

# Janet Arguete

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Istanbul

Turkey

Date of Interview: August 2006

Interviewer: Feride Petilon

If you see someone with silver hair, sparkling eyes and a young heart on the streets of Buyukada, do not refrain from approaching her. She is Camila Arguete. Even if her name on her birth certificate is Camila, this sweet lady who goes by the name Jana or Janet, has without fail, a message to give to you, or a joke, or a riddle. I shared a few summer mornings with her pleasantly. Here is what she recounted...

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## Family background

I never knew my father's father Menahem Sages and my father's mother Camila Sages. The only information I have about them are their images on faded pictures. My grandfather with a fez, and my grandmother with a headscarf, they had to live during the time of the Ottoman Empire. During the period of Ataturk's [1](#) reforms [2](#) Menahem Sages and Camila Sages was a family who observed religious rules meticulously, who spoke Turkish but did not consider Turkish to be their mother tongue. They lived in Bursa [It is a city in the region of Marmara. It was the capital for a period of time during the Ottoman Empire, with an old historical background, famous for Uludag (Mt. Olympus), its hot springs and silk commerce. Today Uludag is a ski resort].

Menahem Sages and Camila Sages were members of the Jewish community who resided in Bursa (Bursa was the most advanced Jewish community of its time. There were 3 synagogues. Yirush, Mayor, Etz Hayim. All of these synagogues served their own Jewish population flawlessly. The community in Bursa had a Jewish club also. Balls would be organized in these clubs). Among the family members I can remember are Tia Sultanicha and Tia Mazaltucha (Tia: aunt in Judeo Spanish). While my older brother got a spanking for his misdeeds, I would silently laugh to myself, and Tia Sultanicha or Tia Mazaltucha would say "I tu mereses haftona" [Judeo-Spanish term for: And you deserve a spanking] and incite my father needlessly. Words and discipline methods were futile, they did not serve anything. My father would insist doing it his way and showed me preferential treatment over my older brother.



Since Tia Mazaltucha and Tia Sultanicha's financial situation wasn't too good, on Thursday evenings, they would take their share of the food cooked for the Sabbath. Even though I don't have much information about their spouses, I know that Tia Mazaltucha had two children named Michel and Ester, and Tia Sultanicha, Leon and Viktorya. I did not see these children very often in the following years.

My mother's mother Flor Abravanel and father Senor Abravanel on the other hand were a family from Salonika [Today it is a city in Greece. But during the years we are talking about Bursa and Salonika were cities of the Ottoman Empire]. My mother's father Senor Abravanel was a manager of a bank in Salonika. In those days, being a highschool graduate was quite a big deal. His brother Jozef Abravanel was the ambassador for Portugal. His wife Viktorya and only son Jak were the other members of the family. My maternal grandmother Flor Abravanel was a teacher in Salonika. [The information given uses the term "profesora de eskola": school teacher. This indicates an elementary school teacher rather than a teacher of a specific subject].

I remember my maternal grandmother living across the fire station in Sishane [Sishane is the district where Neve Shalom synagogue [3](#) is today. During that time the Jewish community lived in this district. The area they called "Kula" was the surrounding area of Galata Tower. A lot of merchants from the fish seller to the sundries/notions store manager were Jewish. The largest fire organization of Istanbul was at the Sishane plaza. Only Jews lived in a lot of the houses then. Fresh Han is an example of this]. When I came to Istanbul from Bursa, the city that looked so big to me would seem even bigger from the iron-barred windows of my grandmother's. Flor Abravanel who remains in my memory with her wrinkled face and the pieces of cake she gave me would seat me on the corner of the window at her house with a pillow and enable me to see the surrounding area. I still like sitting at the window, watching the people passing by in the street probably as a habit acquired from those days.

Through the eyes of a child, Sishane appeared to be fun, mysterious and quite entertaining to me. Across the largest fire organization in Istanbul, the red trucks that moved with sirens, the Jews that lived all together in this neighborhood that was at the heart of Istanbul, moved me.

When we compare my father's and my mother's families, we encounter different things. The Jews of Salonika, that is to say, my mother's side were people with a more modern outlook. There were differences in the education levels as well. Salonika was a European city nonetheless, whereas Bursa was an Anatolian city. [This difference wasn't really considered in those days because both cities, Bursa and Salonika were cities that belonged to the Ottoman Empire. With the downfall of the Ottoman Empire and the declaration of the Turkish Republic, Salonika and Bursa took their place in history as a city in Greece and Turkey respectively].

I do not know how Menahem Sages and Camila Sages, and how Senor Abravanel and Flora Abravanel met or married. These subjects were not broached next to us.

My father Jak Sages was the son of a very crowded family with 9 siblings. The oldest brother Albert Sages was married to Kler Bensason. He had two sons named Menahem and Moshe. When the older son was in the military, Kler Bensason started having irregular periods. While the various doctors they went to recommended different therapies, Kler was pregnant with her third baby. And Michel was born 9 months later. This child who could only be circumcised three

months later, whose arms looked like pencils and his fingers like strings brought luck to the family. Their financial situation improved. The children of Albert and Kler Sages, who immigrated to Israel continued living in Israel. Today Michel who still calls me often, has a personality that values family relationships.

My father's second brother, Michel Sages had contracted tuberculosis. Michel married a lady named Margeurite and passed his illness to her. When Margeurite died, Michel Sages married a lady named Judit this time. Judit took very good care of my uncle Michel. When my mother was warning us not to even drink water when we went to my uncle's house, Judit would use the same handkerchief she used to wipe my uncle's sweat, to wipe her own. And Judit did not contract the disease. Judit was left alone with the death of my uncle Michel and remarried. You can only call it fate that she infected her new husband with tuberculosis. My uncle Michel Sages did not have any children from his first wife Margeurite or his second wife Judit.

Another one of my father's siblings, Isak Sages went with the flow of the times and ran away to France at the age of 17. [It was very common for the young people to seek their future out of the country. At times you even lost communication with the people who left. Because the only form of communication at the time was letters. Letters sometimes got lost in the mail and you might not hear from the person who left for a long time. France, Canada, Argentina, and the United States were the countries that were favored]. He married Albertine Elkabes; had three daughters named Janine, Arlette and Suzi. He and my father never lost touch.

Now it is the girls' turn. Ester married and went to Adana [a city on the south of Turkey, on the coast of the Mediterranean] as a bride. She had a daughter named Leonora.

Sinyora went to the United States for a marriage arranged by matchmaking. Matchmakings like these were done in those days. First they would send each other pictures, then either the girl or the boy would travel and try to get to know their spouse. Sinyora went to the United States for such a prospect. After an unsuccessful attempt, reason unknown, she returned "Kon los mocos enkolgados" [Judeo-Spanish idiom meaning: "with her mucus hanging"; that is to say "without gaining anything from this enterprise".] She married Monsieur Semo in Bursa and had four sons named Menahem, David, Sami, and Nesim.

Oro married Isak Tovi in Bursa; had children named Kemal, Sara, and Camile.

Coya married Monsieur Sevia and had two children named Janet and Jak. Jak served as ambassador of Israel.

Rebeka married Monsieur Bensason. She had three sons named Menahem, Rifat and Albert.

My father Jak Sages was born in Bursa (1881). He came and went to Istanbul often. He wasn't very educated but he was an esteemed merchant. My father's good looks were legendary. He had good relationships with the women in his factory. He was a tough father. He had an authoritarian attitude with his wife and son, but when it came to me, he melted down. He was cool toward religious matters, some of the arguments he had with my mother were even about how to apply our religious traditions. When the usher knocked on our door on Saturday mornings and yelled "Monsieur Sages al kal" [Judeo-Spanish term for: Mr. Sages to the synagogue], I would respond "En la fabrika de Paskal" [Judeo-Spanish term for: at the factory of Paskal meant to rhyme with the

previous sentence in a mocking way]. During the hours when the usher came to the door and encouraged the community to go to the synagogue, my father would be at the factory to prevent the silk cocoons from tangling with each other. Silk commerce was his life. There was a concept of spinning wheel for silk. He was an expert in this subject. He knew how to produce more silk from less cocoons. [Even today Bursa is at the heart of textile commerce]. He always protected his good name in the commercial circles.

In the last years of his life, he moved to Istanbul with my mother at the insistence of my older brother. Unfortunately the disagreements between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are like a law of nature and happened between my mother and my sister-in-law. Of course quietly... In those days the problems within a family were not brought out to the open. They were kept within the family as much as possible or the saying “les linges sales se lavent en famille” [French for: dirty laundry is washed within the family] was observed. My father died in Istanbul in 1975.

My mother was also the daughter of a family with a lot of children like my father.

The older daughter Rasel Saporta was already a widow when I knew her. She did not have children.

Another sister, Henriette Konfino lived in Romania. What took her away from Turkey was marriage chords. But the nostalgia for her native country was an unbearable longing for Henriette. She burned with the desire to come to Turkey. When her older brother fulfilled her wish, it probably was too late already because Henriette was too sick to even know that she had come to Turkey. And she closed her eyes here for the last time. She did not have children.

Lucy Abravanel married David Abravanel. The fact that Lucy and David had the same last name was not a coincidence, it was an indication of an interfamily marriage. Lucy and David were cousins. Even though their first child Arman Abravanel was a healthy child, the second child Neli was deaf and mute. Lucy Abravanel left her spouse in Istanbul and went to Israel with her daughter Neli. She provided a special education for her daughter in Israel and she learned sign language. Neli married there. Neli's first child was born normal and learned how to talk from grandmother Lucy. Unfortunately the second child was also deaf-mute and the grandchild did not learn how to talk because the grandmother was not alive.

Ester Molho used to live in Salonika. They were a family affected by the horrors of Second World War. Her son who was a bank manager and her husband were deported. No one heard from them again just like no one heard from the 6 million Jews...

Another sibling was Anjel Karako. She was married to Isak Karako. Their daughter Ester Cakartas and her husband lost their life in a traffic accident. Ester's daughter Gila married a prince in France. I think this prince was Jewish because the maternal grandmother Anjel Karako went to Paris to hold the thalis over her grandchild. Everything really started like a fairy tale. But just as everything that shines is not gold, this reality was also true for Gila. Gila stayed married for only 6 months. The prince was not a good man. Maybe he was a fake prince, it was rumored that “no era ombre ansina diziyan” [Judeo-Spanish for: “he was not a man”, this saying is used for homosexuals]. Gila suffered a great depression and paid for this marriage by sinking into darkness. Gila had therapy in La Paix [one of the Mental Hospitals in Istanbul] and in other places after returning to Istanbul. She is currently hospitalized in Balikli Greek Hospital [one of the mental hospitals of Istanbul]. Ester's son Isak on the other hand left the country. No one heard from him again.

Jak Abravanel was the oldest of the brothers. He searched his luck in Argentina. None of his siblings saw Jak except in photographs. Even if some pictures were received from the communications with his sons, the siblings were never able to reunite.

Another one of the older brothers, Isak Abravanel was married to Viktorya Levi. He had four daughters named Flor Benzonana, Eliza Elver, Sol Bener and Coya Kohen. Coya Kohen and her husband took their daughter-in-law to France to prepare her dowry. The plane that crashed on the return trip was the end of this story. They all lost their lives together. (Coya Kohen's son had stayed in Istanbul. The mother and father of the bride never lost touch with the son-in-law throughout their lives. This young man even married and had children. The mother and father of the girl who died remained as part of this family).

Ida - David Tasman are another sister and brother-in-law of my mother. David Tasman was a Russian refugee. He was a true Russian aristocrat. He had studied dentistry in Russia and practiced this profession for a long time. Later he ran away from the mismanagement of Russia and the pogroms and came to Istanbul. Rumor had it that David Tasman had a son named Boris that he left back in Russia. His wife had died but this child never came to Istanbul. There was no communication between father and son. After David Tasman came to Istanbul, he worked with another dentist since he did not have the right to open a clinic. He was a very well-mannered and dignified man. He provided very well for my aunt. They celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary. He died at the age of 80. He loved me a lot too. Only, you should never play cards with him. Because he always wanted to win. This is a joke I remember about David Tasman. Ida's child died while still in her womb because of the cord that was wrapped around its neck. She did not have a child again.

My mother Mari Sages' last name before she was married was Abravanel. Mari Sages was an educated woman. She was a teacher. When she came to Bursa as a bride, the siblings of her husband were not married yet. They all started living together. My mother's French was advanced. Her religious beliefs were very strong. She used to light the Sabbath candles, she tried to observe the rules of kashrut. The hardest days of our home were the days close to Passover. My mother would clean the whole house from top to bottom and did not want us to enter the place she cleaned until Passover. This was called "Ya entro pesah en esta kamareta" [Judeo-Spanish for: Passover has arrived in this room]. When it was the turn for the diningroom, my father would start getting upset. Because he did not like eating in the entrance hall that we called kortijo at all, he used to topple the table over. My mother, on the other hand, continued Passover preparations with a lot of calm. My mother who liked to get dolled up never refrained from putting on her lipstick before my father came home from work, and would put on her necklace and earrings a lot of the times too.

When there was a wedding in Bursa, the women of Bursa would go to Istanbul to have an outfit sewn. All the ladies would seek a tailor that was popular in those days at the same time, and the tailor would sew the same outfit for all of them, and all of them would be identical during the wedding. They would not learn a lesson from this and continue the same procedure in the next wedding. When the smell of coffee started to permeate from one of the gardens in the afternoon, it was the sign of the women of the neighborhood starting to congregate. The biggest pastime during those days was to gather together to prepare the homemade pasta, to prepare tomato sauce or

talk about the food that was going to be cooked for Friday. All this important business was embellished by coffee breaks. My mother died just as she wished. One night, when they were returning from an outing, she did not feel good, and that was it. The calendar showed the year 1968.

When the children of two large families, the Abravanel's and the Sages', were married, they started living in Bursa. I know they married in the matchmaking style. My mother came from Salonika, my father lived in Bursa. In Bursa, family gatherings were important. There was a Jewish association. Balls would take place and my mother and father participated in these balls. There wasn't a luxurious life in Bursa, but there was an orderly and good life.

I am the second child of this family.

My older brother Menahem Sages was born in 1921 in Bursa. He continued his education in St. George High school [Austrian missionary school]. But he could not finish it. I know he went to this school for a few years but I do not have any information as to why he wasn't able to finish. In reality, it wasn't possible to question some things, especially by children. If he quits school, he quits, and if he continues, he continues. "No es komo la espesutina de agora" [Judeo-Spanish for: It isn't the same hassle as today]. His wife Rene Nahmias was the sister of my uncle Michel's first wife Margeurite. She was a very beautiful woman but she was too meticulous, she was obsessively meticulous. When we went to her house, she would look at your shoes before she looked at your face. She had a very good relationship with her son. She took care of him like a baby, she paid a lot of attention to her husband too but we generally did not go to my older brother's house, he would come to our house to see me. My brother and my childhood were not alike at all. Because our personalities were not alike. He was calm whereas I was naughty and mischievous. He did not like drinking alcohol or gambling. He did not smoke. But for whatever reason he was always the one spanked during the childhood years. I would climb trees, he would sit at home.

His son Jak Sages was born in 1946 in Istanbul. After attending elementary school in Kurtulus Elementary School, he went to the British High school [3](#). And then he went to Israel. Adventure. Later he immigrated to Canada. Currently he lives in Canada, in the city of Victoria. In those days naming after the grandfather or grandmother was a tradition. Meaning the son of Menahem carries my father's name. My older brother did not want his son to do military service in Turkey, for that reason, especially encouraged him to go out of the country. His going to Canada was an adventure like his going to Israel but it was as if my older brother continually encouraged this adventure. My older brother died in Canada where he went to see his son in 1984.

Even though I carry my grandmother's name according to traditions, Camila is only my name on my birth certificate. I am called Janet or Jana in my daily life. I remember being Camila only when I use my passport.

## **Growing Up**

I was born in 1924. The house where we lived when I was born was the same as the house I lived in when I went to Istanbul as a bride. That neighborhood was called "La Juderia". All of the Jews in Bursa lived on the same street. On both sides of the hill full of trees houses were lined up. Only Jews lived there until the place we called Catalfirin [Forkbakery]. We had 3 synagogues: Yirush, Mayor and Etz Hayim. We were crowded, we were like siblings. We would eat and play together

with the daughters of the poor families who came to our house as helpers. Mrs. Hanife who came from the factory every day would take food to my father. Mrs. Hanife was one of the workers in the factory. My father who liked to eat fresh food, preferred eating lunch with the food that was cooked that day rather than the leftovers from the previous night. When Mrs. Hanife came, the food that was placed in the thermos would go to my father at the factory.

On a day I took advantage of the fact that my mother was making dessert. I ran away and continued walking in the street. When my mother realized I was not home, she rushes out to the street with her apron and finds me in the hands of a woman. My mother screams "Give me my child". The woman calls the police and invites my mother to prove that she is my mother. My father being a well-known person and his good relationship with the people around him enables the problem to be solved. Is there an end to my mischievousness? One of my favorite things was our hill that would be under snow on cold winter days. When I put my bag under my butt, I would slide quickly from top to bottom.

In our street, the yoghurt-seller, the poultry man, the egg-seller would pass. The yoghurt-seller would carry his pans full of yoghurt on strings that were attached to a pole. We would buy this yoghurt sold by kilogram into our pans. We would joke saying "Los guevos del dede son grandes" [Judeo-Spanish for: The grandfather has big eggs, meaning balls]. The poultry man would bring the chickens, my mother and her neighbors would bring the chickens to the rabbi to check if they are kosher or not and would cut them according to the rules of kashrut. They would put aside some chickens as non-kosher. The chickens that were cut were taken to Jewish women to have their feathers removed this time. Those women would almost memorize which chicken belonged to whom but once in a while, the chicken of Madam Rebeka would get mixed up with the chicken of Madam Zelda. But the smell of the cooking chicken would spread to the neighborhood. On Saturdays the firesetter would pass through the neighborhood. The Jews who did not consider it appropriate to light a fire on the Sabbath were able to light the lamps or stove thanks to the firesetters who were Muslim. Even though this tradition was applied by my mother, my father would turn on the lights before he left for the factory.

We have to add the cotton fluffer who was a tradesman of those days who passed through the neighborhood. The fluffer was the one who renewed our mattresses at certain times, who beat the cotton inside with a mallet to air it. The same person sewed the comforters. The work of the cotton fluffer would be very intensive especially in summer and fall cleanings.

Even if shopping was done from retailers in Bursa, the heart of commerce was in the Closed Bazaar. Towel sellers, fabric merchants were inside this bazaar. At the end of the Closed Bazaar you could find Salt Bazaar. Silk cocoons would be displayed as if in an auction during the season. There would be lawyers' offices or offices associated with commerce on the top floors. My uncle was a representative of Michelin [French tyre company] and had an office in the Closed Bazaar.

The house we lived in had three stories. Like the twin houses of today, we could go to the neighbor's house from the stairs in between. The basement of this house where the ground floor was a grocery store, served almost like a refrigerator. Every kind of document and food was kept there. On the top floor, in the entrance which was called "kortijo", were the kitchen, bathroom and laundry. We even called the laundry lady who came to the house Tia Rahelina. [She indicates that they considered the lady who came to do the laundry part of the family and addressed her as tia-

aunt]. When Tia Rahelina tackled the laundry, the whole place would smell clean like white soap, the whites would be boiled in large pots with bluing [a substance used in the old times to whiten laundry]. The laundry that was hung to dry in the garden would sway in the wind. Coal stoves and braziers would be lit on laundry days, food would be cooked on the same stoves. Tia Rahelina's sons later became very rich and saved their mother from this job. In reality, after we came to Istanbul, we did not see Tia Rahelina for very long years. Later on they became in-laws to some distant relatives and we saw her sons and her at a wedding. We learned that her sons were in the tin and oil business. In our times the women did not know much the work that the men did. Men did not explain, and the women would not be interested. But I know that Tia Rahelina's sons were in commerce.

We had a sofa, armchair and a table with a golden mirror in our living room. When I see these end tables in decorating magazines, I understand that the saying "If there was a demand for old things, flea markets would flourish" is not very valid. The floors were linoleum, the stairs made of wood. Sparkling the linoleum was a symbol of cleanliness. The wooden stairs, on the other hand, squeaked. The cleaning supplies were not as strong probably. Soft soap, white soap, bleach was used. Clean water flowed from the taps always, there were heating stoves in each story, and in the kitchen stoves were lit.

In those days, the traffic did not resemble today's mess, there were few motorized cars, and one horse-carriages were vehicles that were used [she used the ladino term "talika brijka" for the horse-carriage]. Obviously in a neighborhood where automobiles were seldom seen, even if there weren't playgrounds designed for children, the streets, the gardens were our play areas. We grew up with this distinction, the orchards and gardens were ours. We would play hopscotch (We would draw squares in the street with chinks, would skip on one foot to move the stone while not letting it touch the lines. In every neighborhood, different rules would be applied to the game of hopscotch. We would explain those who came from other neighborhoods the rules of that neighborhood. For example, holding the stone on top of your foot while playing would make it more difficult, but that was another rule) in the streets, jump rope.

The hamam is one of the biggest features of Bursa. The mikveh habit of older ladies would be satisfied in the hamam too. It was customary to prepare food for the hamam entertainment. One of the favorite pastimes of those days was for a few families to get together to go to the Gonlu Ferah Hotel in Cekirge [Cekirge is a district of Bursa famous for its hot springs. It has hamams that are left from the old times. It is known that these waters are therapeutic and you could go there for medical purposes. Until a short while ago, taking baths as a cure for rheumatism with a doctor's recommendation was a valid procedure].

Going to the Gonlu Ferah Hotel was the favorite entertainment of those days. There were one-story hotels, rooms with their private hamams, and multiple room hotels also in Cekirge. When you went to Cekirge, you would sit in the gardens. Chatting in gazebos covered in vines was one of the preferred pastimes of our elders. Sometimes these outings were not for one day, but could last a few days, because the men went to and from work in Cekirge.

Picnics were part of life in Bursa that you couldn't do without. We would go up to Uludag with buses. Barbecues were brought but the meat would be carried from home. The rules of kashrut were always in effect. Even the dolmas and salads were prepared from home. The breaking of the



ropes of melons and watermelons that were thrown down wells to keep them cold at times would cause disappointments (Because using refrigerators wasn't widespread in those days, melons and watermelons would be tied up and lowered to wells in summer to keep them cold. Sometimes the watermelon or melons would be too heavy, the rope would break and the watermelon and melons would fall into the well).

I used to go to a school named "mestra" before I started school. Mestra was a kind of preschool like the ones that exist today. Ms. Suzan who spoke French would gather a few kids in her house, play games, and supposedly teach them French. Ms. Suzan was a spinster, she was thin and scrawny. Whoever saw her would utter "poor thing". Mr. Geron on the other hand was big and burly. When you compare it to the preschools of today, the children were raised in primitive conditions there.

I started school in a Jewish school, then I transferred to Istiklal School. We met again with friends with whom we studied together, years later. None of us had changed, only our birth certificates had grown old. We would visit each other with these friends. They would not look down on us. They would not regard us as inferior because we were Jews, on the contrary, they wanted to be with us. In Bursa, the holiday visits were important too. We socialized with our school friends and their families. They were all children of intellectual families. We had very good relationships with the teachers in our school too. I remember Mr. Halit and Mrs. Muazzez among the teachers. We thought that these two teachers flirted with each other in school. When we saw them next to each other, we would start giggling right away. But we were never disrespectful toward our teachers, we did not step over our boundaries. I loved Mr. Halit most among the teachers. We would go to kiss their hands on holidays.

I loved reading a lot. I bought all the magazines that came out in those days. Solving puzzles is a habit left over from those days. There were no puzzle books of course, we waited for the puzzles section of the newspapers impatiently. Afacan Çocuk [Mischievous Child], Ses [Voice], Hayat [Life] magazines, Dogan Kardes [Brother Dogan] were among my favorites.

Among my childhood memories, the bar-mitzvah of my older brother is prominent. We had visitors at home for three days and three nights. We distributed food to family and friends for two days, and to the needy for one day. We the children, played around. Towels, pyjamas and socks were among the preferred gifts. 6 monetary units (of the time) were considered a good gift, and would be saved by the mother. My older brother had gone to the synagogue with only my father. My mother waited for them at home, and immediately started giving out sweets. The children of that time had limited means but were happy, today they have everything but they are tense.

Bursa's summer resort was Mudanya [A neighborhood on the border of the sea around Bursa]. When my uncle's family went to their summer resort, they would take me with them. I would show my wild side over there too, and would climb to the top of trees. My father loved Buyukada a lot. [Buyukada is one of the islands in the Princess Islands group on Marmara sea. The others are named Kinaliada, Burgazada, and Heybeliada. Today Burgazada and Buyukada are summer resorts that are in demand by Jews]. In those days, the upper crust people especially went to Buyukada for the summer. Attire and clothing was important in Buyukada, ladies went around with hats, and would go to meet their husbands from the dock.

We would go to the Cankaya Hotel in Buyukada for a month. Such a vacation was a luxury in those days. My father would rent a room every summer in the Cankaya Hotel for 1,5 months. The hotel was all inclusive. We ate our meals there, in the hotel. When summer came, we would take our suitcases and settle there. The clothing to be worn in Buyukada was separate. A separate shopping was needed. Because my mom liked to dress fancy and would not go down from her room without her necklace and her earrings. I would go to Degirmen Beach ever morning with my friends [One of the most famous beaches of Buyukada. Now it is a club, only members can go in. Another one of the beautiful beaches in Buyukada at the time was Yorukali Beach]. My mother did not swim in the sea. My father only came in the weekends. My mother would play cards with her friends or go down to the dock to sit in the tea gardens. I and my friends would enjoy summer vacation thoroughly.

## **During the War**

When I became a young woman, around the 1940's, it was the period when antisemitism was prevalent in Bursa. They called us "Chifut" [Jew]. When we returned home from school we would walk without looking around. All of us (my cousin Ester Carktas, myself and the other Jewish girls) were attractive girls. That is why we were very scared of being approached or made improper advances to. "Citizen, speak Turkish" [4](#) was one of the most important events of our time. There was a fine of 5 units of money for people who did not speak Turkish. There is even a joke about this subject. An official from the public registrar's office came to a house and asked what is your name. Rebeka asked Moshon: "Ke disho, ke disho? [Judeo-Spanish for: What did he say, what did he say?]" "Komo te yamas?" [Judeo-Spanish for: What is your name?] Moshon answers "Rebeka and Moshon". The official continued asking. "Your year of birth?" Rebeka asks "Ke disho, ke disho? [Judeo-Spanish for: What did he say, what did he say?]" "En ke anyo nasimos" [Judeo-Spanish for: What year we were born]. Moshon answers again. While this continued, the official asks "What is your mother tongue?" Rebeka asks again "Ke disho, ke disho? [Judeo-Spanish for: What did he say, what did he say?]" Moshon: "Kuala es muestra lingua maternal?" [Judeo-Spanish for: what is our mother tongue?]. Rebeka immediately answers "Turkchas, turkchas" [Turkish, Turkish].

We were very afraid during the 2nd World War, there were even rumors that ovens were prepared for us. From our family, my aunt Esterina Molho who lived in Salonika, her husband who was a bank manager, her children and her grandchildren were all sent to concentration camps. They were a very esteemed family, and they were very wealthy. Unfortunately in the following years, this money was squandered on attorneys. When the sisters researched this wealth they took part of what was theirs but they did not fight hard enough. The real estates was all lost. Whatever the lawyer wanted to show that is what he showed and that was it. What could my mother do other than grieve. We were not aware of this right away. We became aware in time. When we were made aware it was too late anyways. When the sisters looked for this wealth, they received a portion of what was rightfully theirs.

My mother-in-law had two brothers. One was named Leon Ancel, the other Jojo Ancel. Leon Ancel lived in France. He was able to hide himself by marrying a Christian woman named Helen. I had the opportunity to meet Dominique, the son of Uncle Leon who was saved thanks to his wife in the later years. The other brother Jozef Ancel lived in Switzerland anyways. He was not affected by the war.

I heard about the Thrace Events [5](#), but noone from our family was unjustly treated.

The Wealth Tax [6](#) left a lot of people in hardship. My father was registered as a janitor in the factory, therefore he was not affected much. But some families had everything taken from them. There were those who went to Ashkale and of course those that were not able to come back.

I was already in Istanbul during 6-7 September events [7](#). I had come to Istanbul in 1946. There was a Greek grocer under the home of my mother-in-law, Lucy Arguete in Dereboyu [Main street of Ortakoy. Greeks, Jews and Muslims lived alongside each other on this street. A river ran through the middle of this street, and crossing from one sidewalk across to the other was by bridges. Ortakoy is one of the first places in Istanbul that the Jews who ran away from Spain settled in when the Ottoman Empire accepted them. It is situated on the shores of the Bosphorus in Istanbul]. Looters entered the house and cut up my mother-in-law's rugs. My mother-in-law escaped with her nightgown and came to us. When I went out the next day, my heart ached. There were refrigerators, washing machines, rolls of fabric, sacks of all kinds of produce dragging through the streets. It looked more like a war zone than a looting zone. What attracted my attention most was the Greeks still continuing to speak in Greek fearlessly.

My husband Avram Arguete was a very principled man, hard-working and honest. At first they were very rich. His father Albert Arguete's nickname was "Golden Bee". They had a haberdashery store in Ortakoy. He was born in Ortakoy. That store was the one with the most variety at the time. But I was not around for the times of wealth. Yo me topi en la aniyud [Judeo-Spanish for: I was around for the poverty]. The Wealth Tax erased all of this wealth. My father-in-law did not have a single experience with the police in his life. Police officers came to his store during the Wealth Tax. He fell ill with that stress and died in 1946.

His mother Lucy Arguete's maiden name was Ancel. Lucy Arguete was of medium height, could be considered on the short side and had gray hair. Lucy Arguete's story is quite interesting. When my mother-in-law was in her first marriage, it was the time for the flu epidemic. This epidemic was called the Spanish flu. This epidemic was in the news in the newspapers too. Her husband died on the night of the wedding before they could even have any relationship. Lucy became a widow with her wedding gown, as a virgin maiden. This flu that was called the Spanish flu, is considered an epidemic historically. A high fever and sudden death were the typical symptoms of this illness. Lucy Arguete lived through such a tragedy on the night of her wedding to her husband.

Lucy turned her back to life with this disappointment. She went to visit her relatives in Ortakoy. In reality the reason they called her to Ortakoy was to introduce her to my father-in-law Anri Arguete. At the time, a widow had to be very careful about the steps she took. Lucy, in reality, was a very optimistic and luminous woman. She loved giving out presents. That is why her purse was always full of candy and chocolates. When children saw her, they always approached her. This woman who was of short stature, who put her long gray hair up in a bun on her neck, agreed to marry my father-in-law Anri Arguete who was a widower with one child, with the mentality of those days. Anri Arguete had lost his wife in Ortakoy. He was a very religious, quiet and inoffensive person. There was an age difference with Lucy. Along with the age difference, there was a cultural difference and a difference in life style. Lucy was a modern person who liked to go out, to spend money, to strengthen her dialogue with people. My father-in-law Anri on the other hand, was an introverted person who was lost among religious books, who spent his life within religious books. There were differences from their family structures. Lucy had an aptitude for western cultures, due to her siblings and her connections outside the country. Anri on the other hand, was a good person, and

that was it. Lucy never treated Anri's daughter from his first wife Suzan any different from her own children. When Lucy was married, Suzan was 5 years old. But she became the apple of Lucy's eye. Suzan knew that Lucy was not her mother. Besides, the mother's family used to come to see Suzan. But because Lucy did not distinguish Suzan from her own children, she even showed her preferential treatment at times. When she went out, she always took Suzan with her.

Suzan was a lively, cheerful girl. In later years, she turned out to be a very capable woman. Suzan shared a similar fate with my mother-in-law Lucy. When Suzan married Albert Cukran, Albert's wife had died in childbirth and left her daughter Beki without a mother. In those days, Beki was given her dead mother's name. Suzan took the baby to her heart since she knew the feeling. She did not even tell the three sisters she gave birth to, Juliet, Sara and Zelda this step-daughter situation for years. Beki was told the truth by her fiance. Beki's first reaction was "It does not matter, Suzan is my mother. Please don't tell it to my sisters". Every sister was told that they were of different mothers by their fiance, and the sisters never talked about this amongst themselves during their lifetime, in reality. In Suzan's old age, her sons-in-law competed to take her into their house.

Juliet married Jojo Franko (another last name is Aker). She has two children named Sami and Ari. Sara married a gentleman named Ibrahim, she has three daughters. Zelda married Refik Celik. Refik also had a daughter from his first marriage. (When Lucy Arguete married, she found Suzan. When Suzan married she found Beki. Suzan's one other daughter Zelda, when she married, she married a gentleman who had a daughter from his first marriage. In this way, three generations of women married men who were on their second marriage and found a daughter each).

My mother-in-law's daughter Ceni Arguete was married to Marko Uziyel. She had one daughter named Bella. Ceni was a chubby woman of medium height. She lived with her mother Lucy. Marko Uziyel's financial situation was not very bright. Ceni-Marko Uziyel lived in Nisantas [One of the best neighborhoods of Istanbul] in a basement flat. That house was a humid house. My mother-in-law had succeeded in making that house cozy. Lucy used to receive financial help from her siblings who lived in Switzerland. She in turn gave it to her daughter. Ceni's daughter Bella did not grow up as the daughter of a family with no means. The best of everything was always at Bella's disposal. Bella married but became a widow at a very young age. She had only one son. Her son is a tutor who prepares students for the university exam.

Yomtov Bonjur Arguete on the other hand, was the apple of the family's eye. He was married to Keti Frankfort. Keti was a German Jew. Her father owned a bank. He did not know Judeo Spanish <sup>8</sup>, when this language was conversed within the family, his face became sullen. The Frankfort family was an aristocratic family. Komo se dize, guantes blankas [Judeo-Spanish for: How do you say this—white gloves. It is a saying indicating you were speaking to someone from the upper crust, i.e. you need to have white gloves to be able to address them]. I would be amazed when I went to their house. Starched white table cloths, starched napkins. I would be face to face with a different world view.

My husband Avram Arguete had the nickname "Fuhrer" in Ortakoy because of his adherence to his principles and his harsh reactions. Just think about it. He was of short stature, always in a hurry, someone who walked fast and who was anxious. Our meeting was the result of a coincidence. In reality, when I started to grow up and to develop, it was an indication that it was time for matchmaking for me. I came to Istanbul for this purpose, but when it was found out that the

person they were thinking of introducing me to wasn't appropriate, I started waiting for the return trip. They had told me that the hand of the boy they were proposing for me was disabled. In the meantime, my husband had broken up with his first fiancée. I do not know the reason for this separation, but within years, when the two ex-fiancées met, they would greet each other in a civilized way. I also would greet this lady and talk to her on the streets of Buyukada.

My husband encounters a friend while walking absentmindedly in the street after this separation. He tells him of his troubles, the solution is a new matchmaking, looking for a new fiancée. Mrs. Rosa Palashi was our neighbor. She was a family friend of theirs. When Mrs. Rosa Palashi learned about Albert Arguete's situation, she opened her house to us. We met there. My husband was a handsome, well-dressed man. I was there too. My father and my husband went to the back room. I waited in the livingroom. When their discussion was finished, they told me I was promised. My father did not even ask me, the apple of his eye, if I liked Albert or not. I did not react at all to this event, it was as if what needed to happen, happened. It seemed to me that that was what was supposed to happen. My husband did not react at all too. He accepted it very coolly.

The next day, there was a meeting again, *tratos* [Judeo-Spanish for: negotiations, i.e. the money that the girl's side is supposed to give to the man for a marriage] started. My husband's aunt Tant Regina acted as the go-between. My mother-in-law had a voice, but she never used it. Tant Regina finished it. They settled on three thousand liras. Because my husband was a very honest man, he clarified that he was going to give one thousand liras of this money to his sister Ceni who was going to get married before us. In this way, two thousand liras would be left in my husband's hands. When the negotiation ended, we, the two fiancées, went out. My husband took me to my aunt's house whose housekey I had, upon a pretext, and asked me to clean up all the make-up on my face. His jealous nature was evident at that moment. Yes, he really was very jealous, he did not even want me to go to Bursa. *No seya ke me arevaten los flortes de Bursa* [Judeo-Spanish for: Maybe the boyfriends of Bursa would grab me].

## **After the War**

The engagement party took place in an establishment called Belle Vu. I don't even remember if there were rings exchanged. We got engaged on June 24th, 1946, the civil marriage was on October 24th, 1946, and the wedding on November 24th, 1946 in the Zulfaris Synagogue [9](#). One of the most famous traditions of Bursa was the showing of the dowry. My mother prepared a beautiful dowry, the dowry was shown in the accompaniment of the lute. My mother-in-law did not pay much importance to such stuff. She had just been widowed when I got married anyways. She did not have the state of mind to deal with this stuff. But tradition was tradition and it was done. A black coat, light-colored coat, black suit, light-colored suit, silk brodered nightgowns, tablecloths were integral parts of a dowry. On the wedding night we went to the Park Hotel [in Taksim, one of the most luxurious hotels of the time] in great secrecy. The two of us were alone and no one had been made aware. I still haven't understood the reason for this secrecy. Nothing was ever told to anyone in the family. As if, if it was kept secret and nobody knew, my husband's business would go better. He thought this way. He was afraid of a lot of things, the evil eye, the jealous eye, he did not like to be talked about. From this point of view, he would do everything in secrecy, and prevent being talked about in his own way.

Our first house was behind Tokatliyan Passage [a passage in Beyoglu. The area where the entertainment places were in the old times] for a rent of 40 liras. My husband was paying half the rent and my father the other half. This wasn't a dowry agreement but my father did everything in his power so we would not have difficulties. Even the laundry would go to Bursa, get washed and ironed and return. Some of our basic necessities like cheese or butter would come from Bursa too. Everything was a principle for my husband. He would do anything in the name of honesty. He did not like debts or such. When we were setting up our house a lot of things came as gifts. Lamps, tables, chairs all came as gifts. We bought a bedroom for 400 liras that someone had been using for 40 years. Right now, a piece of that bedroom set still exists. It is almost an antique piece.

My older brother wanted me to choose between an armchair and a radio for a wedding gift. I was already feeling wretched and preferred the radio. I made a divan from orange crates. My husband opened a hardware business with whatever was left from the dowry. He started commerce with two thousand liras. My husband's business slowly took off. He always said "you brought me luck" to me. He never let me work, I wish I had worked, but his jealousy exasperated me. No going out, no coming in, going to Bursa absolutely not. We fought a lot. My husband, in addition to sticking to his principles, was very easily offended. For example if I didn't say "to your health" after he shaved, he would get cross with me. Another thing that is a reality is that a girl who has been raised in a wealthy family, if she marries someone of lesser means and cannot find what she is looking for, gets stressed. This stress amplifies in the woman, the struggle of the man who is trying to attain that lifestyle makes her irate. Sometimes I would win these fights, sometimes my husband. That is how a life was spent.

My husband adored children. When I had my period, all hell would break loose. He would wail "I won't have children". My mother-in-law consoled him "be smart Albert, there is no reason not to have any", she would say. When I became pregnant with Lucy, it meant the world to him. But I had such a difficult pregnancy, such a difficult birth, and a difficult postpartum period that the guy did not want a child again. When Lucy was born she was the sweetest baby in the world, or it seemed that way to me, but I would faint all of a sudden. My mother took me to Bursa during this period, cured me and sent me back to Istanbul again.

My house during this period was at Kuledibi. It was very small, humid and full of mold. We changed houses within a short period and moved to our house where we resided for 11 years. A house in Cihangir [A neighborhood in Istanbul. This neighborhood underwent a lot of changes with time. First it was one of the most exclusive neighborhoods of Istanbul. Good families resided in the homes with a view of the sea. Later the image changed. This time it became the place of transvestites. Nowadays it is a candidate to be an artists' neighborhood. Those beautiful homes are finding the old owners back] with a sea view, but the moving-in price is 500 liras. Where would we find this money. Friends prove their friendships in such days. A friend, again from my family's side lent us money. We paid back the money we owed in a short time. My husband always said that I brought him luck anyways. Later on we moved to Pangalti [A neighborhood in Istanbul].

My daughter Lucy (naturally she carries my mother-in-law's name) was born in 1948. Just as is the case for every baby, a festive wave spread through the family. But I remained very weak after the birth, and I would faint all of a sudden while nursing the baby. My mother came from Bursa and took care of me. After a while, she had to go back to Bursa because our house was very small. She took me and the baby, and cared for us in Bursa, returned me to my good health and sent me

back to Istanbul. During this period, my husband used to come to Bursa too in the weekends. I prepared wonderful birthdays for my daughter. The neighbors, the cousins would come. I would go to Beyoglu on every birthday [The favorite shopping street in Istanbul. Stores were lined on both sides of the sidewalk. Famous restaurants were lined on this street alongside stores with European merchandise. Movie theatres were in Beyoglu too. Women do not go out without wearing a hat. Men went around with canes and felt hats. The tram was also a mode of transportation], I would buy her a dress from the best store, take her to a studio and have a picture taken.

My daughter was a very good student starting in elementary school. According to her father, her grades had to be 9's or 10's all the time. It was that way anyways. After finishing Saint Benoit French Junior High, she entered Notre Dame de Sion [French Catholic schools]. My daughter became engaged to Eliya Barokas before she turned 18. I can say she was obliged to get engaged, to say it more correctly. My husband investigated and found my daughter's spouse from the commercial circles. As you can understand, she married through matchmaking in 1965 at the Neve Shalom synagogue. We went to Lido in the evening, very few people, no friends, there were limited amount of people from the family. Of course my daughter's matchmaking was not like mine. My son-in-law would come, pick my daughter up and go out. On their first meeting, Eliya came and picked my daughter up. We went out, they in front, and us in the back. Later they stayed engaged for 1.5 years, and had opportunities to meet each other during that period. One day before the wedding my husband told me that we were having our son-in-law as a live-in ["mezafranka": to help curb the expenditures for the newly weds, the girl's family takes in the son-in-law and takes care of all their needs]. He had decided this without asking me, as was the case in a lot of other occasions. Even if he asked, I did not have the luxury of expressing my opinion. I wasn't asked my opinion very often. Of course this upset me a lot. But because I did not know otherwise, this seemed right to me.

I rearranged my house for the newlyweds. I allotted them the main room and bought a new bedroom set. They lived with me for three years, summers and winters, and 5 years only summers. But my son-in-law is truly a great kid. He had asked for the dowry before getting married. These procedures were not looked upon warmly then. Some said "Albert loko sos tu dota se da de antes?" [Judeo-Spanish for: Albert, are you crazy, dowry shouldn't be given before the wedding]. My husband said "Si me las komyo las paras ke me las koma, ma a la ija ke no me la keme" [Judeo-Spanish for: if he burns through my money, let him burn it, but my daughter let him not burn]. I cut up a very beautiful fabric for the wedding and took it to a tailor. The fabric was a little expensive. I did not know how to tell my husband. But he liked it too and did not say much. My husband in the meantime started becoming successful in commerce. He dabbled in a lot of stuff like textiles, and dry goods and notions. In the end, he was in the underwear business before he retired. He used to send undershirts and underwear to Anatolia. He died in 2003. He had difficulty breathing. He had a problem in his bronchial tubes. He passed away after a short period of illness, around 6 months.

Lucy Barokas has a son named Semi born in 1969 who currently resides in Israel, and a daughter named Zelda, born in 1972 who lives in Istanbul. My husband Albert Arguete was a man devoted to his children, he would especially die for his grandchildren. When my daughter Lucy went on a trip, the children would stay with me. Then Albert would act like a child, even more than they did.

He would exhaust me with his nagging “Ya komyo no komyo, ya tosyo, ya sudo” [Judeo-Spanish for: he/she ate, didn’t eat, he/she coughed, sweated].

My grandchildren mean everything to me. I love them very much. Semi studied hotel administration. He served as bartender in the Sheraton Hotel. Later he decided to live in Israel where he had gone for an internship. He went to Israel right after his mother’s 25th wedding anniversary to realize his dreams. He married Ronit Simonpur. I have two grandchildren named Linoy (born in 1998) and Maya (born in 2003).

Zelda (she was born in 1972) on the other hand grew up in my house. She is an extremely pleasant girl. Las piedras de la kaye la konosen [Judeo-Spanish for: Even the stones on the street know her]. She was living apart from her family, keeping up with the times. When she started earning her own money she moved to her mother and father’ flat in Ortakoy [a neighborhood in Istanbul on the shores of the Bosphorus]. Her father was a little conservative. But he could not deal with her. There would be a row at every Sabbath meal. “Who are you going out with? What time are you coming back” were among the questions asked in raised voices. One day when she was out with the boy she was dating, she realized she had lost the ring her mother had given her and she was very upset. Her friend Vedat Eskinazi claimed that she was a messy person and that she lost everything. Later on they went on a trip to the far east together. At dinner, Zelda saw a bouquet of flowers on the table, she thanked her friend. Her friend suggested she take a look inside the bouquet. There was a box and a ring inside the bouquet. After this romantic proposal, they called us and told us they were engaged. The mystery of the lost ring was solved too, her friend had taken it to have it sized.

I was very happy when Zelda Barokas and Vedat Eskinazi had their civil marriage. This ceremony was done in Bozcaada [Bozcaada is an island on the Aegean sea famous for its grapevines], they loved Bozcaada a lot. They wanted it to be different. All the guests made their reservations in the hotel. A private van was rented and we went to the place where the civil marriage was going to take place. All the guests, men and women had worn white. The bride came on a tractor. Even the geese had bows on. The friends of the groom carried white pigeons from Istanbul and released them in Bozcaada in honor of the young newlyweds. The offerings were like the offerings of the most luxurious hotel. Vedat Eskinazi exports handbags, belts and accessories. Zelda works at a bank. She went to the United States to learn English. She went to Italian classes in Istanbul. My husband could not see all these wonderful things.. But according to my grandchild, he was watching us from wherever he went. She told me that she went to his grave, and told him about her engagement, her civil marriage and her wedding. She had “Lokum [Turkish delight—a type of candy] papi, I love you very much” inscribed on his tombstone.

My husband, that is to say, Albert Arguete was a very good Jew. He went to visit the dead every year. First we would visit his mother and father in Ortakoy cemetery, and later his sibling and my mother and father in Arnavutkoy [the largest cemetery in Istanbul is in Arnavutkoy. There are two cemeteries adjacent to each other, the Ashkenazi and the Sephardic]. He wished to ask for a haftorah at the synagogue for all the deceased members in his family in the month of July [one of the prayer rituals]. He reminded his son-in-law about this as soon as July came around. In any case, when he died, there was a notebook found in his pocket showing the death and burial dates of all the members of the family. Our family is very sensitive on this subject. I still remind my husband’s brother, Yomtov Arguete about his mother and father’s yartzheits.



My daughter Lucy Barokas and son-in-law Eliya Barokas try to obey the religious rules. My daughter eats kosher meat, and prepares for crowded tables on holidays and Shabbat evenings.

I was in Bolu [A city between Istanbul and Ankara. It is a mountain. It has several hotels. It is a place that a lot of people go to relax] during the 1986 massacre in Neve Shalom [10](#). We were shaken by the tragedy we heard on the radio. The name of Eliya's uncle was read. Our family had a victim of terror. We cut our vacation in half and returned.

I was at my home during the bombings in November of 2003 [11](#). First there was a loud noise. We thought it was a gas tank explosion. Then sounds of ambulances, sirens and chaos.... I grabbed the telephone, called Lucy. "Where is Eliya?", I asked. "Mommy, hang the phone up immediately, Eliya is wounded" she said. My son-in-law was at the Sisli synagogue [12](#). He was taken to Florence Nightingale Hospital. My husband had just died and I was wearing black clothes that are a sign of mourning. My first instinct was to take off the black clothes, get a box of chocolates and rush to the hospital where my son-in-law was. Thank G-d that he recuperated quickly. Eliya is a gem of a guy. May G-d grant peace to all the deceased, and patience to their loved ones.

I am slowly getting to the end of my story. I want to wrap it up with a beautiful event. One of the important days of my life is my 50th wedding anniversary (1996). One Sabbath evening, Eliya put two tickets in my hand. He said "I want you to celebrate your 50th wedding anniversary in Israel". My grandson Semi Barokas picked us up at the airport and took us to his home. We were in Israel for more than 20 days. We went all the way to Eilat, my husband bought me a necklace [she showed the necklace around her neck and said that she never took it off after that evening]. Another Sabbath evening, my daughter said "we are going out to dinner on Sunday night, get ready, I will come and pick you up". When we went to a fish restaurant on the Bosphorus, we saw the surprise; every member of the family apart from me had helped Lucy organize this. It was a wonderful evening. We celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary by cutting a cake.

Now my life is spent among my grandchildren, my children, my memories and my friends....

We wish dear Camila Jana Arguete all the best...

Note: Jana was so happy while this interview was taking place, that at times, when she received phone calls, she would say "No te puedo avlar tengo echo. Me estan azyendo reportaj vana eskriver la vida mia (I cannot talk to you now, I am busy. They are interviewing me, they are going to write about my life). She answered the questions with a lot of care and sincerity

## GLOSSARY

### [1](#) **Ataturk, Mustafa Kemal (1881-1938)**

Great Turkish statesman, the founder of modern Turkey. Mustafa Kemal was born in Salonika; he adapted the name Ataturk (father of the Turks) when he introduced surnames in Turkey. He joined the liberal Young Turk movement, aiming at turning the Ottoman Empire into a modern Turkish nation state and also participated in the Young Turk Revolt (1908). He fought in the Second Balkan War (1913) and World War I. After the Ottoman capitulation to the Entente, Mustafa Kemal Pasha organized the Turkish Nationalist Party (1919) and set up a new government in Ankara to rival Sultan Mohammed VI, who had been forced to sign the treaty of Sevres (1920), according to which

Turkey would lose the Arab and Kurdish provinces, Armenia, and the whole of European Turkey with Istanbul and the Aegean littoral to Greece. He was able to regain much of the lost provinces and expelled the Greeks from Anatolia. He abolished the Sultanate and attained international recognition for the Turkish Republic at the Lausanne Treaty (1923). Under his presidency Turkey became a constitutional state (1924), universal male suffrage was introduced, state and church were divided and he also introduced the Latin script.

## **2 Reforms in the Turkish Republic**

After the establishment of the Turkish Republic (29th October 1923) Kemal Ataturk and the new Turkish government engaged themselves in great modernization efforts. Fundamental political, social, legal, educational and cultural reforms were introduced in the 1920s and 30s in order to bring Turkish society closer to the West and shape the republican polity. Ataturk had abolished the Sultanate earlier (1922); in 1924 he did so with the Caliphate (religious leadership). He closed down the dervish lodges, the turbes (tombs of worshipped holy people) and forbade the wearing of traditional religious costumes outside ceremonies. According to the Hat Law the traditional Ottoman fes was outlawed; surnames were introduced and the traditional nicknames were outlawed too. International measurement (metric system) as well as the Gregorian calendar was introduced alongside female suffrage. The republic was created as a secular state; religion and state were divided: the Shariah (Islamic law) courts were abolished and a new secular court was introduced. A new educational law was created; the institutes of Turkish History Foundation and Language Research Foundation were opened as well as the University of Istanbul. In order to foster literacy the old Arabic scrip was replaced with Latin letters.

**3 English High School for Boys:** Founded in 1905 in the district of the Galata Tower by the British Consulate, primarily to provide comprehensive education for the children of the British colony in Istanbul. In 1911, Sultan Mehmet V gave the British Embassy a 5-storied wooden building in Nisantasi for exclusively schooling purposes. The school gained the status of high school in 1951 and also became coeducational. In 1979 it was nationalized and renamed as Nisantasi Anatolian Lycee.

## **4 Citizen, speak Turkish policy**

In the 1930s-1940s, the rise of Turkish nationalism affected the Jewish community as well. The Salonican Jew Moise Cohen (1883-1961), who had been in close contact with the young Turks in his home town in the years preceding the restoration of the Constitution, took the old Turkish name Tekinalp. He led a campaign among his fellow Jews to encourage them to speak only Turkish to integrate them fully into Turkish life, declaring that 'Turkey is your home, so you should speak Turkish.' In the major culture however, the policy of 'Citizen, speak Turkish' was seen as pressure put on minorities to speak Turkish in public places. There was a lot of criticism and verbal attacks and jeers on those who did not comply with this social rule.

**5 The Thrace Events:** In 1934, after the Nazis came to power in Germany, anti-Semitism was rising in Turkey too. In fear of disloyalty the government was aiming at clearing the border regions of the Jewish population. Thrace (European Turkey, bordering with both Bulgaria and Greece) was densely

populated with Jews. As a result of the anti-Semitic propaganda of the rightist press riots broke out, Jewish property was looted and women were raped. This caused most of the Jewish population to leave (mostly without their belongings) first for Istanbul and ultimately for Palestine.

## **6 Wealth Tax**

Introduced in December 1942 by the Grand National Assembly in a desperate effort to resolve depressed economic conditions caused by wartime mobilization measures against a possible German influx to Turkey via the occupied Greece. It was administered in such a way to bear most heavily on urban merchants, many of who were Christians and Jews. Those who lacked the financial liquidity had to sell everything or declare bankruptcy and even work on government projects in order to pay their debts, in the process losing most or all of their properties. Those unable to pay were subjected to deportation to labor camps until their obligations were paid off.

## **7 Events of 6th-7th September 1955**

Pogrom against the ethnic Greeks in Istanbul. It broke out after the rumour that Ataturk's house in Salonika (Greece) was being bombarded. As most of the Greek houses and businesses had been registered by the authorities earlier it was easy to carry out the pogrom. The Greek (and other non-Muslim communities) were hit severely: 3 people were killed, 30 were wounded, also 1004 houses, 4348 shops, 27 pharmacies and laboratories, 21 factories, 110 restaurants and cafes, 73 churches, 26 schools, 5 sports clubs and 2 cemeteries were destroyed; 200 Greek women were raped. A great wave of immigration occurred after these events and Istanbul was cleansed of its Greek population.

## **8 Ladino**

also known as Judeo-Spanish, it is the spoken and written Hispanic language of Jews of Spanish and Portuguese origin. Ladino did not become a specifically Jewish language until after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 (and Portugal in 1495) - it was merely the language of their province. It is also known as Judezmo, Dzhudezmo, or Spaniolit. When the Jews were expelled from Spain and Portugal they were cut off from the further development of the language, but they continued to speak it in the communities and countries to which they emigrated. Ladino therefore reflects the grammar and vocabulary of 15th century Spanish. In Amsterdam, England and Italy, those Jews who continued to speak 'Ladino' were in constant contact with Spain and therefore they basically continued to speak the Castilian Spanish of the time. Ladino was nowhere near as diverse as the various forms of Yiddish, but there were still two different dialects, which corresponded to the different origins of the speakers: 'Oriental' Ladino was spoken in Turkey and Rhodes and reflected Castilian Spanish, whereas 'Western' Ladino was spoken in Greece, Macedonia, Bosnia, Serbia and Romania, and preserved the characteristics of northern Spanish and Portuguese. The vocabulary of Ladino includes hundreds of archaic Spanish words, and also includes many words from different languages: mainly from Hebrew, Arabic, Turkish, Greek, French, and to a lesser extent from Italian. In the Ladino spoken in Israel, several words have been borrowed from Yiddish. For most of its lifetime, Ladino was written in the Hebrew alphabet, in Rashi script, or in Solitreo. It was only in the late 19th century that Ladino was ever written using the Latin alphabet. At various times Ladino has been spoken in North Africa, Egypt, Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, France,

Israel, and, to a lesser extent, in the United States and Latin America.

**9 Zulfaris Synagogue/Museum of Turkish Jews:** This synagogue, recorded in the Chief Rabbinate archives as Kal Kadosh Galata, is commonly known as Zulfaris Synagogue. The word is derived from the former name of the street in which it is located: Zulf-u arus, which means Bride's Long Lock. Today the street is called Perchemli Sokak which means Fringe Street. There is evidence that this synagogue preexisted in 1671, when Haim Kamhi was Chief Rabbi, as the foundations date from the early 15th century Genovese period. However, the actual building was re-erected over its original foundation, presumably in the early 19th century. In the 1890s, repair work was carried out with the financial assistance of the Camondo family and in 1904 restoration work was conducted by the Jewish community of Galata, presided over by Jak Bey de Leon. (Source: [www.muze500.com](http://www.muze500.com))

### **10 1986 Terrorist Attack on the Neve-Shalom Synagogue**

In September 1986, Islamist terrorists carried out a terrorist attack with guns and grenades on worshippers in the Neve-Shalom synagogue, killing 23. The Turkish government and people were outraged by the attack. The damage was repaired, except for several bullet holes in a seat-back, left as a reminder.

### **11 2003 Bombing of the Istanbul Synagogues**

On 15th November 2003 two suicide terrorist attacks occurred nearly simultaneously at the Sisli and Neve-Shalom synagogues. The terrorists drove vans loaded with explosives and detonated the bombs in front of the synagogues. It was Saturday morning and the synagogues were full for the services. Due to the strong security measures that had been taken, there were no casualties inside, however, 26 pedestrians on the street were killed; five of them were Jewish. The material loss was also terrible. The terrorists belonged to the Turkish branch of Al Qaida.

### **12 Sisli Beth-Israel Synagogue**

Istanbul synagogue, founded in the 1920s after restoring the premises of the garage of a thread factory. It was rebuilt and extended in 1952.