

Eli Perahya At A Weekend Party With His Friends



This photo was taken in 1931, at a weekend party at the Belvu Hotel garden in Fenerbahce, Istanbul. I am the third from left, with Albert Nasi and Elsa Angel on my left and Claire Pardo and Moise Campeas on my right. I was 18 years old. I was a member of the Social Benevolence Association of Haydarpasha [Cercle Israelite de Haidar-Pacha, Israelite Circle of Haydarpasha] in my youth. From 1931 to 1936 I served as the president of the literature division of this association,

'Cercle Litteraire,' as we used to call it. About fifteen youngsters, both girls and boys, of an average age of seventeen attended this division. Amongst them were, as far as I can remember, Jozef Alkahe, Salomon Azarya, Albert Nassi, Robert Sarfati, Moris Barbut and my best friend, Anri Kaneti. Later Anri went to Morocco and established himself there. I met him once in Paris, but we didn't have further contact. We used to gather in the Cercle's locale twice a week, usually after 8pm, organizing conferences, debates, concerts, meetings and the like. In Haydarpasha we had many Muslim, Greek and some Armenian neighbors. I don't recall any anti-Semitic incident - neither in the neighborhood nor in school - I don't recall even hearing anything to imply such a thing or any alienating feeling. On the contrary, in our association, there was one young Muslim man named Fahir Selami, whose father was my teacher of Turkish language, and one young Armenian man named Serkis Kalebcian who could talk Judeo-Spanish much better than we did. In the orchestra we founded, Elsa Angel played the piano, Fahir Selami and I played violin and Serkis Kalebcian played the wind instruments. We also had a library that we youngsters were managing as well. I've kept the records and correspondences of this organization and I still have them today. Generally we went to the famous hotel of the time, the Belvu in Fenerbahce to dance. Naturally, many love affairs blossomed during these gatherings. I also got to know my first wife, Elsa, in this organization.