

My Friends Who Fled To Palestine



This is a picture of all my friends who fled from Thessaloniki to Israel in 1943: Hector Florentin (second from left), Nina Florentin (third from left, standing), Charles Pessah (seated, first from right), Boubis Nissim (third from right, standing) and next to him, his wife. The photo was taken in Tel Aviv in 1945.

There were no separate groups at school at the time. We even socialized with students from all classes. Such as Hector Florentin, who was younger, and Pessah who was in the same class with Mico Alvo, two years younger than me. I did form friendships very easily then. It was a closed circle, a small circle. I had four or five dear friends with whom I used to meet and go out more often. Boys and girls. Nina for instance was in our company.

Nina Florentin was my classmate in the second class of the school, but during the second year of the baccalaureate she dropped out. She did not have the background to acquire it. The courses were difficult and during the baccalaureate we were only five in class. We didn't have too many girls in the last two grades. Before the war they left in order to get married. They didn't care that much and their relatives were not so keen on educating the girls.

School finished at one thirty. Then I returned home with my mother, grandfather and my brother. We finished lunch around 3-4pm, and then I went for a walk. I met my friends somewhere. Then at night I studied. The neighborhood I went to was Gravias, because this was where my friends were. One was Hector Florentin, the other Moise Agi, who lived a little further down on Martiou Street, and the third one who now lives in Barcelona., was Charles Pessah. There were two or three more. They were all Jewish and were my classmates.

We met at Gravias where they lived and then we went for a walk. We went to patisseries nearby, such as 'Ivi' on Georgiou Street. This patisserie was owned by a Christian and it wasn't one of the

student's parlors. It was, however, convenient since it was in the neighborhood where my friends lived. We went there and talked for a couple of hours and then we returned home.

During the war, I saw Hector and Nina when we lived in Alexandras Street, in Athens. Maybe we met by accident because we lived in the same neighborhood. And I went to see them. I went a few times. Nina and Hector escaped through Euboea by boat. But we did not have money, so there was no such chance.