn and his wife Jean walked in, bringing along the icy-cold air that clung to their clothes. Their teeth chattered. They shook the snow from their shoulders and stamped their feet heavily on the floor to reactivate the circulation in limbs made numb by the subzero weather. Walter extended his hand to Enrico and said:

"Congratulations."

"Congratulations?" I asked, puzzled, "What for?" Nobody took any notice of me.

Enrico was busy hanging Jean's coat in the closet, and both the Zinns were fumbling at their snow boots with sluggish fingers.

"Nasty weather," Jean said, getting up from her bent position to put her boots in a corner. Walter again stamped his feet noisily on the floor.
