

The Coyas Family



This photo was taken in the year 1936 or 1937. The woman sitting down is my aunt Rasel Deleon. Standing just behind her is my mother Mazalto Coyas. You can see me standing on the left. My younger brother Izak, two years younger than me, is standing on the right. The photo was taken at the Iris Studio in Taksim. This is the first photo taken after my father's death. I have already had my Bar Mitzvah. I am wearing the suit that we had bought from Bahcekapi for my Bar Mitzvah ceremony. My brother is still in short pants because he hasn't had his Bar Mitzvah yet. It has been

a long time since my father died in 1927. My uncle Nisim Amon, who was living with my grandmother, on Simitci Tahir Street, in Kuzguncuk, took us to live with him when my mother became a widow. That is how we moved to Kuzguncuk. Nisim was very fond of his elder sister (my mother). My uncle supported us both financially and morally, as a father would do. My aunt, Rashel Deleon also frequently welcomed us at her house in Yedikule. We would stay there for days. During those times, family ties were very close, and there was a great mutual support amongst relatives. During the years we used to live with my uncle Nisim, my mother was trying to make some money by buying sewing supplies from the wholesaler, and trying to sell them to her friends. Our comfort lasted for 5-6 years, till my uncle Nisim Amon got married. From then on there began a very uneasy atmosphere at home. Sofi Taragano, my uncle's wife, was disturbed by our presence at home. Upon this, we moved into the attic. My grandmother and she couldn't get along with each other either. Their fights were so famous in the neighborhood, that we, the two siblings, would run to our mother in fear, when the screaming started. My mother, who couldn't stand this uneasy atmosphere, decided to leave the house after a while, in 1933, though my uncle never wanted her to do so. After this event, there started a coldness between the two siblings, and they started not seeing each other. That year, my mother started to work for an Armenian dress-maker in Uskudar, for one lira a day (our monthly house rent was 4 liras), in order to make a living for us. She would leave home in the mornings, and go to work on foot, in order to save money. (The distance between our house and her work was 3 km) She would prepare our lunch, before she left. I was 10, and my brother was around 8 years old. We would play with the ball or marbles in the street all day long till my mother came home. We would play with the ball reluctantly, fearing that our shoes, which were already old, would wear out more as we played. My mother, who had become desperate once, cut the upper parts of her boots, which were left from her teenage years, and gave me the cut boots to wear. I often saw my mother crying, and cried also because I couldn't bear to see her cry. We had a lot of difficulty getting by. My father's sister Rasel, who was married to Jozef Deleon was a very kind hearted woman and she would visit us often in Kuzguncuk or invite us to stay at their house in Yedikule. She gave us a lot of support in those difficult times.