

Elsa Perahya With Friends



This photo was taken on 12th June 1931 at a picnic near the Göksu creek [on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus] we organized as the young members of the Cercle Israelite de Haidar-Pacha. The young girl on the right is Elsa, my wife-to-be, and the one on the left is Claire Pardo. The young man in the back is Serkis Kalebcıyan. I was a member of the Social Benevolence Association of Haydarpasha [Cercle Israelite de Haidar-Pacha, Israelite Circle of Haydarpasha] in my youth. From 1931 to 1936 I served as the president of the literature division of this association, 'Cercle Litteraire,' as we used to call it. We used to gather in the Cercle's locale twice a week, usually after 8pm, organizing conferences, debates, concerts, meetings and the like. In Haydarpasha we had many Muslim, Greek and some Armenian neighbors. I don't recall any anti-Semitic incident - neither in the

neighborhood nor in school - I don't recall even hearing anything to imply such a thing or any alienating feeling. On the contrary, in our association, there was one young Muslim man named Fahir Selami, whose father was my teacher of Turkish language, and one young Armenian man named Serkis Kalebciyan who could talk Judeo-Spanish much better than we did. In the orchestra we founded, Elsa Angel played the piano, Fahir Selami and I played violin and Serkis Kalebciyan played the wind instruments. We also had a library that we youngsters were managing as well. I've kept the records and correspondences of this organization and I still have them today. Generally we went to the famous hotel of the time, the Belvu in Fenerbahce to dance. Naturally, many love affairs blossomed during these gatherings. I also got to know my first wife, Elsa, in this organization.