

# Albert Arditi

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Istanbul

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*I am honored to have met with Albert Arditi, an architect who spent most of his life in the Kadikoy district. I had the chance to get together with a man who is always so witty as to say “Not you again?” when he sees me, so honest as to wholeheartedly convey to me his religious and political perspectives, and so knowledgeable and honest as to narrate to me what his life has been all about. Albert Arditi has a true passion for nature, and as such, owns a house with a great view of the sea. What he loves most is to have a cup of coffee in front of that view, sitting across the seat from his wife. His wife is a woman who deeply cares for Jewish traditions. She always offers me some of the wonderful delights she cooks for Shabbat [Sabbath]. It seemed to me that every corner of Mr. Arditi’s house was filled with pictures of his children and grandchildren. In addition, many of their friends’ gifts were placed in their cupboard. Mr. Arditi is very proud of talking about his life because its pages are clean. On each encounter of ours, he tells me a different story, and then gives me his perspectives on that story. Sharing these with you is truly a pleasure for me... The Nina-Albert Arditi couple and I have become very close over time. “We still have so much to tell you; come back and see us again sometime.” they say to me when it is time for me to leave – “You enliven our life.”*



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## **Family Background**

My paternal grandfather’s name was Avram Arditi. I do not know his date of birth, but I believe he must have been born around the 1800s in Balat [it is a county in Istanbul situated around the Golden Horn shore. This county had a significant Jewish population, and as such, many synagogues. In time, most of the Jews there ended up moving to the area around the Galata Tower]

because he died around the 1900s. I do not have any information on his educational and military background or what he did for a living. All I know is that he was an only child.

My father's mother, Viktorya Arditi [birth date unknown] was also born in Balat. She passed away in 1908. She went to a district school [this term does not represent an Alliance school in the district, but it rather stands for a school where children living in the district went to]. She was a house-wife, and she unfortunately passed away at a very young age.

Back then, the causes of death were not investigated much. The general belief among people was that some bug bites caused diseases such as measles, which was deadly. The use of antibiotics in response to infections was not common. As such, many would say "tuvo una kayntura i se muryo" [Ladino for "he/she caught a fever and died"]. Sometimes, death would be attributed to epidemic diseases such as tuberculosis, typhoid and cholera. In the end though, even the closest relatives of a deceased person would not always know why he/she had died.

My father became an orphan at a very young age...

My mother's father, Aron Saranga, was born in Edirne [a city in the Thrace region], in Gumulcine [a village near Edirne]. The family moved to Edirne after the Bulgarians had captured Gumulcine during the Balkan Wars. Aron Saranga's sister, "La Tia Sihula" [Ladino for "aunt Sihula"] remained in Gumulcine because of her husband. She died there... [Back then, the Balkan Peninsula and Thrace were part of the Ottoman Empire. After the Balkan Wars, Edirne became part of Turkish soil, and Gumulcine became part of Greece's. As a result, the family was dispersed into the soils of two different countries] [1](#) [2](#)

I met La Tia Sihula only once in my life. I was young, but I was very impressed. I was around 6 or 7, and she was 60 years old. She had come over to our house to visit. I remember her playing the lute, and singing to us songs of Rumelia. She had a very nice voice. I specifically remember this song "Alisimin Gozleri Kari." She had said "kari," using the Rumelia tongue, but she had meant to say "kara," which means black. She had black hair. She was an unforgettable woman... ['Tia' stands for 'aunt' in Ladino. It can also be used to denote the elder female persons in a family. 'Onkli' carries the same meaning for the males (uncle), and is used to denote the respected, elderly men in a family]

Aron Saranga subsequently moved from Edirne to Istanbul. He moved to Ortakoy [a district on the European coast of the Bosphorus]. He started out as a livestock dealer [someone who buys and sells livestock]. After he ran into some financial difficulties, he began earning his living as a butcher. He was a tense and irritable man, but he was also a very honest man, who always stood by his word. He apparently had an argument once with the chief rabbi at the time (I do not remember the rabbi's name). Since kosher meat was taxed at very high rates, and was therefore very difficult for the poor to afford, they were forced to eat regular, non-kosher meat. The Jews who deeply cared for the tradition, and wanted to eat kosher meat, had a difficult time in doing so. Hoping to make a difference, Aron Saranga had a heated argument with the chief rabbi. Many, including some members of his family, thought he disrespected the chief rabbi by bringing this issue up. His argument did not yield any positive results.

Mr. Saranga had four siblings. His brother, Dr. Ruben Saranga had attended the military academy, and was a respected man in Edirne. His sister, La Tia Dudu was married to El Tio Isak Eskenazi, and

they lived in Ortakoy. El Tio Isak was an insurance underwriter as part of the Sark Insurance Company, and a volunteer rabbi at the Yenimahalle County within Ortakoy. He did not receive any financial remuneration for his work as a rabbi. The couple had lost a daughter at a very young age. The cause of death in this instance was also unknown. It is possible that it was because of an epidemic disease. Their daughter was around 16-17 years of age, and was engaged to a doctor. Her sudden death shook her entire family. She was the couple's only child. She apparently was a very beautiful girl. I remember that we mourned for days; everyone sat on the floor... [old tradition of mourning during the 7 days following the burial of a parent, or first degree relative].

As for his other siblings, there was an Ester Saranga, who was married to a Behar. His other sister, La Tia Sihula, lived in Gumulcine. I do not know who she married.

Dr. Saranga and his wife's marriage account is very interesting. Dr. Saranga had studied at the military academy. During the war, he was appointed major, and was stationed at Necef [a village in Anatolia]. There were not many educated people at Necef at the time. This allowed him to become both the village's governor and notary public. Because of this military appointment, he had to leave his 17-year old fiancée, Ester Saranga, back in Edirne. At that time, La Tia Dudu was already married to El Tio Isak. Dr. Saranga asked El Tio Isak to come to Necef, and asked him to do something for him. He gave Isak power of attorney, requested him to take the letter of attorney back to Edirne, and complete all the necessary steps so that Dr. Saranga could officially be married to the woman he loved. Isak did as he was told, and completed all requirements so that Dr. Saranga and Ester could be declared husband and wife. He took Ester back to Necef, and delivered her to Dr. Saranga. He even had to sign a document stating that he delivered Ester to Necef - safe and sound, and took the document back to Edirne with him for the chief rabbi's confirmation. After the War, Ester and Ruben Saranga moved back to Edirne. They then had two children named Sonya and Leon.

Aron Saranga died at a young age. He had a livestock trading business. My maternal grandmother had become a widower when my mother was only 12. He might have died because of a heart attack; he was a tense, edgy man. He spoke Judeo-Espanyol. He was not too religious, but he did practice Shabbat [Shabbat]. He passed away in 1916.

My maternal grandmother's name was Suzan Sultana Saranga. I do not know her maiden name. She was born in Kurucesme [a district in Istanbul, near the Bosphorus], and lived in Ortakoy. She knew the Rashi alphabet (Back then, this language was taught by rabbis) <sup>3</sup>. She knew tatting. She was a brunette, and she always preferred darker clothing because she was in mourning. My grandmother was a calm woman; she did not raise her voice too much. She was a calm person. She did not directly manage the housework or cooking in the house, but she had overall supervision.

Whenever I think about my grandmother's house, I cannot help but remember the days I was sick... I was in seventh grade, and my parents and I were invited to a wedding. On our way there, I became feverish and my temperature became unmanageable, so my parents took me to my grandmother's house in Ortakoy. It was a two-storey, wooden building. They prepared a bed for me on the ground floor so I could rest. I was confined to bed there for a long time because of typhoid. I had a very high temperature.

My grandmother's house was one that had constant running water, electricity and a coal furnace. She did not have attendants, cooks or maids, who helped her with housework. There was a laundry

woman though, and she was Jewish.

I was sick during my entire stay there, so I do not have very detailed memories about my grandmother's house. Despite this, I do remember that Jewish holidays were celebrated as family meetings. My grandmother had wonderful relations with her neighbors. Both Muslim and Jewish neighbors there got along perfectly well. When I was sick, I remember that they all came by to check on my health, and brought food. There was a doctor named Dr. Aser. He was the most famous doctor in the Ortakoy area. In reality, he was a gynecologist, but it seemed that he could heal all kinds of diseases – no matter what the patient was suffering from [Ortakoy is a district in Istanbul, situated along the Bosphorus. It is an area in which all three religions intersect. The Etz Ha Hayim Synagogue, Ortaköy Mosque and the Ortakoy Church are all within the same area. The proximity of these places of worship for different religions also manifests itself in districts such as Balat, Kuzguncuk, etc... As a result, the solidarity among the Jews, Muslims and Christians is quite strong].

My father's name was Nesim Bensiyon Arditi. He became an orphan at a very young age. It is interesting; back then, his mother's other children got sick after birth and passed away, or she miscarried. No one really knew why this happened. In those years, no one sought to investigate the cause. When my father was born, they named him Nesim ('Nes' in Hebrew), which stands for 'miracle.'

A tradition that follows a similar situation was called Marko Merkada. Whenever a child recovered from a very serious illness, he was symbolically sold to another family. In this way, the child became 'sold' or 'merkada.' It was thought that this symbolic process would change the child's destiny. Yet another tradition was name altering (called 'mesallayim' in old Hebrew). According to this tradition, if a person survived an epidemic disease that would normally result in death, that person's name was changed in the hopes that his destiny also would. The person was usually given a new name from the Torah.

Nesim Arditi was born in Balat in 1898. He lived in Ortakoy for a while, and then he moved to the Kadikoy area. He studied at an Alliance School [4](#). Since he was an orphan, his aunts took care of him, and supported his educational and other needs. He did not want to be too much of a burden to them, so he joined the military by misrepresenting his age.

He served in the military for a long time. First, he actively took part in an operation to free the Suez Canal from English occupation. This was in 1915. Sometimes by walking barefoot in the cold and sometimes using the rail, his platoon arrived at the Syrian border. Passing Jerusalem, the men arrived at the Suez Canal. Cemal Pasa was the commander of the Turkish army. My father was a corporal at the time. The Turkish military lost the fight, and was forced to surrender. This was a very difficult time for all the men as living conditions were very poor, and the lack of proper clothing and adequate food only made the situation harder. The Arabs had rebelled against the Ottoman Empire.

While the army was going to Sivas [a city in Anatolia] though Aleppo, my father froze from the dead-cold in Kangal [a town near Sivas. The name was later given to a breed of dog]. His corporal just left him there to die. One of the villagers pitied him and said to my father "Look, you are at a deadlock and you have only one option to survive. We will bury you in a pile of fertilizer. Otherwise, your legs will become gangrenous and you will die. With the fertilizer method, the freezing will

slowly disappear, but there is a risk. Your veins can burst. The choice is yours.” Deciding that each option was as dangerous and deadly as the other one, my father had no choice but to accept the villager’s offer. His legs healed in time, and he went on the road again. This time, he caught measles, and then typhoid. When he finally arrived in Istanbul, he was very tired and beaten.

When the war was over in 1922, his military unit dissolved. Later on, during the 1940s, he was called on to serve in the 20 military classes. [5](#) In this respect, I can say that my father took active duty in both World Wars.

My father was a respected man. He was not very talkative. He always dressed in suits, and Bossalino hats [an Italian trademark hat company]. Whenever he traveled abroad, he always brought back these hats as presents for his friends and relatives. My dad owned a store called the Kooperatif. Before he became the owner, he had worked there as a regular employee for a long time. The store was in Moda; a modern county back then on the Asian side of Istanbul in which many residents spoke both English and French. My father was considered one of the good, successful workers there because he spoke French [this store was one of the oldest within the Kadikoy area. It was located across from the Armenian Church, and was founded in 1892 by a number of Englishmen. Its ownership was transferred later on]. The store was owned by Englishmen prior to 1924. It provided customers with a variety of products ranging from everyday needs to souvenirs. In 1924, a number of new laws were established by Ataturk [6](#) in order to protect domestic investment, and so it was no longer possible for the English to own the store. They summoned my father, told him he was an honest man and asked him to take over the ownership in return for a small pay-out fee. They also told him not to damage the reputation of their brand and their store. My father accepted these terms, and took over the ownership of the store with a number of Greek-Turk associates.

Back then, Moda County was home to a number of elite Levantine and English families. [7](#) As such, the stores had to provide luxury goods. The goods sold in this area were of the highest quality. When Inonu [8](#) became the President of the Turkish Republic, for example, he once visited his sister in Moda, and had the opportunity to taste some cheese from our store. He liked it so much that he wanted to find out where he could find more of this cheese. From that point on, kilos of cheese began to be transported to Cankaya [the name of the presidential palace where Presidents of the Turkish Republic reside throughout their term] by rail. Being the son of the store’s owner, my father began giving me the responsibility - since I was 16 - of managing all food preparation for the parties we attended.

My mother Fortune Saranga was a serious and trustworthy woman. She managed our home affairs, and was our family’s permanent counsel. She was the first person whose advice everyone in the family requested. Not only did she observe events with an objective perspective, but she also had the ability to reconcile people’s differences with her compromising tone. She could always get others to do what she wanted, and she was the one who got the family together.

During holiday celebrations, we had many visitors in our house. My mother was a very elegant woman; she went grocery shopping in elegant shoes and clothing. She had her clothes tailor-made. These tailors generally happened to be non-Muslims. My mother had her hair cut when she was a teenager, but after a certain age, I never remember her with short hair. She would always wear her hair in a bun.

She had a beautiful collection of jewelry. Back then, Russian merchants sold Russian-style jewelry, and my father bought these for my mother. She later on gave her jewelry to my sister as a gift.

My mother went grocery shopping every morning, because my father ate lunch at home. Lunch was considered the most important meal in our family. My mother had a very good eye for meat and poultry because of her father; who had owned a butcher shop. I remember going to the butcher's with my mother once to buy some meat. The butcher placed a piece of meat on the counter, but immediately rescinded after seeing the look on my mother's face.

My mother was a helper, but she did this confidentially. I remember going to a government office once after she died. One of the ladies who worked there asked me if I knew my mother. I responded "Of course, I do." But, she said "Not only you, but people like us who received so much support from her know your mother too, and we will always remember her." I never found out what kind of support my mother had provided to this lady.

Although she had a tranquil-natured personality, my mother was still a 'Saranga.' Like every Saranga, she occasionally flared up in anger. But, she never yelled at her children. In any case, my sister, Viki, was the mascot or the princess of our house.

My mother usually directed her anger at my father because he did not always take the best care of his health. The religious holidays were also a problematic subject between them. Since my mother was the elder of her family, she usually invited everyone else over. However, she would drive herself to exhaustion during the first night of the Holidays because she did not have support staff that helped her with grocery shopping or cooking. We would always tell her that we did not want this much food and in this variety, and that all we wanted was to see her at the dinner table on the first night of the celebrations. She would not understand though. Holidays meant food, and that equaled my mother being sick - and, of course, crowded dinner tables. Her tapadas were the best [this is a dish from Edirne, its cooking instructions are provided at the end].

My mother had five siblings. Yuda Leon Saranga immigrated to the United States in 1912, when he was 14. He started working in a factory there. He later became a trade-union chief, and married his wife Suzan. They had a son named Aron. In 1953, Yuda Leon Saranga and his family came back to Istanbul by ship. His wife was originally from Canakkale. [the Dardanelles] On the night the ship passed through the Bosphorus, they did not sleep all night long because they were so excited to see the city of their ancestors even if it was from a distance.

When my grandmother Sultana Suzan Saranga saw her son after all this time, she raised her hands towards the sky and cried "Atyo Santo" [Ladino exclamation for "my dear God"]. It must have been extremely unnerving and exciting for her to see her son at 40 years of age because he was only 14 when he left the country.

The ship they traveled on was an Italian vessel. Yuda did not eat much at the beginning of the journey because he thought there might be pork in the food served on the ship. Later on, he became very close to the entire crew, and had them cook him a nice, hearty dish of pasta. When the journey ended, he and the chief police officer left the ship arm in arm.

My mother's sister, Sara Saranga, later changed her last name to 'Kohen.' She gave birth to two children named Besim and Erol. Both of them are living in Israel today. For the longest time, they

operated a toy business. Erol's wife's name is Teri Adut, and Besim's is Zizi.

Her other brother, Salamon Saranga married Simbul Mizrahi, and they lived in Balat for a long time. They never had children. Beki Saranga married Izak Argun. They had two children named Rozi and Albert. Rozi is living in Israel today, and Albert is in Istanbul.

How my parents first met could be considered romantic. My father had a walking stick; it was fashionable to use one then. Kooperatif had a franchise store on the European coast of Istanbul, where my father worked for a while. He used to take the tram to get to and from work, and would frequently see my mother in the tram. One day, soon after my mother got off the tram, he dropped his walking stick right in front of her, and that is how they first met.

In those years, the general convention in the society stipulated that dating was a serious matter, and others expected relationships to result in marriage after a short dating period. My mother's father had already passed away. My father, also a kid at the time, had lost both of his parents. La Tia Dudu (Aron Saranga's sister), who was taking care of my father at the time, was knowledgeable in matters of love and marriage. She asked him "Are you going to marry her?" "Yes, I will" my father replied. Not long after that, my parents got married at the Ortakoy Synagogue. Ortakoy was a very small district, where everyone knew each other, and so it was relatively easier to arrange for these things.

Fortune and Nesim Arditi preferred to live on the Asian coast. I, Albert Arditi, was born in Kadikoy, Yeldegirmeni in 1923 [Kadikoy is a district on the European coast. Yeldegirmeni is a county, whose gardens are full of ivy roses. The area also overlooks the Haydarpasa Bay, and contains many of the old windmills. As such, it is affected both by northeast and southwest winds].

The Kehribarci, Valpreda and Menase apartments built in Yeldegirmeni were generally occupied by Jewish residents. Overall though, I can say that there were an equal number of Turks and Jews living in Yeldegirmeni. There were not a lot of Armenians and Greeks. The pharmacist, tinsmith, fisherman and the glazier were Jewish. There were two butchers in the area that provided kosher meat. These were Bensal and Niyego butcheries. The pharmacies in Yeldegirmeni were also different. One could easily find ready-to-go medicines over the counters within the pharmacies, but made-to-order medicines were sold more frequently. Pharmacology, of course, was an important element of pharmacies, but so was psychology.

In summer time, children played in the streets, and women knitted and embroidered crochets.

## **Growing Up**

When I was born, the street we lived on was called Piyasa Street. Later, when the famous Turkish writer Rezaizade Ekrem passed away, the street was renamed after him. In Yeldegirmeni, there was a 'Kucuk Paris' (Small Paris) neighborhood, which was parallel to the railway that began at the 'Ibrahimaga' neighborhood. The fire of 1922 that erupted in Haydarpasa destroyed more than 400 homes. As a result, about 1000 families became homeless overnight. No synagogues or schools got caught in the fire, but the Jewish families did get their share of this disaster. By the 1980s, there were not a lot of Jewish families left in Yeldegirmeni.

When I think about our house in my younger days, I remember a wooden, three-story house – just like the house I live in today. In those years, my father had just bought the Kooperatif store, and so, most of the money he made provided for paying his debt. Therefore, we did not live in luxury – even though we had everything.

The houses in Yeldeğirmeni at the time were similar to the townhouses today (there were no gardens or a family space in between houses). Because of this, my friends and I spent time in the streets, playing. Our toys and games were not luxurious, but we did have a lot of fun. We played marble games and leapfrog [The marble games consisted of the arranging of the marbles next to each other. The player tries to hit all the marbles with the one marble he has in hand, and the person who is able to hit the most marbles, wins the game and takes the marbles he won with him. So, when other children return home, they ask their parents for money so they can buy new marbles for next day's game. These marbles had different names according to their shapes and colors. The models that had uncommon shapes and colors were in more demand, so they were more expensive. The children even exchanged their marbles] [Leapfrog is a game in which children try to jump over each other when the other person is slightly bended]. We did not have bicycles. The streets had paving stones. We were happy.

In 1926, my brother Henri Arditi was born. By disposition, Henri was a lot funnier than I was – full of jokes. He was a happy child and everyone loved him. When he finished middle school, he went to Palestina [today's Israel before the republic was founded]. He began living in a kibbutz there, but I do not remember its name. He had good relations with everyone there. Unfortunately, he got injured there and stayed at the hospital for a while. Apparently, while playing with a donkey, the donkey hit Henri hard over his heart. Later on, he returned to Turkey and did not go back to Israel for a long time. When he returned, he immediately began working with our father. He married Lizet Haver. They had two children together, Bensiyon and Eli.

Henri passed away in Istanbul in 1987. Lizet remarried, but her second husband also passed away shortly afterwards. She was very different in character compared to my wife. For my wife, her home, husband and children are very important. If need be, she would not eat but ensure that we did – in the truest sense of the word. She had different perspectives on life in comparison to Lizet's. They never really became close friends. But, family is family, so we try to see each other during the holidays because we believe that there should not be resentment among family members. For me, Henri had always been a lot more compromising and understanding. He always put helping family members first. He would wake up in the middle of the night, and prepare food for his babies. In the years that he worked for the Kooperatif, everyone was fond of him. Back then, Kooperatif was the shopping address for the elite families of Istanbul because it sold a lot of luxury items.

Bensiyon (Henri's son) got married in the United States to a lady named Suzan. They had three children together. They later got divorced because of irreconcilable differences. When they got divorced though, Suzan was pregnant with their third child. Bensiyon later got married to a Christian lady. Eli, Henri's other son, got married to a lady named Luna. They had three children named Aron, Esli and Alison.

Henri Arditi was a graduate of middle school, so he continued the family business at the Kooperatif store.



In 1932, my sister Viktorya was born. Viki (short for Viktorya) went to the St. Benoit Lycee [a high school in Istanbul founded and supported by the French]. Viki was considered the princess of our family. She was under the constant protection of my mother, and no one could touch her or say anything negative about her. Viki got married to one of Henri's friends, Isak Levi. Isak Levi was also a well-liked, respected man in his community. Even though he joined our family later on as a 'groom,' his opinions and perspectives were considered to be important in our family. Viki and Isak immigrated to Israel in 1942. When Viki left for Israel, she took my mother's sewing machine with her as a souvenir. The couple had two children named Lea and Hayim. Lea ended up getting married to Rafi Azuz, a man from Bursa [a city in the Marmara Region, Turkey].

Before I continue with the biography, I would like to share with you my views on the common names of my time. There have always been popular names such as Viktorya, Albert, Ojeni, etc... Whenever a name becomes popular, it is fashionable to give children these names in every family. This is because these popular names go all the way back to King Albert and his wife Viktorya as well as Queen Ojeni, the wife of the Napoleon III, and their visits to the Turkish soil. Queen Ojeni, for example, visited the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan Aziz. By giving these names to their children, families believed that the children might acquire noble characteristics.

During my childhood years, Yeldegirmeni was a neighborhood that housed about twenty thousand Jews. When I think about these years, one of the first memories that come to my mind is that my mother went grocery shopping everyday. Every Friday, Leon the fishermen would stop by and tell my mom "This goby is just the right one for you," referring to the fish he was holding in his hand. Once, the goby was so fresh that it actually jumped out of Leon's hands! [Eating fish Friday evenings is an important tradition among the Jewish families of Turkey. Goby is generally the most consumed. It is cooked with plums; a recipe can be found at the end].

Going to the Turkish baths in our neighborhood was something else... I first went to one of these baths with all the women. It was one of those classic Turkish baths... It had a marble basin and a heated marble platform. The attendants in the baths would wash the women. The most important tradition about these baths was that they provided a place for single women to be displayed for possible arranged marriages. Whenever a single woman was ready for marriage, before her family began looking at potential grooms, she would be taken to these baths. In this way, others would be able to observe the woman in a very detailed manner in order to see whether she had any physical deformities. And of course, everyone in the baths would enjoy various delights of food (dolma, meatballs, quiches (borekitas) etc... while this 'display' was underway.

I remember always having support staff around the house. We refer to them as 'femme de menage' [French for "cleaning lady"] today. In those days, we viewed them as an integral part of our house. They would help my mother in cooking, cleaning and laundry. I specifically remember one of them, Nivart, whose husband had gone to fight the war. She had no place to stay, so my mother took her in. She ended up staying at our house until the war ended. We called her 'tantika' [Ladino for "aunt"]. After her husband came back, she still continued to come around the house to help my mother. She was scared that her husband would irresponsibly spend the money she made, so she would give all her earnings to my mother. My mother would watch over her money until she needed it. Her children got into good schools later on, and made something of themselves. Tantika occasionally came to visit us.

I cannot say there was a lot of anti-Semitism in our neighborhood. We all grew up together, like brothers and sisters, regardless of religion. In some cases, children from outside our neighborhood would come to ours to pick a fight - mostly with the Jewish children - but they would generally return disappointed. According to them, we were this neighborhood's Jews. In this respect, we were part of our neighborhood, and we could not be touched by others. If kids from other neighborhoods ever made a pass to our girlfriends, we would strike back, hard. I think there was a stronger sense of solidarity among everyone back then. For example, the village headman for Yeldegirmeni was a Jew named Haribi Nesim. My point is that back then even Jews could govern neighborhoods, towns, etc...

I went to a school named Ecole Communale [this was an Alliance School. The school board and the Jewish community of Haydarpasa considered it an important responsibility to ensure that the school did as well as it possibly could, and so they put considerable time and funding into it. The Haydarpasa Community Student Teacher Regulations are provided at the end]. We considered Mme. Matalon and Mlle. Duba some of our most important teachers.

One of the most important memories in a man's life is his bar-mitzvah. My father was not a religious man, but he knew both the Jewish religion and its traditions well, and added to them his own perspectives. We did not study the Torah in its entirety either, but we did read some of its prayers. My becoming a man at age 13 - my bar-mitzvah - was celebrated in a fairly traditional manner. People did not engage in exaggerations, or elegance races back then like we do in bar-mitzvah celebrations today. The only thing that did not change about the celebrations today is the bar-mitzvah speeches.

My father had taken me to the synagogue, and requested the help of our respected rabbis so that I could gain some religious insight into the process. The rabbi who tutored me told me that he would be the one to prepare my speech, but that I would address it to all my guests during the big night. At that point, my rebellious character came onto the scene. I told him "I want to be the one to prepare my own speech." I figured "if the rabbi prepares the speech, then he should be the one to give it on the night of my bar-mitzvah because they will consist of his own thoughts. I can only promise to do what I can do." My parents did not let me. On top of this, one of my father's friends gave him some very elegant piece of English made fabric so that I could use it for my suit. My father asked me to thank him, but I refused. I told him "You thank him. This present does no good for me, it was given to you." My mother prepared a wonderful selection of recipes for the day of the ceremony (tefilim). She used the best products from the Kooperatif. My father got drunk, and as always, the entire family had a chance to get together.

I wanted to attend the St. Jozef Lycee [French Catholic school] after elementary school. In other words, my parents wanted me to attend St. Jozef because the brother of one his Greek business partners was a bishop at the school, and so could provide us with a significant discount in school tuition. The catch was that I had to take an exam and pass with a successful grade. I began taking private lessons from Mr. Kohen. For some reason, I was not successful in my efforts to convince my parents that my Math and French were sufficient. After a couple of tutoring sessions, I took the responsibility upon myself, and discontinued the lessons. I was quite successful in the exam. Based on my marks, I was given the opportunity to directly begin the sixth grade - without going through the preparatory year for middle school. When I got to the eighth grade, the school board wanted me to restart the seventh grade because they feared a government inspection during which

officials could discover I was too young to be in eighth grade. They were not successful in their efforts though.

When I think about my time at St. Jozef, one of the first things that comes to my mind is the passing away of Ataturk. Everyone knew that he was very sick. I remember staring at the flags in the school with everyone. If one of the flags was ever hauled down, we would know that he had passed. The time came. We were all in the school yard. Our principal announced "Ataturk has passed away." Everyone began staring at each other. I remember our English teacher asking us to all go back to our classrooms. He said "Please take out your books and notebooks, and continue to study. This is what Ataturk would have wanted from you." I remember going to the Dolmabahce Palace. The Palace was extremely crowded. People were crying, moaning and staring with a blank expression on their faces. Our house had a view of the sea; I remember watching the people carrying Ataturk's coffin. They carried the coffin by sea, and passed through Izmit on their way to Ankara. Ships from several different nationalities followed the one which was carrying his coffin. On the landside, people were walking in the streets in the hopes of glancing at the great man's coffin one last time.

### **During the War**

I graduated from St. Jozef with the highest honors (Prix d'honneur). In the 1940s, the government required Math teachers to attend the military, so our French teacher began to teach us Math. He was given two books. One contained the questions, and the other, called 'livre de maitre,' contained the answers to those questions. He would ask us a question, and give us a grade by comparing the student's answer to the answer key. I remember what happened when it was my turn to answer a question. I solved the problem, and found the correct answer, but my solution did not follow what was in the answer key. Our teacher first did not know what to do, but he ended up giving me the full points for the question.

I also have fond memories about my Literature classes. We studied Divan Literature [there is an important movement within the Turkish Literature called the Divan Literature. The Sultan and other respected, elite persons in the Ottoman Empire placed significant importance on this type of literature, which was influenced by Arabic and Farsi. It is written using constant lines of poetry and form]. At the same time, I started learning Hebrew. When I received an extremely good grade from one of our Divan Literature exams (the language of the Divan Literature and Hebrew were very similar), my teacher was surprised. He summoned me to his office, and asked "How come even the best students in your class did not receive a grade close to what you received? How did you do this?" I told him that I was also learning Hebrew, and he was convinced. He gave me the highest grade that had ever been awarded to a student till that point.

When I was a senior in high school, World War II erupted. It was from that point on that I started observing signs of anti-Semitism...

Back then, every senior had to take a 'graduation exam' [this exam was one that every student had to pass right after graduation from the high school. It was not administered by the school, but rather by the government. Even if a student graduated successfully from his/her high school, it was not possible to be considered a high school graduate without passing this exam]. This exam covered subjects such as Turkish, Mathematics, Science and Philosophy. I liked all of those

subjects.

My Philosophy teacher had graduated from Sorbonne University. I remember that I was taking a Philosophy exam once; all of my friends had cheated from me. Realizing this, my Philosophy teacher had failed me...

Anyway, back to the exam... Every student also had to take what was called the university exams after graduation in order to be able to attend a university. Students who failed this exam had to enlist in the military. I wanted to attend ITU [Istanbul Technical University- it is the best engineering school in the country]. ITU accepted its students after only one test, but only the elite or really successful students, who came first, second or third in their class, generally made the cut. Because of the graduation exam, I forgot about ITU and began studying for this test. I received 8 out of 10, and finally graduated from high school.

As for the ITU exam, I was not sufficiently prepared, but I did take the test anyway. During the exam, I began to doze off. A person, whom I found out later to be a professor, told me "Do what you can, we will see what happens after the test." What he told me made me realize the seriousness of the situation. I began answering the questions with all my power. The result was not too positive. I could not get into ITU, so I began attending another technical university that was recently founded.

One day, I read in the newspaper that ITU was currently accepting students that were previously waitlisted. And, my name was on that list. My mother wanted me to become a doctor because there were many doctors in our family, but I knew I wanted to be an engineer. Mathematics came easily to me... I was very happy while studying engineering, and I have always liked what I did for a living.

I had the opportunity to form wonderful friendships at ITU. Suleyman Demirel [9](#) and Necmettin Erbakan [10](#) were both my classmates there. An important feature of the educational program in those years was that our faculty contained both Architecture and Civil Engineering students. Today, both fields are distinct, but back then, we had the opportunity to graduate with two different degrees, as stated on our diplomas.

Students attending universities also had to take a mandatory course pertaining to the military. The Architecture and Civil Engineering faculty took this class together with the faculties of Literature and Fine Arts in an amphitheatre. An army officer taught this class. When I was a sophomore in college, the officer in question began teaching us the Wealth Tax. [11](#) What I remember was that he was not teaching the subject in an objective manner, but he rather added his own subjective views. He would say "The Wealth Tax had to be implemented to save us from the non-Muslims. They nearly robbed us of all our businesses. Now we will have a chance to see what they can do without any capital." When they heard this, all of my classmates began looking at me - wondering if and how I would respond. I remember smiling back at them in extreme sorrow because my family had personally been affected by the taxes as well. But, I believe that if there is one thing a person should not lose - no matter what - that is his honor and dignity.

After the Wealth Tax had been implemented, my father's capital drained. My family went through very tough times. But, amongst all of those tough times, we were still able to find hope. The tradesmen, from whom my father bought wholesale goods for his store, came to the rescue, and

embraced my family. They told my father “Whatever you see in our stores is yours. Take whatever you want, and you can pay us back whenever you can. This is what we have to do for you.” They encouraged my father tremendously. It was as if life had restarted for us...

I, on the other hand, decided to drop out of college. I had lost all my hope. I was thinking to myself that one works, earns, and then the government confiscates. So, he begins again, earns only to have the government confiscate everything again... I decided that I would not accept this. I stopped attending my classes, and received failing grades [in those years, students who did not receiving passing grades from a course had to take a completion exam during the subsequent semester].

I took the completion exam without having studied at all. All 10 of us entered the classroom, where the exam was taking place. The professors were going to ask each one of us a question. After the first question, I began observing my classmates. Seeing that no one was going to answer, I called out “I am ready,” and responded to the question. The professor screamed “Get out!” I did not understand. Even if I got the answer wrong, I still had two more tries. Of course, in those years, vindication was unheard of. I left the classroom, and told my friends that I did not understand what had just happened. 10 days later, our grades were posted. I had received 20 out of 20!

I went to the professor’s office to thank him for the grade, but I could not help but ask him “If you were going to give me a full mark for the question, why did you ask me to leave the classroom?” He responded “You are as lazy as they get, but you are smart, and this is why you were able to figure out the answer to the question. Not only that, but you managed to come up with a simpler explanation than the one I had provided before. No professor would want to cheat from one of his students.”

That was how I decided to continue my education. By the time I was a senior, however, anti-Semitic events at school had significantly increased. That year, all seniors had to participate in a graduation project called the diploma project. For this purpose, a German professor was brought to ITU to help the students. His name was Kohl Bonatz, and his son was an SS Officer. After the War ended, his son was arrested, and it was a matter of time before they arrested him as well. One of the professors in Turkey, Emin Onat Bey, who at the same time was the Rector of our university, thought it would be more beneficial for both parties if Mr. Bonatz was brought to Turkey to teach instead of languishing in prison. Mr. Bonatz was a very educated, knowledgeable man. I remember being extremely afraid when I first saw him. At that time, my psychological wounds from the War were still fresh. The interesting thing about those times was that - contrary to what I had expected - I did not see gentlemanly behavior from my Turkish professors. It was instead Professor Bonatz, whose demeanor towards me was decent. When I look back on the anti-Semitic experiences I went through during the diploma project, I see that the Turkish professors were the ones who exhibited those types of behaviors, not Professor Bonatz.

For the diploma project, the students were given a task to come up with a plan to build a hotel (its interior, exterior - the works...). The project was expected to be beneficial to passengers arriving to and leaving from the Yesilkoy airport. After I completed a 3-4 page paper, I presented it to my professors. They looked through everyone’s project, and separated mine from the others. One of them told me “If you would, can we please put your project up on the board so that your classmates could benefit from your insights?” I was extremely happy, but later on, I found that I

had failed. The professors had failed two more students like me; one of them was Russian, and the other was a Jew living in Izmir. We all wanted to resubmit our project, but the situation was getting worse. We realized the professors were determined to fail us. Therefore, we decided to take the problem as far as the Minister of Education at the time, Hasan Ali Yucel. He was both a customer and a good friend of my father's. After hearing us out, he had to put in a good word on behalf of us to the university professors. Only then, were we allowed to graduate.

In order to start working, I had to go back to ITU first to get a certified document stating that I had graduated from the university. I went to see the Rector for this purpose. When he saw me, he asked "Where are you going tonight?" I responded "To celebrate my graduation." [Back then, whenever one bought something new of importance or succeeded at a difficult task, friends, family and relatives got together to celebrate. This celebration is called watering the diploma]. The rector told me I could not go to the celebrations, and I asked "Why not?" He said "You have to be in Ankara by tomorrow morning. I found you a job there. I promised people that you are going to help build the Anitkabir" [the mausoleum dedicated to Ataturk. His coffin lies there]. I asked him "Can I leave tomorrow morning instead of tonight?" He responded "I think you did not quite understand. You are starting your new job tomorrow morning." I could not disagree with him. I went to Ankara by train [it is the capital of Turkey. It is approximately 500 km. away from Istanbul. In those days, it took about a 12-hour train ride to get to Ankara from Istanbul]. I was on the train all night.

In Ankara, I worked both as an architect and civil engineer for the building of Anitkabir. Most of my other colleagues worked either as an architect or an engineer. Helping in the construction of Anitkabir is my proudest work of all. For the construction, I had the opportunity to work with one of my university professors such as Emin Onat. He and I worked in the area where Ataturk's tomb resided. This area does not have a lot of decorations; it is mostly made up of soil samples taken from the 67 cities in Turkey.

Ataturk's tomb is built towards the south in accordance with Islamic traditions. However, his mausoleum is built towards the Ankara Castle. Anitkabir has a beautiful flagpole, which was constructed by an American-Turkish gentleman. Special transportation arrangements had been made so that it could be carried from Istanbul to Ankara. I was the one who was given this wonderful opportunity to prepare and install this flagpole, which was 33 meters in height.

One of the most important amongst my later projects has been the construction of the Hirfanli Dam [this dam is one of the most important river dams built in Turkey. It is situated along the Kizilirmak River. Kizilirmak rises from Middle Anatolia, and flows into the Black Sea. It is the longest river within Turkey]. I had seen an ad in the newspaper by the George Wilton Company, which was looking for a civil engineer. I applied for the job, and was called in for an interview shortly. During the interview, they asked me what I did for a living. I responded "I am an engineer." The company executive asked me "What does that mean?" When I said "What do you mean what does that mean?" he began counting to me all of the subgroups under engineering such as mechanical engineering, mathematical engineering, etc... He wanted to know which one I was. I told him that I could do them all.

I was accepted to work on the project for a trial period of one month. They wanted to see what I could do first. My first assignment there was to build the wooden model and maquette of a tunnel that was 9 meters in diameter. After a few prototypes, I realized that some of the calculations for

the maquette were not entirely accurate. I had the prototype model remade a few days before the groundbreaking ceremony. We were able to keep our noses clean; we presented an accurately made model there. Two days after the ceremony, the executive officer gave me the keys to one of the buildings, and told me that I was officially hired as a chief construction engineer.

Since I had to relocate for my work on the dam, I took my wife and daughter with me. Those were difficult days. We were living in an area of lower socio-economic status that also lacked a strong infrastructure. The engineers' first responsibility was to construct the dam, and then work on the implementation of a stronger, environmental infrastructure. I remember my daughter getting very sick with a high temperature. I remember being extremely worried.

Another one of my strongest memories from those days is celebrating Passover [Pesach] across from the beautiful Kizilirmak view. We prepared the Seder, and celebrated Passover with another Jewish family residing on the construction site. Mr. Danon was also an engineer for the Dam project. I was already acquainted with the Danon family back from Yeldegirmeni. The family had relocated to Zonguldak for a project before moving onto the Kizilirmak Hirfanli Dam project. Mr. Danon and his wife, Julia, had a daughter named Nora. This was a wonderful coincidence, because there were now two Nora babies residing on the construction site for the Hirfanli Dam. I learned that Mr. Danon later ran into difficulties in finding work. He even offered me to be his partner for some new work, but I did not accept. I heard they later immigrated to Israel.

Suleyman Demirel [one of the most important politicians in Turkish history. He held many political offices; the most important being the President of the Turkish Republic] and Necmeddin Erbakan [also an important politician, he held the office of Prime Minister] were my classmates from college. When Suleyman Demirel was an executive in the Water and Sanitation Ministry, he came to visit the Hirfanli construction site. When my company's executive director introduced us, Demirel said "How are you Arditi?" He used to always say that to me when we were going to school together. The executive director was shocked. He asked me why I never told him I knew Demirel. I responded "You never asked."

I had the opportunity to meet with Demirel on a number of different occasions after that. When he was elected President, he threw an elegant dinner party in honor of his university classmates from ITU. We all wanted to go to Ankara to congratulate him anyway. He invited us and our wives to a beautiful reception at the Presidential Palace.

Back to the Hirfanli project... I had taken my annual leave in Istanbul that year. When I returned back to Ankara, a big surprise was waiting for me. The Company had hired a new foreman [a graduate of an engineering lycee. Foremans did not have engineering degrees from universities], and I was to work under him. I told my superiors I could not do that. When I submitted them my resignation, I was told "We realize you are the one with the degree, but this is how it works around here." In the meantime, the Turkish Executive Director of the Company had called me in and told me he gave me a raise. I told him "I did not resign because of money. If I had, you would have known." I asked him to kindly accept my resignation, and provide me with a letter of recommendation. I unfortunately had to send the letter back once it arrived. I instead contacted the Company's arm in London to provide me with the kind of recommendation that I was looking for. The Board of Directors there gave me a very strong letter. When I was packing my belongings, the Executive Director told me "This Company has never provided an employee with as strong a

recommendation as you were given. This document will take you far anywhere you want to go in Europe.”

After the Hirfanli Dam project, we relocated back to Moda. Since we did not have a house there, we stayed at my parents' place. My brother, his wife Lizet and their son Bensiyon were already living there as well. In some ways, the family had all come back together again. My parents owned another apartment in the same building they lived; when the lessee decided to vacate the apartment, it was the perfect opportunity for us to move in. Although my mother preferred that I live with my brother and his family that was not possible because Nina and Lizet did not get along very well. Both families also had children. I had all my belongings in storage; I had put them there before I relocated to the Hirfanli area. Moving into the new apartment made sense for us, we were still going to live in the same apartment building with my parents and my brother. We saw each other frequently, and my mother, as always continued to handle our sometimes difficult behavior.

I have very interesting memories about my term in the military. After my training, I was given a diploma that stated my graduation status as a reserve officer. It also says “very good,” referring to the degree with which I finished my term.

### **After the War**

I was enlisted in the military in 1950 as a reserve officer. I actually was enlisted before my mandatory military attendance date. I tried to network as much as I could so that I could finish my military term as quickly as possible. I began my military duties as a naval officer first (assigned to me by lottery). There were not any ranks in the naval forces in regards to architectural engineering, so I was ordered to wear the uniform of ground forces. I worked in the construction of a building in Heybeliada that is currently used as a military school. My commanding officers really liked my work, so they asked me what I wanted in return. One of my painter friends was also in the military at the time. I asked my officers if it was possible to station my friend to my unit so that he could help me with the drawings for the construction. In this respect, I was able to facilitate the relocation of one of my friends, and have him work with me. I knew he was having a very difficult time at his previous location.

On Election Day, which resulted in a victory for the Democrats, a curfew was enacted for military officers. We could not go out on the streets, so I was sitting at the military headquarters. My commanding officer, who was residing at a nearby building close to sea level, summoned me to his quarters. I received permission to leave, and went to see him. I remember seeing a high-rank officer sitting across from my commander. My commander asked the officer to leave, so I could sit down. Rank is a very important concept in the military. To be honest, I was scared because I did not know what to expect. In the meantime, the soldiers in the streets were busy with preparation efforts for the 19 May national holiday. They were performing acrobatic dances on a large, iron construction. My commander asked me whether I thought the construction was strong. I told him that I did not think the construction was sufficiently solid, and that there was a very good chance it could cave in. I also walked him through the steps that should be taken in order to make it stronger and more durable. In this way, I was able to correct some of the construction mistakes, and prevent a possible disaster from ever happening. My observation on this matter was very well received by my commander. From that point on, I can say that I had a comfortable military term. As an engineer, I was given the responsibility to supervise the construction of a railway system.



Back then, there was an exam called the platoon exam. The exam consisted of questions for the purpose of testing what kinds of strategies an officer would implement given a particular situation. I was asked a difficult question. Hypothetically, if I had not ordered my men to withdraw, my platoon would have suffered tremendous losses. But, I was not sure if I was brave enough to say this out loud. In the end, I did, and suggested to my commanders that maybe we should consider a voluntary attempt to withdraw rather than shooting blind at the enemy. I thought that human loss could be minimized this way. I believe that by offering this scenario, I was able to cause a change of mentality in the military. I was able to emphasize the importance of a voluntary and conscious attempt to withdraw. I was rewarded by full marks on my diploma.

My wife, Nina Siltan, was born in Beyoglu in 1932. She graduated from the St. Benoit Lycee. She has a brother and a sister. Her older brother, Salamon Siltan was born in 1928. He and his wife, Luna Barokas, have two children named Robert and Nora, who both live in Israel. My wife's sister, Selma Siltan, was born in 1940. She has two children named Davit and Sila. She lives in Istanbul.

I met my wife at a restaurant in Yesilkoy [a county close to the Ataturk Airport. It is a luxury neighborhood known for its greenery and one-story houses] through one of my cousins. My cousin had seen my wife making home-made tomato sauce. He said it was very good tomato sauce [Back then, during the summer, people used to make lots of tomato sauce in preparation for the winter. Tomatoes were scarce during wintertime. One was considered to be a very good house-wife if she knew how to cook tomato sauce, because this was a very rough task, and one had to know the ropes if she were to prepare it well]. My cousin believed that my wife could be a very good house-wife, and so he wanted to arrange a proposition meeting between me and her [proposition stands for the arranging of a meeting between a woman and a man by a third party for the sole purpose of marriage. Back then, women and men, who had met by proposition, generally ended up marrying each other shortly after].

After my wife and I went out a couple of times, we decided to take our relationship to the next step, and began discussing our engagement. This, of course, marked the beginning of the dowry discussions between our families.

[At this point, Mr. Arditi's wife, Nina, begins to reiterate those discussions.]

At first, our families could not find a compromise. My brother wanted to cancel the engagement. We had a summer house in Yesilkoy, and we used to go there a lot. Just as we were leaving for Yesilkoy, Albert's mother called. She asked my mother if she would accept the following terms for our marriage: Albert's family would agree to the dowry, but my family would first have to agree on what was called a 'mezafranka' [the term is used for a son-in-law, who lives with the family of his wife after the couple gets married. The duration of the stay is predetermined before marriage takes place. During this period, the wife's parents support the newly married couple financially. In this way, the couple gets a chance to save money. This process often became a subject of discussion during dowry talks]. Other dowry items (las kamas) such as bedding and pillow sets were to be provided by the bride's family.

My mother accepted these terms, but she did not initially tell my father about the mezafranka and the bedding sets, etc. when he came home from work. That night, Albert and his family came over to our house.

During this entire process, nobody asked what I had thought about marrying Albert. I actually had not made a final decision yet. I was not sure. I ended up being the silent party – if you will – in all this. That week, there was a bar-mitzvah at the Haydarpasa Synagogue. My parents sent me there as Albert's date; they thought it would be good for me to go. After all, he was *ijiko cudyo es* [Ladino term for "Jewish boy"]. All the guests at the bar-mitzvah thought I was Albert's fiancé. I remember one more thing. When I used to go to the summer cottage in Yesilkoy with my family, Albert would come, visit me there. I would expect to go and meet him at the train station, but he would ride a cab. When I asked him why he did not take the train, he would say to me "I could not wait for the train. There were 10 minutes left for departure." Albert never did like to wait for anything for too long; he has always been a quick-to-act type of person. When he visited me, he would tell me that he wanted to be the one to take me out and show me around. This, of course, flattered my pride tremendously. In short, I "*me topi espozada*" [Ladino term for "I found myself engaged"] to Albert, and "*no me demandaron*" [Ladino term for "they did not ask me"] – nobody asked me anything.

In the end, my mother did tell my father about the *mezafranka*, and she took care of the other dowry items herself, using the money she had saved up. Our witness at the wedding was Dr. Garti, who at the time was the president of the Jewish Community and a Mathematics professor. My family is really big; we had so many relatives that we did not want to cause any trouble in the family by choosing one relative as our witness. By choosing Dr. Garti, we had the opportunity to avoid breaking anyone's heart, and to show our respects for the man.

[Mr. Arditi narrating]

My wife and I got married on the 24th of June, 1953, at the Hemdat Israel Synagogue in Yeldegirmeni [As the name implies, the Hemdat Israel Synagogue was opened with the permission of Sultan Albulhamit. [12](#) It was constructed in between two parallel streets; Uzunhafiz and Izzettin Streets. The Chief Rabbi's district chief, Moshe Ha Levi, made the official announcement on the 8th of April, 1899, that the construction of the synagogue had been completed, and that inauguration events were going to take place. It is known through the synagogue's archives that Baron Edmund de Rochild had visited the synagogue on Yom Kippur day in 1899. Rabbi Yitzhak Saki is one of the most important personas of the synagogue. Other important persons, who are closely associated with the synagogue include Haim Nahum and Hayim Moshe Becerano].

The location of the wedding (on the Asian coast) put a lot of pressure on my wife because all of her family and relatives were living within the European side. Back then, there were no bridges connecting both sides of the city. All transportation consisted of cars and car-ferries. On top of all this, my mother-in-law was deadly scared of the water. It really became a huge burden for the Siltan family to attend the wedding...

We did throw a beautiful dinner party. My wife had her wedding gown made at a dressmaker in Galatasaray [a district in Istanbul, where most of the luxury stores of the time were located. It is sometimes referred to as Pera. In addition to having stores which sold European goods, the district was known for its leading fashion houses and luxury restaurants. Galatasaray was the heart of night-life back then].

Before moving to our first house in Moda, my wife and I stayed at my mother-in-law's house in Kuledibi for about a year and a half. I had a very difficult time living with my wife's parents. There are many reasons for this. First, my mother-in-law's cooking was entirely different than my

mother's. The second problem was that my office was located in Moda, and traffic to and from Kuledibi was a huge problem. Waiting for the tram, checking for ferry schedules was not for me.

I came home one day, and told my wife Nina "Look inside my pockets." She asked "What is it?" I had a rent contract in my pocket. I had rented an apartment on the third floor of a building in Moda - without asking her. The apartment was overlooking the water. I knew that this was going to be a difficult step for Nina, because she was pregnant. On top of this, it was going to be her first time living on the Asian coast.

When we first moved into our new apartment, all we were able to manage was to complete the bedroom. The living room was empty. This was because there were not many furniture stores back then, and so furniture was made-to-order. The completion and delivery would usually take about 6 months. I remember going to the Kooperatif to get ourselves groceries and other kitchen necessities. We had everything set to start living in our new apartment.

We did not have continuous running water in the apartment; only at night would we have access to water. Back then, there were a lot of loaded water lines in Moda. I remember my wife waking up in the middle of the night so that she could fill up the water cans. Our baby would wake up because of the commotion, and she would feed her. My poor wife would stay awake all night taking care of the water issue and the baby's needs.

I myself made it a point to come home for lunch. At this point, my daughter was already born, and my wife had a difficult time juggling everything. I remember her having to go down three floors just to get some bread. She did not have anyone to help her, but she still did not complain much. My wife believed that it was very important for the babies to go outside, and get some air. She would go outside with the baby everyday for two hours - once in the morning and once in the afternoon. She would go up and down those stairs all day long.

Our bedroom was very special in that its furniture and décor was made of rose leaves. Before my wife and I got married, we had wanted to order a bedroom set, but she could not decide on a model. She was very sad; she cried. I decided that - as an architect - I would draw a prototype bedroom set myself, and see if she liked it. She did, and so I had every detail of it made with extreme care. There still is not one blemish on the furniture. The carpenter I contracted gave me a special discount for the bedroom set. He later used my prototype model to construct two more bedroom sets of similar design and quality. He was able to sell them at very high prices. In this way, I can say that I not only worked as an architect in my life, but also as a decorator - even if it was just for my family.

My wife and I had two daughters together. Fortune Tuna was born in Istanbul in 1955. She studied architecture. Some of my old classmates became her university professors. But, Tuna never used this to her advantage. One of her professors even got suspicious once, when he heard the last name Arditi, and asked her "Are you in any way related to Albert Arditi?" She responded "He is actually my father." Her professor then said "Alright then. Take this project back to your father, and ask him to help you on it." He rejected her project submission.

When I completed my work on the Hirfanli Dam, my wife and I were asked to relocate to the United States so that I could work on the construction of a dam there. We thought of our family and

children... We did not want our children to grow up in a foreign culture, so we decided not to leave. However, later when Tuna got engaged to Viktor Filiba, she and Viktor decided to relocate to the United States, and did not even ask for our permission. They just let us know that they had made a decision. We had no choice but to go along with it.

They moved to San Diego, and Tuna began working as a volunteer there for the Jewish Community. She still works as a volunteer at a synagogue. She gives several speeches in an effort to support child education. Among some of her interesting work, she conducted research regarding the Jewish Community of Turkey, and proposed that they were of a Spanish origin.

I remember her making a huge pandispanya [a type of cake], and handing it out to children there. She also has a box collection; she makes colored boxes that symbolize each Jewish holiday (the symbol for each holiday was carved on each box), and sells these at the synagogue. These boxes are made of a variety of materials such as porcelain, cardboard and ceramic.

Tuna changed her name to Mazal in San Diego [Fortune and Mazal carry the same meaning. Tuna is short for Fortune in the Turkish language]. Tuna gave birth to two daughters named Teri Ester and Michelle Nora [Giving a middle name to children is a tradition among the Jewish families of America. One of these names almost always is of Judaic origin].

My other daughter, Nur, was born in 1961 in Istanbul. She is an expert on Infectious Diseases. She married Ivo Benzonana, and they have a son together named Atay. Atay has grown up in our house because her mother has a full-time job. Just like her kids, my wife also took her grandson out everyday for two hours. She would even stay at Nur's house sometimes so Atay could resume his order [Atay is short for Sabetay in the Turkish language]. My wife and I see Nur as our heavenly radiance, and Atay as our light...

Atay is currently 14 years old. He usually comes over to our house after school. My wife prepares quiches and cakes for him. They also come to our house every Friday night. To this date, we have continued to keep these Shabat [Shabbat] dinners as a tradition.

In our family, we have traditionally prepared a Seder table for Pesach. During these Seders celebrated in Arditi fashion, we ate, we drank, and we sometimes even got drunk. We would sing songs, and all members of the family would join in. We celebrated the holiday as a true celebration. But, the woman of the house would get very tired after the holidays. I also remember my mother getting sick after the holidays would end. I especially like celebrating Purim. It is a happy celebration for young people; costume parties are thrown, lots of jokes are made, and children play with rattle-toys. Children loved Purim because they would get lots and lots of candy.

After I got married to Nina, I continued living in Yeldegirmeni. There was an array of strong friendships there at the time. Restaurants, Taksim Public Casino [a famous casino of its time, where celebrities often performed. In some cases, internationally acclaimed artists would perform there as well], Club X were among the places we liked to go. I never liked going to the Prince's islands, and I still don't like it. The islands make me feel as if I am in a prison that is open on all four sides. I get anxious. You miss your ferry by a matter of three minutes, and you end up losing 2 hours of work. I believe that Kadikoy has a place that has all-things-island. I remember going frequently to Yakacik [a high hill situated near the Anadolu hillside. The hillside had a beautiful view, and was famous for its natural spring water]. We would go to Yakacik often for picnics, and eat a wide

variety of different foods we had prepared earlier and Pendik [one would get to Pendik, which was famous for its fish restaurants by train].

I used to sell revenue stamps in my free time. One day, when I was out walking, I found an envelope in the street. My friend became very interested in this envelope, so I sold it to him. Later that day, when I was walking through the Yuksek Kaldirim area, I found some stamp catalogues, and I was intrigued. From then on, I continually bought and sold stamps. Sometimes I bought an Ottoman stamp from a person that was not interesting in having it, and then sold it to someone else. This became both a business and a hobby for me. By selling revenue stamps, I was able to gain an in-depth historical and geographical knowledge. There used be one of those contest shows on TV5; during one of those shows a woman who had responded correctly to a question, raised her hands in the air. She was doing the victory sign with her hands, and saying “A la filateli.” I think that selling stamps is something that truly enhances a person.

My thoughts on being a Shabbatai are that some of them are completely against Jews, and others behave as if they are Jewish. [13](#) I also have done some research on the Karaites. [14](#) I know there are two categories of Karaites. First, there are Karaites of Turkish and of Caspian origin. It is not entirely possible to know who among them are Turkish or Jewish. I am thinking that the Russian Jews in Kiev are possibly Karaite. Second, there are Karaites of Iranian origin; they are the sons of people who study the Bene-Mikva. They are not really open to change; they accept things as given, and are not open to different perspectives on the subject.

We, the people in Kadikoy, were not entirely affected by one of the important policies of the day ‘Citizens, Speak Turkish,’ [15](#) because we were already speaking Turkish among ourselves. No one really had to force us to speak Turkish, and they did not need to anyway.

We were affected by the anti-Semitism in Germany though; we often heard about these occurrences. I believe that these occurrences especially began to generate some heat among us after all of those awful events took place. Maybe, no one wanted to believe they were true. Maybe, there was fear. I remember following the War from a map. I knew that the snake had to be destroyed - no matter what. Everyone heard that Jews were being taken from their homes by force, but there was not much information as to what actually happened to them after they were taken. When things began to break the surface - if you will - it was over... Most of the damage had been done.

I remember that my father was called in to serve in the 20 military classes. He went to Sindirgi to fight. He was not a person to surrender really; he was a very hardworking person so he viewed the military as a sport in some respects. He was the eldest soldier within his unit, so he knew how to get everyone else’s respect.

During that period, I was running my father’s store, and my mother was helping me. I got along very well with Romanian immigrants because I spoke Hebrew. After the War ended, several groups of Romanians had immigrated to Turkey. They would first come to Istanbul, and wait for 7-10 days so that their immigration paperwork could be processed. I had met a young, Romanian woman, and we had spoken in Hebrew. Before she left Istanbul, she told me this “We are the happiest people on Earth. I have come here from Romania; I only know how to speak Romanian. You live in Istanbul, and speak Turkish. Our mutual language is Hebrew. I know that I now have a brother in Turkey.” I

was really affected by what she said...

The establishment of the Jewish State, Israel, was an extremely inspiring event for the Turkish Jewry. We followed the happenings moment by moment. This made us feel complete in a way. We had heard the good news at 3:30 in the AM that evening; we were following what was going on through the New York radio. I got extremely excited when I heard Ben Gurion's speech at the United Nations. What he said that day - "We have founded our Jewish State, and we have named it the Government of Israel" - still gives me goose-bumps.

The events of 6-7th September, 1955, [16](#) were felt in Moda in a significant manner. I did not know what was going on, or what to do because I could not get myself to view this as an anti-Semitic event. This was truly a barbaric event for me. My daughter Tuna was only a month-old at the time. The insurgents trashed my father's store. They turned that beautiful store into shambles. The store, which was known for selling the best of the best, and which was always fully stocked, had almost disappeared. Oil bottles were tumbling onto the streets. We were able to see from Moda what was happening on the other side of the sea. Our relatives had suffered insurmountable losses as well. The insurgents did not take the next step to their destruction; they only destroyed non-Muslims' office buildings and businesses. Many Muslim landlords took their non-Muslim lessees under their wings. I remember my wife watching all the destruction from behind the window curtains, while holding her daughter in her arms. These events were extremely thought-provoking...

We had extremely strong friendships in the Yeldegirmeni neighborhood. Since we had all met each other when we were teenagers, the high level positions or protocols some of us have reached today, did not build a wall between us and our friendships. We discussed many subjects amongst each other. The subjects of religion and Israel were not taboo, but we still did not discuss them much.

I was not really an active participant within the Jewish Community, but I always made it a point to be readily available as an architect whenever I was needed. I personally participated in the construction of the Caddebostan Synagogue. I drew the prototype. I remember submitting the project's details as if they were for the construction of a dance school, not a synagogue. I was called in, and asked "What kind of a dance school is this going to be?" I responded "This is my understanding of what a dance school should be like." We had to request favors from some of our old friends in order to continue with the construction project.

I later worked on the air-conditioning installation and restoration projects for the synagogue. I actually remember calling into attention that the installation for some of the air-conditioning systems were not accurate. Later, there would be some collapsing in the exact installations I called into question. Rabbi Adoni, [the Rav haKal of the Caddebostan Synagogue.], did not get hurt because of the collapsing, because he was aware that I had foreseen these problems. Another project I worked on was the restoration of the Goztepe Kultur Organization (GKD) and construction of its ground floor. [17](#)

I can describe my political affiliation as almost neutral. I tend to lean towards the left a little bit, but I cannot help but think that politicians will always have to lie. I remember asking a worker during the Hirfanli Dam construction project which political party he was going to vote for. It was national election days. He responded "I will not vote for Menderes." [18](#) I asked him why that was, and he

said “This is a predominantly Muslim country. He had wine factories built in this area. How can I vote for him after that?” I asked another worker, and he said he was not going to vote for Menderes as well. When I asked why, he responded “This area is filled with grape vines. Menderes only had one factory constructed in this entire area, but more factories mean more jobs.” What I am trying to say is that I don’t think it is possible to please all of your citizens. This means that politicians have to play for both sides as long as they are actively involved in politics.

I was extremely furious and saddened to hear about the Neve Salom massacre in 1986 [19](#) as well as the attacks of 15th of November 2003. [20](#) For some reason though, I had received word that both of these attacks were going to take place; people were talking about preparation efforts for these kinds of attacks for a long time. I cannot do anything but condone terrorism.

I am currently spending my days with my wife. My daughter Nur, and my grandson Atay have become my biggest support system. Last month, we celebrated Atay’s bar-mitzvah. We had the ceremony at the Caddebostan Synagogue, and then threw him a dinner party at the Goztepe Kultur Organization. Celebrating my grandson’s bar-mitzvah in these venues, on which I have worked with tremendous pleasure, has been a truly exciting event full of pride for me. My wife Nina also shares my sentiments.

#### Haydarpasa Jewish Community Student Regulations

1. The school opens at 7:50 AM with a prayer ceremony, for which attendance by all Jewish students is mandatory.
2. Classes will be held between 8 AM-12 PM and 1-4 PM.
3. Students are required to come to school with appropriate uniforms and school supplies.
4. Students are required to leave their coats and umbrellas in the cloakroom before entering their classrooms.
5. It is forbidden to make noise when going up and down the stairs.
6. Older students are not permitted to leave the classroom during class sessions. Younger students are allowed to leave only with the permission of their teacher.
7. It is forbidden to make noise or yell in the classrooms.
8. It is not possible to leave the school premises before classes end. In cases of emergency, students can see the school Principal.
9. When class sessions end, students should wait for their teachers’ permission before leaving school.
10. After class sessions begin, it is only possible to enter a classroom with the teacher’s permission.
11. Students’ behavior while entering and exiting school premises should be in accordance with the behavior that fits a student.
12. Students who do not return home immediately after class sessions end will be punished.
13. It is forbidden to play in the streets surrounding the school.
14. It is a rule of respect, and therefore necessary for students to greet the teachers they are acquainted with.
15. Students are required to keep their books and notebooks well taken care of.
16. Students, who have behavioral problems, will be suspended.
17. Students, who engage in immoral behaviors, will be expelled.
18. Students who come to school with ripped clothing in spite of all warnings will be suspended.

## Teacher Regulations

1. Teachers are required to observe all general rules and regulations of the school.
2. Teachers are required to sign the teacher's book as soon as they arrive to school.
3. Teachers are required to observe students in a close manner during class breaks.
4. Teachers are required to ensure that entries and exits to and from the classrooms are in tandem with school regulations.
5. Teachers are required to ensure the cleanliness of classrooms before students come in.
6. Teachers need to completely follow the class curriculum.
7. Teachers are required to note the subject and content of each class in the appropriate place.
8. Teachers should not permit outsiders to disrupt a classroom while it is in session.
9. Teachers are not allowed to leave the classroom while classes are in session.
10. It is requested that teachers do not punish students in a physical manner.
11. Teachers cannot seek their students' help for their private affairs or work.
12. The Principal will hold teachers responsible for ensuring that the class book is completed.

## Recipe 1: Gaya Kon Avramila (Goby with Plums)

### Ingredients:

- 1 kg. of goby, approximately 11-13 pieces
- ½ kg. sour plums
- 1 lemon
- Salt and oil or margarine (amounts arbitrary)

### Cooking Instructions:

Each goby piece is cleaned thoroughly. The fish's gills are cut with a specific type of scissors. The fish is then washed thoroughly. The plums are also thoroughly washed, and boiled. After the plums are cooked, they are placed in a drainer, and crushed until the plum's skin and kernel is left. In this way, the water of the plums is filtered. After the plums are mixed with oil and salt, fish is added, and cooked thoroughly to complete the process.

Have a great one! We wish you crowded Shabbat dinners.

## Recipe 2: Tapada De Kezo (De Berendjena)

### Ingredients:

-For the dough:

- 1 tea cup of water
- 1 tea cup of vegetable oil
- 1 tea cup of margarine (melted)
- 3 glasses of flour
- 1 spoonful of baking powder
- Salt

-For the filling:

- 1 water glass of grated cheese
- 2 large potatoes (boiled)



2 eggs

Salt and pepper

If eggplants are preferred, two grounded and cooked eggplants can be used instead.

Cooking Instructions:

The dough ingredients are mixed until dough with a very soft consistency is obtained. If the dough does not stick to one's hand, which means it is ready. Let the dough rest for about half an hour. Then, it is divided into two parts, and the first piece is rolled out onto a tray in a thin style. The mixture of ingredients are mixed, and added onto the dough. Then, the second piece of the dough is rolled out onto the tray - on top of the dough and the mixture. The grated cheese and the egg yolk are added on, and the tapadas are cooked in the oven for about 30-40 minutes. The approximate cooking time depends on the type of oven. Please don't leave the kitchen, otherwise all your efforts might go in vain.

Note: Cutting the tapadas into small pieces before cooking ensures that they are cooked well and thoroughly. Also, please don't forget to grease the cooking tray before preparing the tapadas.

Today, there are pre-oiled aluminum foils; many use these for cooking. Back in the old days, when we did not have ovens at our homes, we used to take the cooking trays to the bakery. This was generally the children's responsibility. The children also had to take the trays back from the bakery once they were cooked. If the baker mistakenly overcooked the tapadas and burnt them, our mothers would say "You must have been distracted playing." If instead, the baker undercooked them, our mothers would say "You must have gone to the bakery earlier to get the tapadas." El ornero (the baker) had a big role in all this.

Every Friday morning, these types of pastries such as laz kozaz de orno, laz bulemaz, laz borekaz, la tapada, were exchanged among neighbors. Everyone would send her neighbors a piece of what she had cooked. This was called gostijo. The plate that was sent to the neighbor, was of course, returned in full with another pastry. There was almost a traffic of plates among all neighbors...

**Glossary:**

### **1 First Balkan War (1912-1913)**

Started by an alliance made up of Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, and Montenegro against the Ottoman Empire. It was a response to the Turkish nationalistic policy maintained by the Young Turks in Istanbul. The Balkan League aimed at the liberation of the rest of the Balkans still under Ottoman rule. In October, 1912 the allies declared war on the Ottoman Empire and were soon successful: the Ottomans retreated to defend Istanbul and Albania, Epirus, Macedonia and Thrace fell into the hands of the allies. The war ended on the 30th May 1913 with the Treaty of London, which gave most of European Turkey to the allies and also created the Albanian state.

### **2 Second Balkan War (1913)**

The victorious countries of the First Balkan War (Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia) were unable to settle their territorial claims over the newly acquired Macedonia by peaceful means. Serbia and Greece

formed an alliance against Bulgaria and the war began on 29th June 1913 with a Bulgarian attack on Serbian and Greek troops in Macedonia. Bulgaria's northern neighbor, Romania, also joined the allies and Bulgaria was defeated. The Treaty of Bucharest was signed on 10th August 1913. As a result, most of Macedonia was divided up between Greece and Serbia, leaving only a small part to Bulgaria (Pirin Macedonia). Romania also acquired the previously Bulgarian region of southern Dobrudzha.

### **3 Rashi alphabet**

A Hebrew alphabet traditionally used for Rashi (Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac, 1040-1105) commentaries of the Bible and the Talmud, it is also the traditional alphabet of Judeo-Spanish. The Judeo-Spanish alphabet also used certain characters to denote the Spanish sounds that are alien to the Hebrew phonetics. Judeo-Spanish religious as well as secular texts were written in Rashi letters up until the introduction of the Latin alphabet, first by Alliance Israelite Universelle after 1860.

### **4 Alliance Israelite Universelle**

founded in 1860 in Paris, this was the main organization that provided Ottoman and Balkan Jewry with western style modern education. The alliance schools were organized in a network with their Central Committee in Paris. The teaching body was usually the alumni trained in France. The schools emphasized modern sciences and history in their curriculum; nevertheless Hebrew and religion were also taught. Generally students were left ignorant of the Turkish language and the history and culture of the Ottoman Empire and as a result the new generation of Ottoman Jews was more familiar with France and the west in general than with their surrounding society. In the Balkans the first school was opened in Greece (Volos) in 1865, then in the Ottoman Empire in Adrianople in 1867, Shumla (Shumen) in 1870, and in Istanbul, Smyrna (Izmir), and Salonika in the 1870s. In Bulgaria numerous schools were also established; after 1891 those that had adopted the teaching of the Bulgarian language were recognized by the state. The modernist Jewish elite and intelligentsia of the late nineteenth century Ottoman Empire was known for having graduated from alliance schools; they were closely attached to the Young Turk circles, and after 1908 three of them (Carasso, Farraggi, and Masliah) were members of the new Ottoman Chamber of Deputies.

### **5 The 20 military classes**

In May 1941 non-Muslims aged 26-45 were called to military service. Some of them had just come back from their military service but were told to report for duty again. Great chaos occurred, as the Turkish officials took men from the streets and from their jobs and sent them to military camps. They were used in road building for a year and disbanded in July 1942.

### **6 Ataturk, Mustafa Kemal (1881-1938)**

Great Turkish statesman, the founder of modern Turkey. Mustafa Kemal was born in Salonika; he adapted the name Ataturk (father of the Turks) when he introduced surnames in Turkey. He joined the liberal Young Turk movement, aiming at turning the Ottoman Empire into a modern Turkish nation state and also participated in the Young Turk Revolt (1908). He fought in the Second Balkan War (1913) and World War I. After the Ottoman capitulation to the Entente, Mustafa Kemal Pasha organized the Turkish Nationalist Party (1919) and set up a new government in Ankara to rival

Sultan Mohammed VI, who had been forced to sign the treaty of Sevres (1920), according to which Turkey would lose the Arab and Kurdish provinces, Armenia, and the whole of European Turkey with Istanbul and the Aegean littoral to Greece. He was able to regain much of the lost provinces and expelled the Greeks from Anatolia. He abolished the Sultanate and attained international recognition for the Turkish Republic at the Lausanne Treaty (1923). Under his presidency Turkey became a constitutional state (1924), universal male suffrage was introduced, state and church were divided and he also introduced the Latin script.

## **7 Levantines**

Levant literally means Eastern Mediterranean, the lands east of Italy (Orient). In a broader sense it refers to the non-Catholic or Protestant East, including Northern Africa, the Middle East, Anatolia and the Balkans. Initially the Levantines were the Western inhabitants (Venetian, Genoese, French, etc., mainly the descendants of the crusaders and traders) of the Byzantine Empire up to the Ottoman conquest (1453). They played a very important role as middlemen in the Ottoman trade with the West. The term took up a pejorative meaning after the British took control of Palestine and Transjordan after WWI, referring to the local population of European origin who had adapted to the local ways and customs as opposed to the European colonists. The Levantines lived mainly in the Ottoman maritime cities (Salonika, Istanbul, Smyrna, etc.) and besides European trade they were increasingly engaged in diplomacy after the Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876), being familiar with the European ways and languages (especially French, the lingua franca of the time). As a result they gained immense power and had a strong impact on Ottoman culture. They were considered the forerunners of 'Western culture' and spread the modern way of life in the Empire.

## **8 Inonu, Ismet (1884-1973)**

Turkish statesman and politician, the second president of the Turkish Republic. Ismet Inonu played a great role in the victory of the Turkish armies during the Turkish War of Independence. He was also the politician who signed the Lausanne Treaty in 1923, thereby ensuring the territorial integrity of the country as well as the revision of the previous Treaty of Sevres (1920). He also served Turkey as prime minister various times. He was the 'all-time president' of the CHP Republican People's Party. Ismet Inonu was elected president on 11th November 1938, one day after Ataturk's death. He was successful in keeping Turkey out of World War II.

## **9 Suleyman Demirel (1924- ), Turkish political leader, president of Turkey (1993-2000)**

A successful engineer, he became leader of the Justice party in 1964, deputy prime minister in Feb., 1965, and prime minister in Oct., 1965. His failure to halt civil anarchy in the form of student riots, leftist agitation, and political terrorism forced the resignation of his centrist government in 1971. He again served as prime minister (1975-80) of a coalition government, but in 1980 civil turmoil led to an army coup. Demirel was ousted, detained (1980, 1983), and banned from politics until 1987. From 1991 to 1993 (now as leader of the conservative True Path party) he was again prime minister, after which he became president. Although the presidency was largely a ceremonial office, a series of short-lived and unstable governments enabled Demirel to acquire considerable power

## **10 Erbakan, Necmettin (1926- )**

Islamic politician and Prime Minister of Turkey (1996-97). Since the proclamation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 (secular state) he was the first leader openly adhering to Islam. Born in Sinop, and a professor of Physics, he lived in Germany for many years. He was the founder of the Welfare party, growing in popularity in the 1990s and the leader of Islamic protests in the 1980s. As a Prime Minister he strengthened Turkey's ties to the Muslim world, yet kept the country's European orientation intact. At home he introduced a number of popular measures, gave support to the poorest and raised the wages of civil servants. His party was outlawed in 1997 by the military and forces fearing Islamization and the escalation of the Kurdish question. (Lexicorient: <http://i-cias.com/>)

## **11 Wealth Tax**

Introduced in December 1942 by the Grand National Assembly in a desperate effort to resolve depressed economic conditions caused by wartime mobilization measures against a possible German influx to Turkey via the occupied Greece. It was administered in such a way to bear most heavily on urban merchants, many of who were Christians and Jews. Those who lacked the financial liquidity had to sell everything or declare bankruptcy and even work on government projects in order to pay their debts, in the process losing most or all of their properties. Those unable to pay were subjected to deportation to labor camps until their obligations were paid off.

## **12 Sultan Abdulhamid II (1842-1918)**

Conservative ruler (1876-1909) of the late 19th century, saving the Empire, once more, from collapse. He accepted the First Ottoman Constitution in 1876 but suspended it in 1878 and introduced authoritarian rule after the Berlin Congress when - due to European Great Power interference - many of his European possessions were lost to the newly independent Balkan states (Serbia, Greece, Romania and Bulgaria). After losing Tunisia to the French (1881) and Egypt to the British (1882), he turned towards Germany as an ally and signed a concession for the construction of the Istanbul-Baghdad railway (1899). During his reign the University of Istanbul was established (1900) and a nation-wide network of elementary, secondary and military schools was created. The Empire went through immense modernization: a railway and telegraph system was developed and new industries were created. Despite the continuous effort of the Zionists he wouldn't allow Jewish settlements in the Holy Land, neither would he give it to the British. Sultan Abdulhamid II was abdicated by the Young Turk Revolution in 1909 reestablishing the Constitution and expelling him to Salonika.

## **13 Donme**

Crypto Jews in Turkey. They are the descendants of those Jews who, following the example of Shabbatai Tzvi (leader of the major false messianic movement in the 17th century), converted to Islam. They never integrated fully into the Muslim society though and preserved various distinctions: they married between each other, performed services in distinct mosques and buried their dead in separate cemeteries. Up until the Greek annexation of Southern Macedonia (1912, First Balkan War) they lived in Salonika and were relocated to Ottoman territory (mainly to

Istanbul) with most of the rest of the Muslim population later.

**14** Karaite: Jewish schismatic sect, founded in Persia in the 8th century. Karaites reject the Oral Law, the Talmud, and accept only the Torah, but have developed their own commentaries. In Russia the Karaites initially enjoyed the same rights and suffered from the same oppression as Jews, however, after the 18th century they were given the right to purchase land. During the Nazi occupation they were not persecuted, as they were not considered a part of the Jewish community. Up until the end of the Ottoman era, Haskoy was the center of the Karaite community in Istanbul; however, they also lived in Karakoy. Today Turkish Karaites are part of the greater Jewish community, but they bury their dead in a separate plot at the Jewish cemetery and mixed Jewish-Karaite marriages still have a problematic status.

### **15 Citizen, speak Turkish policy**

In the years 1930's - 1940's, the rise of Turkish nationalism had the Turkification of the minorities as its goal. The community that was mainly aimed however, were the Jews, with whom the Turks did not have a history of enmity. The Salonican Jew Moise Cohen (1883-1961), who had been in close touch with the Young Turks in his home town in the years preceding the restoration of the Constitution, took the old turkish name Tekinalp and led a campaign among his fellow Jews to encourage them to speak only Turkish to integrate them fully into Turkish life declaring that "Turkey is your home, so you should speak Turkish". In the major culture however, the policy of "Citizen, speak Turkish" was seen as pressure put on minorities to speak Turkish in public places. There was no law to enforce this but it was more of a social pressure to make sure everyone learned how to speak the language of the new country. There was a lot of criticism and verbal attacks and jeers on those who did not comply with this social rule.

### **16 Events of 6th-7thSeptember 1955**

Pogrom against the ethnic Greeks in Istanbul. It broke out after the rumour that Atatürk's house in Salonika (Greece) was being bombarded. As most of the Greek houses and businesses had been registered by the authorities earlier it was easy to carry out the pogrom. The Greek (and other non-Muslim communities) were hit severely: 3 people were killed, 30 were wounded, also 1004 houses, 4348 shops, 27 pharmacies and laboratories, 21 factories, 110 restaurants and cafes, 73 churches, 26 schools, 5 sports clubs and 2 cemeteries were destroyed; 200 Greek women were raped. A great wave of immigration occurred after these events and Istanbul was cleansed of its Greek population.

### **17 GKD**

Goztepe Cultural Association, Jewish social club for people of all ages, founded with the aim of preventing assimilation.

### **18 Menderes, Adnan (1899-1961)**

Turkish prime minister and martyr. He became one of the leaders of the new Democratic Party, the only opposition party in Turkey in 1945, and prime minister after the elections in 1950. He was re-elected in 1954 and 1957 and deposed in 1960 by a military coup, lead by General Cemal Gursel. He was put on trial on the charge of violating the constitution and was executed. (Source:

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/>)

### **19 Neve Shalom Synagogue**

Situated near the Galata Tower, it is the largest synagogue of Istanbul. Although the present building was erected only in 1952, a synagogue bearing the same name had been standing there as early as the 15th century.

### **20 2003 Bombing of the Istanbul Synagogues**

On 15th November 2003 two suicide terrorist attacks occurred nearly simultaneously at the Sisli and Neve-Shalom synagogues. The terrorists drove vans loaded with explosives and detonated the bombs in front of the synagogues. It was Saturday morning and the synagogues were full for the services. Due to the strong security measures that had been taken, there were no casualties inside, however, 26 pedestrians on the street were killed; five of them were Jewish. The material loss was also terrible. The terrorists belonged to the Turkish branch of Al Qaida.