

Suzi Sarhon's School Diploma



This is the back of my primary school diploma with my personal details. They gave me this diploma in 1940 when I finished primary school. It says here I was awarded this diploma as a result of the final tests I took at the end of the 1939-1940 school year. At that time, we had to pass tests at the end of primary, secondary and lycee. It appears I took tests on the following subjects: Turkish, History, Geography, Social Sciences, Arithmetic, Geometry, Natural Sciences, and Family Sciences. And I got grades for Music, Gym and Calligraphy. Overall I got the grade of "Good".

I remember the day we finished primary school. We had pictures taken with our teachers. We had a lot of fun that day and then we also had a graduation ceremony where we were presented with our diplomas.

My father first sent us to some sort of preschool. The law that said we had to study at a Turkish primary school had not started yet. So Vitali and I went to St. Benoit for a couple of years. There were nuns at this school and I had a round cap. Then the law was passed and I went to the state school called "44. İlkokul" [44th Primary School] in Bomonti [a district very near Osmanbey]. There weren't many private schools then. All my brothers and I studied in that school. Of my classes, I liked Turkish best of all. We also had history, geography and citizenship classes. It was interesting because we would learn about all the things that Ataturk had done. Then I went to the "Arts and Crafts School" where I learned sewing and household management.

There was a teacher I did not like in primary school. Why didn't I like her? Well, it was like this: in our school they used to give lunch to the poor kids. One day, there were chick peas for lunch. I asked for some and they gave me a plate but I saw some stones in the food. I told my friend: "the people here are very dirty". She immediately went and told this to the teacher whose name was Nahide. "Sultana said this about you". So the teacher called me and asked me what the problem was. I said it was nothing but from that day on she disliked me. We would go out into the garden and if anything fell or was dirtied she called me to pick things up or clean things up. Then when we were in fifth grade, we had finishing exams [to get primary school diploma]. This teacher asked

me the most difficult questions so she could flunk me but my own teacher did not let her do that. He protected me and I passed.

We had music and gym classes, too but no language classes. I did not feel any antisemitism on the part of my teacher or my friends. There were very few Jews in that school, most of them were "Turks" [she means "moslems"]. I had some very good friends among them. I remember one girl called Remziye for example.