

Beach At Barcelona



This photo was taken at a beach in Spain. I don't remember the name of the beach but it was in Barcelona. From left to right, I am the first person. The girl beside me is Suzi Kohen. She had immigrated to Spain from Turkey. She and her family had gone there a couple of years before me, so that would be in 1930 or so. The man at the right is a Spanish we had.

It was a weekend or holiday in 1934. We went to the beach with some friends. Another friend must have taken this picture but I don't remember who. I used to see the people in this picture

nearly every day when I was in Spain. I even had a room in the house of that girl. I used that room as a workshop where I painted. She was from Kuzguncuk.

I went to Spain when I was 20. How did I decide to go to Spain? Well, when I finished school I started working at an office writing letters in French. This was quite a big firm that was doing 'commission importation'. It was called Rotterman. That was my first job. I was doing the correspondence in French with firms abroad. There was another friend there, from Kuzguncuk [a district on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus where Jews used to live] who was doing the correspondence in German. We were dreaming of travelling. Then one day my friend came and said: "Shall we go to Spain?" and I said: "Yes, let's go". So we decided to go to Spain, find a job there and settle down. Of course, our families started protesting: "Why do you want to go there? You don't know anyone there etc. etc." But we were decided and did not budge.

We left for Spain in 1934. We went to Barcelona. We went by boat. We had the address of a restaurant with us. It was in fact, a kind of café and they served lunch and dinner. The owner of the restaurant was a Jew from Greece, I think from Salonica. So we went to this restaurant and told the owner that we had just arrived and needed somewhere to sleep. He called someone called Joseppe and told him to go and ask a certain lady if she had rooms available. Joseppe went and came back saying that she did, so we took our bags and took the rooms in that hostel. That's how we started to stay there. As for money, I remember that I went to Spain with 50 liras. One peseta was then 50 kurush [100 kurush is one lira], so 50 liras was not a lot of money but it was OK for a while.

At first, we started to sell textile products at open markets and observed what others were doing. Most people were doing this kind of business, so we learned it too, and started doing it. Then I started doing painting work. I was painting ties. My friend couldn't do this work, so he returned to Turkey after one year. I was alone then. I stayed in Spain for 2.5 years. Then there was a revolution during Franco's time [Spanish Civil War, 1936-39]. Franco was in the government and the communists started a revolution. This revolution lasted long years. At first they weren't doing anything to the people. I remember that at that time the Olympic Games were going to be in Barcelona [1936], and my business had been thriving because I was painting ties for the Olympic Games. I was painting the 5 circles, the symbol of the Olympics on the ties. Then in Barcelona, the revolutionists won, the Olympic Games were cancelled, all business stopped and I had to leave. I went to France on a British ship.