

Samuel Coyas And Izak Bonofiel



In this photo you can see me on the left and my best friend during my youth, Izak Bonofiel. The photo was taken in Taksim Square, where we went quite often for outings. The photo was taken by one of the street photographers there on 12 September 1941. I had not done my military service yet. I was working at the cloth shop belonging to the rich Farhi family in Karakoy. I did all kinds of odd jobs and measured the cloth bales. Izak Bonofiel was my best friend. They lived in Kuledibi. He was 2 years younger than me. He was very tall. He was engaged to one of the girls in our group, Suzan. They got married before I did. They had two sons. Our friendship did not go on as before after military service. I think they still live in Nisantasi. Our very religious neighbor, Marko Cerasi,

found my first job. Monsieur Cerasi would say "al ken va vinir a la tefila, le var topar echo" meaning "I'll find jobs to whoever comes to Tefila [morning prayers]". In this way, he encouraged us to go to the synagogue every morning. My first job was to work near a cap dealer on Mercan Slope [a trade center in Sultanhamam, on the European side] for 1.5 liras a week, at the age of 13. My job there was to cut the rough material around the caps, and arrange them. But regular cutting work damaged my hands in a short period of time. All of my fingers got swollen. Besides, the money I received was only sufficient for my ferry ticket. I quit working there after a month and started at another place, which made military uniforms. I also quit that job, because I was paid monthly, not weekly. My mother did not have enough to provide for my travel expenses, all through the month. After a little while, Sami, the son of our neighbor Baruh, placed me as an apprentice at the Farhi Textile Wholesale Shop, in Sultanhamam. I used to do all the cleaning and office boy jobs there. Within time, I started measuring the fabric rolls. The same firm had a retailer branch in Karakoy. Later on they placed me there to work. I stayed in that firm till I was drafted. The Farhis were a rich family. They used to live in the famous "Cumhuriyet Apartimani" [Republic Apartment in Taksim, was a luxurious apartment building which housed the richest families of the time.] in Taksim. Mr. Farhi's wife was the sister of Albert Siyon, the glass king of the time. Unfortunately, the Siyons lost all of their fortune during the Wealth Tax Period. The Wealth Tax didn't affect us, because we were poor. But we heard that a lot of wealthy Jew families like the Siyons, were hurt.