

# Jak Rutli

Jak Rutli

Istanbul

Turkey

Interviewer: Yusuf Sarhon

Date of Interview: May 2005

Jak Rutli is 86 years old, can be considered tall for his generation, has silver hair, is superior to Hollywood actors with his speaking manner and his good looks that have not lost anything with age, is a little firm-sweet in demeanor, and is an elder that I am very fond of. He lives in Mecidiyeköy on a ground floor with his wife Ceni Rutli. I have spent my childhood with him due to the fact that he is a friend of my parents. This interview has provided me with the opportunity to see them again after long years and to rekindle my childhood memories. Witnessing his humor and vigor despite his age and the illnesses resulting from his age also made me very happy.



[My family background](#)

[Growing up](#)

[My wife Ceni Rutli](#)

[Family life](#)

[World War II and the Turkish Jews](#)

[Glossary](#)

## **My family background**

I do not know anything about my great grandparents, neither on my mother's nor on my father's side. I don't know what they did or what language they spoke. I guess my father's side spoke Yiddish, because my grandparents and parents spoke Yiddish. My father spoke Russian and Arabic, too, so they might have spoken Russian too.

My mother's father was Sami Rozental. His name in Yiddish was Zolmen but he was called Sami here. He was from Romanian origins and he was very religious. He lived 110 years and was very much respected by everyone. According to what I was told by my mother, people would come to get his advice until his last days; in other words he was able to dole out sane advice even at the age of 110. He was a very religious, honest and wise man. Also as far as I know, my mother's father emigrated to Egypt with my mother and the whole family, but that is all I know. I don't even know the name of my mother's mother. I have no information on that.

My father's father was Yitzhak Rozental, and his roots are from Lithuania. According to what I was told, he was born there, he lived there and he died there. I was only 16 when my father died. They must have lived through a lot but unfortunately I don't know anything. In our community [the Ashkenazi community] it was customary to name a child after a dead person, they wouldn't give a child the name of a person if that person was alive. So if a grandfather is alive, the grandson is not named after him; only if he is dead. So I got the name of my mother's father.

They must have been working to earn a living but I have no idea what they were doing. Maybe they were tailors. I don't know which languages they knew. I think they spoke Yiddish.

I think my father's father had a beard, I saw it once in a photo. I don't know in what kind of house they lived in or what kind of furniture they had. What I do know is that my father's father left their house in Lithuania and ran away. Either when the Russians came or when communism came, in the 1875's, I am not sure which, they left and ran away. Before those years Lithuania was independent, but then the Russians came and they left. My father went to Egypt but I don't know if it was with his whole family or just him. I don't know what happened to his family. I just know that my father went to Egypt, there he met my mother and they got married in Egypt.

My father's mother's name was Zelda. My grandmother did not wear any wigs like the Orthodox ladies, she wore the clothes that were in fashion at the time. They did wear hats though, they would never go out without a hat.

My father told me that because the mothers were different, they had other daughters. My grandfather, my father's father, lost his wife at a young age. She produced 2 children, my father and a sister, then she died young and he married another woman. I don't remember the name. And he arrived, Fritz arrived, a sister, I don't remember the name, arrived. They all went to France, but they were cool in their relationship. The reason was probably because the mothers were different.

We were closer with one because he was here, in Istanbul, Fritz Rozental. He was born here, lived and died here. Fritz had two sons and one daughter. Leon Rozenthal, Izi Rozenthal and Eni rozenthal. His wife was Klara, she was religious, she read books. She died too. Only Izi is left from his family and Leon's son, Izel Rozental.

My mother stayed in Egypt for 10 years, they lived there, then they came here, later when my father died, and my older sister, having married a doctor, settled in Israel, she went with them and lived there.

My father was born in Lithuania. I don't know but he probably went to highschool, he couldn't do more because he ran away from Lithuania. My father spoke in Yiddish. He knew German and Arabic. My father spoke Yiddish in the family among themselves and their parents. They spoke in Arabic if they wanted to hide something from the children.

My father was a serious and hardworking person and a very, very good father. He was especially very fond of his children. He was excessively fond of them. We, 5 kids, went to school at the same time. All the children attended school. At the Saint-George school, and there was a Goldschmith school at the time. He educated all of us. He was so fond of us that, in summer we would go to the sea as a family. He would go into the sea, he would only allow us to go in until the water reached

our knees, he would not allow us to go deeper, he was scared that we could drown. None of us learned how to swim because of this. He did not allow us to eat green plums. If we drank water following that, we could get sick.

My father worked at Carlmann before he opened his own store. There was Sümerbank in Beyoglu [the famous district in Istanbul, which used to be called Pera], a big building. That building was Carlmann's. And 3 stories were ready-to-wear clothing. My father was a manager there. After that he opened his own store. He opened a female and male tailoring store. My father did tailoring to earn their living. My father earned well, he was a good tailor for women and men. During the war there was no sugar here, there wasn't this or that but my father imported it from Russia in blocks. The ladies of the Pasha and his entourage brought it for him.

My father was tall. He had a bulging hat. At the time you had to pay a penny to cross Karakoy bridge [bridge across the Golden Horn]. They would stand at the ends of the bridge with coin boxes, they would charge one penny on one way and one penny on the way back. He sometimes took me too, we would cross the bridge walking. When he was paying the official, the other would say: "Can't you see? He is German". That's what he looked like, like a tall German. He dressed well of course. Because he was a tailor, he dressed well, he did all the ironing. My father did not go into the military at first because he was a foreign national, a white Russian. He became a Turk later on.

My mother was born in Romania. My mother went to Egypt when she was 2 years old, she must have gone to school there. My mother spoke Yiddish, she spoke German. She knew Arabic too, she spoke Arabic with my father. I don't know what she studied. She was married at 15.

The clothing of my mother was the modern clothing of the times. My mother was very good too, her only job was to raise the children. But she walked around with a whip in the house. There was a pole, with leather strips on the end. Because there were 6 boys, 2 boys in each room, the pillows would fly in the air. As if this were not enough, the 6 children of my father's sister would also come to our house. My mother of course walked around with that whip and everyone was scared. But the house was always clean and my mother was always busy with cooking. She would cook for lunch in the morning, and for the evening in the afternoon. One meal would not be enough for both lunch and dinner. There were 8 people in the house, and Swartz, makes 9, you have to feed these. In our family the one who went (shopping) to the bazaar was my mother, my mother did all the shopping. There weren't any vendors or merchants that they especially bought from.

My mother and father met in Egypt, but how, I do not know. My father had moved to Egypt, they met there and were married there. In Cairo. First my mom went there, she was 2 years old then. She stayed there for 15 years. Later my father came and stayed there for 10 more years. But I don't know how they met. Was it matchmaking, or was it not, I was not told. I only know that they were married in a synagogue in Egypt.

Our family's financial situation wasn't very wealthy, but it was good. He educated five children at the same time, a big house, plenty of good food, and going out, that means he earned well.

The house we lived in was big. It had 7-8 rooms. The children stayed two per room. There was no bathroom at the time. Houses with bathrooms were very rare, there weren't any in Kuledibi. The inside of the house isn't like the ones today of course. There were sofas and armchairs, a china cabinet, the kitchen had a stove that worked with coal. The gas was coal gas piped into buildings

then, there were no gas tubes. There were coal stoves for heating. We had continuous running water from the taps. We did not have a garden, we lived in a flat. We had pets in the house, we had a cat, its name was Pamuk(Cotton). It lived with us for 25 years. We did not have helpers like servants, maids, nannies, au paires or laundry women. We only had a woman who came once a week.

We always had books in our house. My older brothers had books, magazines, for example, there was Stern. There were a few religious books but we did not read them, my father did. My parents liked reading, but my father read more. My mother, even though she enjoyed it, did not have much time from struggling with the kids. A newspaper arrived to the house too. The French newspaper, Journal d'orient [1](#) would come. They did not have the habit of going to the library.

My father could be considered religious. He applied Passover, Purim, Rosh Ashana and Yom Kippur among the Jewish traditions. They observed kashrut. Pork products, shrimp and such would not enter our house. He even had different tableware served during Passover. There were special plates for Passover. Also my father did not like small plates, he liked to eat in big plates. There would be holiday celebrations in the house. We would go to relatives, they would come to us. My father went to the synagogue every Friday and Saturday. My family was a member of the Jewish community. My father had active duties in the community. The tailors had built the Schneider Temple [the old tailors' synagogue, which has now become an art gallery] at the time. Schneider means tailor. All the tailors built that synagogue and they were all members there.

My parents did not have political views, they were not involved with any party, or political, social or cultural organization.

When we lived in Kuledibi, we had Jewish neighbors. There was Cansberg, the Deutchberg's, there was one Matild Moskovic, she came every day to our house. The women came. My father had friends too. There was Roustein, he was a watchmaker in Beyoglu. He was Russian too. They would go out together.

We did not go on trips much. But my father did not like to stay home. He would go out in the evenings, on Friday and Saturdays. He even went out with so many children.

My mother stayed in Egypt for 10 years, they lived there, then they came here, later when my father died, and my older sister, having married a doctor, settled in Israel, she went with them and lived there.

My father is buried in the Jewish cemetery here, my mother's is in Israel.

Of course there was a rabbi at the funeral, and he was buried with a religious ceremony, we recited the Kaddish. I do their yartzheits on the anniversary of their deaths. A letter comes from our community to remind us, even my older sister Zelda's letter comes for reminder even though I did not even meet her. Our community sends out letters because we are few. 10-15 days before.

My mother's sibling, I do not remember his name, he was a technical manager at the Rozental Bomonti beer factory. I did not meet any other sibling, there probably was none. This sibling had a son, Charles, and daughters, Fani and Rasel . Charles went to Buenos Aires with his father, later he went to Rio de Janerio. Fani married here with Albukrek. Rasel also married here with Jak Palombo and went to Israel.

My father's sister was Ida. Her husband was Eliya Huves, he was a tailor too. We lived across from them in Kuledibi. They left for Israel too about 30-40 years ago. They had 8 children, 5 boys and 3 girls.

He had one brother, Fritz. He also had siblings in France, his relationship was cool with them. I neither met them, nor do I have information about them.

We were 8 siblings. I do not know the birth year of Zelda. When she died I was not born yet. She died at 18 years of age. When my mother came from Egypt, she came with 5 children. She rented a house here. My father did not know about shopping, just like me. My mother did it to the very end. One day my mother had to go out. She had a neighbor who had a daughter. She said, leave, I will take care of her. My mother said, I will be back in 10-15 minutes, I am going to the grocer. My older sister was a baby then. Maybe one year old. Apparently she sat her on a high stool, she fell from it, hit her head and was sick. She developed epilepsy. She would start trembling. My father and mother did not refrain from seeing every doctor. There was no cure. She was fine then. She was big then, she helped raise the children of all the friends. She was fine till 18 years of age, but she would be afflicted with this sickness from time to time with a doctor and she died at 18 years of age. When she died I was not born yet.

Robert, born in 1900. When he was around 20-21 years old, there were Jews escaping Russia, most of them came here. A lot of Jews came at the time, Russians also came, even princes came, the princes of the czar and such would sell flowers in the streets. They escaped from Russia when communism came. There was Hotel Gendemann in Kuledibi, Kücükhendek, the Russians settled there. My older brother met a girl named Frima, Russian Jew, and he loved her very much and married. He was married in the hotel. I remember, there was music and I was 2 years old, they gave me a small chair and I played. They left for the U.S.A. the next morning to live there. He died there. When he was here, he did brokerage. He did commerce there too. He had one son, I don't remember the name. He divorced while he was there.

Moris Rozental, I don't remember the date. When his older brother left for the U.S.A. when he was 17, he said, why should I stay here, I will go to be with my older brother. But they were not giving visas for the U.S.A. then. It was free until then. You would buy a ticket and you would go. He made an agreement with a man to go to U.S.A. There were 8 more young people that this man made agreements with. They traveled by boat. The trip probably took 15-20 days. Just when they arrived, they said you cannot go in. He left all of them on an island there. They stayed there for 3 days, they ate bananas and so on there. 3 days later, when the checking was easier, he smuggled them into the U.S.A. illegally. Later he went to my other older brother. He stayed there, he married there. He had two sons, one daughter. Soli, Vili and Beti. He stayed in New York for a while. Later he found New York too noisy, he left and went to Los Angeles. He stayed there. At one time he came here and I met Moris because I did not know him. They came to our house in Caddebostan. With his wife and one son.

Alberto Rozental said I will not stay here, either. I will go to Buenos Aires, to be with my uncle, he said. Next to my mother's brother. He went ahead and left. I don't know his birth date. He registered my birth date as the 6th of May. He stayed in Buenos Aires for 10 years then moved to Rio. He married in Rio with Bronya Rozental, he did not have children. As far as I know, and from what my nephew in the United States tells me, he became very wealthy. He would even tell in his

letters “it is midnight, I am still working”. He had a construction business and a factory for locks. And he did constructions. He worked very hard. But when El-Al was newly founded, Motle Schneider was the first manager. He was the best friend of my older brother Davit. One day he left for Rio. He met with my older brother there. On his return, he said “listen, I have seen a lot of houses but I haven’t seen one like your brother’s”. He was that wealthy. Later on the letters ceased. My nephew in the United States said that there was a rebellion. The street where my older brother resided was the place for bigshots, rich people. They cleaned out everything. I wrote to the community, I did not get any news. His wife also did not answer. Because they had nephews, it did not suit her, I was a brother. She did not let me know so I would not inherit. My nephew did not tell us anything, I think they killed him. There was a riot against the rich, what they call a program in Rio.

But when he was alive, the fourth son that is to say my fifth brother Charles who was here was dating a Catholic girl. He was born in Egypt too. He also said I will not stay, I will go to Rio too. He went ahead and left for Paris. He did not have a visa for Rio. My older brother said you stay in Paris and wait, I will send you a visa. Charles got a permit for 6 months, in the meantime, problems arose for the visa, he could not get it one way or the other. Consequently he got engaged to a Jewish girl who was an acquaintance, he went to the Prefecture de Police (Police Station), saying we are engaged, we are getting married, and extended his permit for another 6 months. In this way he extended it for 3 years. In the meantime he worked there, he did tailoring, ironing, he did commerce. The purpose was to earn his living. 3 years later the French said you are not getting married and revoked his passport, took him to the embassy, and because he hadn’t done his military service, he became a fugitive soldier. And they moved him out of border to Italy. When he went to Italy, the visa for Brazil came to Paris in the end, but he couldn’t go and came back here with the police. He disembarked in Sirkeci with the police. My father waited for him, gave the guy 10 bucks, and the police let him go. He did not go to the military for 3 years. He stayed here.

Davit was born in Egypt in 1915. He also studied here in Saint-George. Later there was an important brokerage agent here, Davit Leon Farber, he worked there. But then there was an even more important agent, Emu Mayer, who was one of the wealthiest in Istanbul. This Emu Mayer was such a merchant that when he passed through Aşirefendi with his horse-carriage, all the merchants stood up. Because he was a good employee, he removed my brother out of his job and took him under his wing. He gave him double his salary. It was a huge place, there were a lot of employees. Later he also gave him his daughter. He married Berta Mayer. He had one daughter, Nadya. She died recently, she was in her 60’s maybe. My older brother and his wife had previously died in Istanbul. My brother died at 57 years of age. He had a myocardial infarction, he died while he was on a trip to Germany. He traveled a lot. He was here for one month, in Germany for one month, that is how his life was. His grave is in Germany, we went to visit it previously. The Jewish community there did not want to give him up. The Grand Rabbi there did not want to give him up. We talked on the phone, we will send him with cargo, we said, he did not give him up. The Grand Rabbi was very powerful among the Jews after Hitler, the government did not get involved. The Grand Rabbi said, according to our laws, we can only send him to Israel from here. As you know, in our tradition, the funeral cannot wait too much, you have to bury within 24 hours. At the time, Turkish citizens could not leave the country more than once a year. My older brother and I could not leave because our passports were not suitable. The brother of Berta was an Italian national, we sent him to get the funeral and bring it, they did not give it up and he returned. The

Grand Rabbinate there sent pictures and this and that and placed the tombstone. About 20 years ago we left and went to Munich and visited his gravesite.

Ida was born in 1917. She also studied in Saint-George. She grew up here. Later we went to the military. 3 brothers, we were taken into the 20 military classes.<sup>2</sup> My two older brothers and I. They took my older brother Davit three times to the military. We gave a petition saying my two older brothers are soldiers, I do not have a father, I take care of my mother and sister, allow me to stay till one of them comes back. The answer arrived: one of them is in the reserves, since it is not known when he will be released, we cannot allow it. I did not go to the military but I was arrested in the street as a fugitive and went to the military. My mother and sister stayed alone. When they were left alone, my cousin Bernard, the one I said had made fruit leather, the son of my father's sister, he owned a building in Kuledibi, he took in my mother and sister. They stated there till my older brother came from the military. Later we came back too from the military, my sister was married. She married Sami Reytan. They had one son and one daughter, they live in Israel. Hayim Reytan and Rita Reytan. They each have two sons. My older sister lives in a nice villa in Ramat Hasharon, only, her husband died.

### **Growing up**

I was born on May 6th, 1919 in Kuledibi in Istanbul. I was born on the street they called Kal de los Frankos (the synagogue of the Italians). We lived in Kuledibi all through my childhood.

There were maybe 7-8 rooms in the house we lived in. Stoves were used for heating and we had many stoves. The name of our house was Kuledibi appartement. There was the Levi appartement, Broth appartement. There was electricity and running water. There wasn't a central heating system for staying warm then.

There was a hill down the street from our house. Today there is the Beyoglu hospital, before it was the British hospital. Then there was Saint-George school and Saint-George hospital across it. Behind it there was the Saint-George school for girls.

There was a coffeehouse around Kuledibi. The manager there was a Jew named Menahem. Every evening, the best known families of Kuledibi, there were the Broth's, the Suraski's, they would meet there with their families. We would sit with my father and mother, my father enjoyed the suka. We, the young children played together. Every evening more or less. Our neighborhood was very clean, there was everything but there wasn't a hamam, there was one in the Perseme bazaar, one in Beyoglu, that's where we would go. I remember going to the hamam with my father, I was young. My siblings would all go together, along with cousins, a lot of teasing went on. There was a famous hamam in Sultanahmet, they would go there as a crowd and had wonderful fun. I could not go because I was young. The age difference was big. I was two years old when my oldest brother got married.

My mother raised me, there was no preschool or such then, in addition, we did not have a nanny or an au paire.

I do not remember the period before school, we usually played at home. My mother and father had close friends, the Frumkin's and the Ruthstein's. We played at home with their children, child games probably. They did not allow us to go out to the streets. I went to elementary school in Saint-George school. This was an Austrian priests' school. It was with tuition. My mother would

prepare food for us for after school when we went to school, later we did our homework. We even had a German teacher who came to tutor us, my older sister and me. Later on, of course the siblings would come, my father would come. There was the radio then, we would listen to the radio. We would go to the coffeehouse in the evenings with my father after dinner. Starting from the time of elementary school, we went to temple to take classes, together with the other children in the neighborhood, for 1-2 hours after school. This went on till 13 years of age, after the bar-mitzvah, we quit.

When I was little, we would board the trolley with my mother, father and sister and go to Sisli. Last stop. There we would go on a horse-carriage and go to Mecidiyekoy. At the time Mecidiyekoy was an orchard of mulberries. You could rent a tree for 2.5 liras. We would put a white sheet that we brought from home under it, shake the tree, the mulberries would fall and we would eat there till the evening. There were Jewish families, Turkish families, they always came. Everywhere was an orchard of mulberries. We would go to Altinkum again with my mother, father and sister, after Büyükdere. There was a beach there and there were a lot of restaurants in front of the beach. We would eat in those restaurants, then swim in the sea and return in the evening.

Again when I was little, we would go to the movies on Sundays. My father, mother, sister and I would go. The other siblings were all much older than us. They would go out with their friends, they were grown up. There was Modern movie theater in Tepebasi. There was a variety show before the movie here. Singers would perform, there would be theatrical plays, there would be songs, short parodies. Then the movies would start. There would be movies like dramas, comedies, adventure movies and so on. I have not retained any of the movies I watched in my mind. There was Cumhuriyet casino in Tepebasi on Friday nights. There were big stars, Turkish style and European style there. I remember that cover charge was 11 kurus then. Money was valuable then. When the famous stars appeared, the red carpet would be rolled out on the floor. I do not remember the names of the stars of the time now.

When we grew up a bit more we started going to the movies with friends. For example there was first class in the movie theaters in Beyoglu, this was 35 kurus. We would go to the movie theater, then we would go the milk-pudding store, or there were bakeries, we would go there. We could not spend one lira. Sundays were spent like this.

I attended Saint-George school for junior high and highschool too after elementary school. Among our friends in school, there were Turks, there were Jews, there were 1 or 2 Armenians, mostly there were Jews and Turks.

All my classes were fine, my favorites were math and about animas (naturekunder). I did not have teachers that I especially loved or hated. I had a good relationship with all the teachers. I played basketball in school for a few months but I did not continue. We had a teacher named Maya, he would teach us. I took music classes in school. I was playing harmonica then, the whole school took classes of harmonica.

I did not encounter any antisemitism from my teachers or classmates, only at the very end, when Hitler came to power. There were no German students in our school. There was one Armenian, Medovic. He was the son of the owner of Tokatliyan hotel. He was a German national, the German flag would come out, the Nazi cross, and there would be tension. But there were Turkish students, we got along well with them. Later on we finished school. After a period, our school also



displayed the German flag, the swastika. Because Austria was invaded by Hitler, that's why. Later on the Austrian hospital also displayed the German flag, swastika.

During school years there were girls in Kuledibi who we were friends with, they attended the Austrian girls' highschool. There was a friend named Lora, we would go on the balcony in their house, we would dance, and chat. There was Caroline Markus. She was our friend, we were together because we were from the same street. There even was a girl, she was Chaldean, she was a pretty girl, I don't remember her name. One day she came to my home, rang the doorbell, my father answered. I was not home, my father said "come in, my daughter". The girl said: "I love Jak a lot, but he does not love me". Look at the girl's chutzpah. My father answered "is that so, my child, I will speak to him". In the evening my father related this to me. I was about 14-15 years old then, a child, as you can imagine. My father took this event very calmly, he was a very modern man. They even laughed about it at home with my older brother. My father had even said "pretty girl" about her to me. Whenever he saw a girl next to me in the street, he would remove his hat and greet her.

We would go out on Saturdays and holidays. There was a colony of Eastern European Jews on the side of Uskudar [a district on the Anatolian side of Istanbul]. There were houses resembling a small village, you could eat and stay at houses like Polonezkoy [a village on the Anatolian side of Istanbul founded by the Polish and which therefore had the name "village of the Poles"], there even was a rabbi, but there was no synagogue there. We stayed there for 15 days. Sometimes we would only go for the weekends, Saturday and Sunday, and we would return. There were always Ashkenazim there, we would go there mostly with Ashkenazim. My older brothers would go more often. The schools were separate. We were separated from girls. We could not go into their school.

My friends outside of school were Jewish. There was also a British girl, she was not Jewish. Her name was Eillen Castle. There was a house belonging to the British embassy, because this girl's father worked at the embassy, they stayed in this house. That's where I knew her from, we would just meet with her. We would go out when we were free, we would go to the movies, meet with the girls every day after homework, have fun with them. There was Benhabib in Kuledibi, Izak Benhabib, he had a very beautiful voice. There was a tallish rock under the tower, he would sit there and sing. There was a famous singer called Tina Rossi, he would sing her French songs. All the girls would come out to the windows around him. We would tease and have fun. We had this friend, Benhabib. Peyse Levi, Yonas Kohen, Lazar Arovas and one unlucky guy who drowned in Florya, I don't remember his name. One day we were going to go to Moda. He made us get out of the boat at the last minute so we could go to Florya. So we went ahead and arrived to Florya. The water in the beach came up to your knees. There were a few more beaches adjacent to our beach. He suddenly turned towards us and said "I am going to the beach next door, I have a friend that I know" and he left and did not come back. We looked and saw it is already 4-5 p.m., we will return in the evening, he still has not come. We searched and searched and could not find him. In the end they found him in the sea, he drowned. But the water is up to your knees. Someone told us that sometimes there are potholes in Florya, one appeared in front of him, he was afraid of falling down so he held on to a woman next to him. The man next to the woman punched him for holding onto the woman, and he fainted and died, they said. Later on the police arrived and told us to go and inform the family. The poor guy was lost.

The Jews here had specific professions of course, usually they were all merchants. The Suraski's had a big store in Sultanhamam [industrial district in Istanbul], selling fabrics and ready-made clothing, the Broth's had a big store again in Sultanhamam selling British fabrics for men and women. Then there was Inselberg, Reitz, Dr Markus, and Schnitter. These were all merchants and 80% of the Eastern European Jews were agents, they had brokerages.

There were good families in Kuledibi. 80% of the Eastern European Jews lived in Kuledibi. There were no Ashkenazi Jews living in places like Hasköy or Balat. They were all at Kuledibi and Tunel. Later they slowly left. I was in Kuledibi until I was 16. All my friends were from there. There was Benhabib, there was Levi, Yonas Kohen, Lazar Arovas. We all lived close to each other there. There were all Jews.

I cannot say anything as far as numbers but Istanbul was close to 100,000 people but I cannot know about Kuledibi, it was crowded. The Ashkenazim had 3 synagogues only. An Ashkenazi synagogue at Yüksek Kaldirim (a hilly neighborhood on the European side where the Jews did commerce), Schneider Temple next to Saint-George hospital and one more behind Yüksek Kaldirim but the environment was bad, there were brothels, and it closed.

There was a rabbi, an usher, a cantor, there was everything. There was mikveh, Talmud Torah, and Yeshiva.

There was one great rabbi, Rav Shapira. Then there was the Ashkenazi colony. There was the colony of Ashkenazi Jews on the other side, we would go there. This is how we grew up.

Later when it was time for Purim, we all dressed in Purim clothing in Kuledibi. I had one older brother. He was quite arrogant as he had studied a lot, he would become a prince. He would go around in a horse-carriage, the other 2 siblings would be his attendants. He would go around the street like this in a horse-carriage. I had another cousin, named Bernard Huves. The son of my father's sister, he was a jokester. He was a hairdresser for women and men. The wife of İnönü [3](#) would come to him, he was that good of a hairdresser. But he liked jokes a lot. One day he bought a potty for Purim, new, he washed it. His mother made marmelade from fruit leather, he filled the potty with this marmelade, a little later he ate out of this potty with a spoon, and he made a little bit of a mess all around too. Everyone who saw the potty thought it was something else, and he came to our house like this at Purim. He went to other houses like this too. That's how it was done, we had fun, there was this much freedom in the streets.

I did not encounter any kind of antisemitism when I was a child. I remember the military parades, the independence day celebrations from my childhood. I especially remember the 10th year. In the 10th year, there was a crescent moon and star bulb at every window in every house. There were 10-15 bulbs around the moon, like stars and the lights were on. Not only at every house, almost at every floor in every window it was on. It was like daytime. Everyone took care of their own flat. The crescent moon and star were sold ready and we put up the bulbs. Then arches were placed on the streets all the way from Tepebaşı down till Karaköy, the Jewish community did it, lit by bulbs. That night songs were sung, we had fun till the morning. Nothing like this ever happened again, it was not done. I was around 14-15 years old then.

Another event I remember was the death of Atatürk [4](#). When Atatürk died in 1938, there was a ceremony in Dolmabahçe Palace. I was supposed to go somewhere in Besiktas for work, I passed by with the trolley. As I was passing in front of it, let me get down and go too, I said. When I was

entering Dolmahçe, they said without a hat or coat, it was winter then, I did not understand it well and I thought that they would take the hat and the coat, I cannot find it again in this crowd, I thought. I changed my mind and did not go in. Apparently holding it in your hand was acceptable, I was mistaken. But in the evening we went with my mother and older brother to Dolmahce. It was very crowded and there were people who fell into the sea from the throngs. An Ashkenazi girl fell into the sea with her mother. There were deaths. 6 people died that day from the crowds. There were policemen on horses. When we saw this crowd, we went back. That is how much Atatürk was loved by everyone. Atatürk was different, everyone loved him.

I have a few more memories involving Atatürk. Atatürk danced with my cousin. I had a cousin Rapaport, she was married to my cousin Charles Huves. Charles Huves was my father's sister's son. He lived in Bombay for 10 years, then came here. He was the manager in the firm he worked and the firm had sent him to Bombay. There was Rapaport, he was very wealthy, he imported tripps. He married his daughter. I do not remember her name. They had a villa in Suadiye. In summer when they were in the casino of Suadiye hotel, Atatürk came from the sea by motorboat. The wife of my cousin was a very beautiful woman. Atatürk came and asked permission from her husband to dance with her. After the dance, Atatürk brought her to the table and thanked her. This happened in Suadiye hotel.

There is also a memory of Atatürk in Park hotel. There was lunch for 110 kuruş at Park hotel every day, there were 3 courses for the meal. Also 5 musicians, they were Ashkenazi and without passports. These were the ones who escaped from Poland and Russia. When Atatürk came to Istanbul, he used to eat there and enjoyed the music. These people played classical music. Every time Atatürk came to Istanbul, he came here. In the meantime a law was passed. Only Turkish citizens would be able to work in jobs like musicians and waiters. Consequently they let these musicians go, because they were all foreign. Atatürk came and sat down to eat and asked where the musicians were. They told him these were not Turks, so they could not work there. Atatürk was angry, "what do you mean they cannot work, find them at their homes and bring them here one by one", he said. They brought all of them, in front of Atatürk. Atatürk asked: "what is your name?" One of them said, "Goldenberg". Atatürk: "O.K., let your name be Altındağ (in Turkish it means Golden Hill), you have just become Turkish, write it down", he said. He gave all of them a Turkish name and made them Turkish citizens. "Now go ahead and play music", he said.

Atatürk's dentist was Günsberg. His place was in Beyoğlu. My wife used to wait at the dentist's door to be able to see Atatürk, when he came there. When Atatürk came to Istanbul, he would visit with Dr Marküs too. The old president of B'nai Brith. Dr Marküs was our Grand Rabbi. He was a doctor of philosophy. Atatürk enjoyed talking with him. Let me also talk about this. Atatürk got in line for the subway going from Karakoy to Beyoğlu and bought a 2nd class ticket, and of course passed, everyone got up but he acted like a regular citizen. Of course there were policemen in civilian clothing for security. There was Tokatliyan hotel in Galatasaray. He would sit there with his entourage. Sometimes we would see, he would wear a dark-colored capelike thing, and tall boots, we would look with admiration, he had such eyes, you could not stare, they were piercing.

The Austrian captain that I remember. At the end of World War I, when the foreign armies that were here were leaving, the Austrian army, I have no idea where they came from, stayed for 3 days and returned to Austria. A soldier with a captain's uniform missed the return date and stayed here in the streets with his cane. Just as my father was crossing the street in Tünel, he looks and

sees an Austrian soldier. My father knows that the Austrians have left. This soldier, his cane in his hand is shouting. "Achtung (attention), Fire", he shouts. My father called him. He asked his name: "Schwartz". My father understood that he was Jewish, he also checked, he was circumcised, he was not mentally normal. They tried to help him return and asked around at the embassies. They could find no connection, his family probably died during the war. They looked for his family to send him back but could not find them. He had to stay here. My father gave him civilian clothing, found him a place to sleep. There was a grocer, Jewish, "come to me every day. You can deliver the orders", he said. He came to us too every evening for dinner. We were together every evening at the table. This lasted 25 years. During this time he never begged, he even gave money to beggars. There was one thing he loved, he always said give me a tie. When I was in the military, there was an epidemic of smallpox and he died, I heard about it when I was in the military.

### **My wife Ceni Rutli**

My wife Ceni Rutli (nee Romi) was born in Istanbul at Altinci Daire [a district on the European side of Istanbul]. On August 15th, 1923. She studied in junior high. Her mother tongue is Judeo Espanyol, she also knows French. She worked for a very short while after school. The Berber store of Soryano Hanalel. They sold things like shirts and pijamas. She did not work after getting married. She had 2 siblings. The older one Jak Romi, the younger one Albert Romi. They both went to Israel. Jak Romi opened a hardware store there. He had one daughter and one son. Mahir Romi and Estella Romi. Albert Romi married a woman from Egypt there. He did not have children.

This is how my wife and I met. I had a friend, Izi Goldenberg who was the owner of Grundig radios and televisions. He used to manufacture gloves before, gloves for men and women. He was at Sultanhamam in the five fingers building. We also founded Rutli-Goldenberg, an agency specializing in hardware but it did not work afterwards. My current wife was working in a shirt store around there. When Goldenberg was working on gloves, she came one day to buy a pair and we met there. I helped her carry the package she bought, we took it to the store. She was a beautiful woman, "would you date me?", I said. "Yes, I will date you", she said, but not alone. I had friends, we went out together. We went out one or two times. Later we continued. After a while she started asking about marriage. I said, "I cannot marry before my sister is married". She told this to her mother. Her mother said, "ask if she has money". She came to me and asked, "does your sister have money?". I told her that the older brothers that are in the United States and the ones here, they will all give. She then told me "I know a doctor. If your sister gets engaged, I will enter your house too, I want to get engaged too". I said, "o.k." We made a date at a bakery in Beyoğlu, so they could meet. My older sister came with my older brother, and I with Ceni, and doctor Sami Reytan came alone because he did not have a father or such. He was a good man, later on he became an internist, they liked each other a lot. They decided, came to our house, got engaged and later on married. They got married and we got married. Following us, my older brother Charles also married. And my mother lived with my older sister and the doctor. The Doctor opened a clinic. There was a famous professor Frank here, who ran away from Germany, he was his assistant. He did his residency with him. He became an internist. Then he received a very good offer from Israel and went to Israel. There he became a doctor at Kupat Holim (national/public healthcare centers in Israel). They had children there. He bought a villa, he bought two flats for his children. His financial situation was good. My mother went to Israel to be with them.

We were married in Istanbul in the Ashkenazi synagogue at Yüksek Kaldırım with my wife in 1947. My wife is Sephardic. I registered her to our community with a paper I took from the Sephardic community to be able to get married. They have an agreement among themselves, they do not compete. There is a difference in the way we get married in the synagogue. Now, when you go to the temple, the groom comes with his mother and father just like the Sephardim, with us, I came with my mother, because there was no father, my older brother took his place. With us, when the bride comes, she does not enter the temple directly. She goes up the stairs, there is the first gallery there, she waits. The rabbi comes, takes me and my mother, we go upstairs. We open the veil to see that it is my wife. We say "o.k.". I go down alone, my mother stays with the bride and they descend together. And this is why, it is in our history, Rachel for Leah. This is it. Because the guy wanted Rachel, they gave him Leah. [Story from the Bible: Yaakov wanted to marry Rachel and had to work for his future father-in-law for seven years to have her hand in marriage. However, on the wedding day, instead of Rachel they put the ugly older sister under the veil and married her off to Yaakov!]

The wedding went very well. There was no evening party. We got married, we immediately went home, undressed, changed, took a small suitcase and went immediately to the hotel. We went to Heybeli ada [the third one of the Princess islands, on the Marmara sea, south of Istanbul] for our honeymoon. We stayed at a hotel there, Halki Palas, it was a nice hotel, the food was very good. I remember there was a dish where they placed an egg on toast. An egg over a toast, the yolk in the middle, however they did it, it was fantastic. We stayed for 3-4 days there. We were married on August 31st. Our friends came too. We went out on a boat.

For the first 3 years of our marriage we lived with my wife's mother in Altinci Daire. Then we moved to Elmadag. And we started to live on our own.

### **Family life**

We had two children. I have a deceased son. Norbert Noah Rutli. My father's name. He was born exactly 9 months after we were married in 1948. She became pregnant from the first night. Later on we went to Israel because he was sick. He had a debilitating illness. We stayed there. He had an infirmity in his spine, there was a germ. At the time I contacted Switzerland and the U.S.A. Switzerland asked for a lot of money then. Finally I got in touch with the ambassador and took him to Israel. There were the sons of my father's sister there. We stayed at their house. He stayed in the hospital for one year. I stayed here during that time, my wife stayed there with the cousins. At the time, the biggest professor in the United States who happened to be Jewish, had come to Israel for a visit. We wrote to him and I don't know how many thousands of dollars he asked for. My son had to stay 6 more months in the hospital then. The doctor saw my son, why should he stay, let me operate and you take him with you, he said. And he died during the operation. But I think it was a mistake, I was not there. It was what they call a shock operation. Now, they had to put him under before entering the operating room. They brought my son the operating room without putting him to sleep. When my son saw the operating room and the lights, he went into shock and died. Before putting him under the knife. He was 5.5 years old when he died. This illness started when he was 3.

After my son's incident, my wife could not get pregnant for a long time. From stress and anxiety. Then G-d granted it. My daughter Stina Rutli was born in 1956 in Istanbul.

When Stina was little, she ate with so much difficulty, that we did not want to have any more children. The same morsel in her mouth for hours, we would say a birdie is flying, she still would not swallow.

We spoke in French with Norbert. He was very smart. While his mother read in French, he would memorize it. We spoke in Turkish with Stina. She does not know Judeo Espanyol at all. We could not send her to a Jewish school- she attended a private elementary school in Pangalti, I do not remember the name, that school doesn't exist any more. She attended junior high in Saint-Pulcherie [French Catholic school]. She learned French there. My cousin Eli Rozental was a teacher there. He was a French teacher.

We raised our child according to Jewish traditions. Even today, we celebrate the first night of Passover in Stina's house.

We developed a lot of great friendships during the years we lived in Elmadag. Esti and Mordo Peres, Zelda and Yomtov Behar, and us, 3 families lived in Elmadag. Also Süzi Izak Sarhon and Izi Sülzet Levi would come. We would meet every evening. Esti could not sleep at nights, she went to bed late, so she invited us all the time. The place we lived at was called Uftade sokak (street). We would go to the movies. We would have conversations, sing songs, play games, we had a lot of fun. During summers, we would go, again all together, to Caddebostan for years. Later on when Stina grew up, we went to Suadiye for summer. [Two neighborhoods on the Asian side, on the seashore]. We got a nice home, that is to say rented it for summer. The landlady had a son. One day she came home, I wasn't there, "with the decree of G-d, and the power of the prophet, I want your daughter for my son". Stina was still 14-15 years old. We stopped going to Suadiye after this and started going to Büyükada [the largest and last one of the Princess islands]. A few years later she married Yusuf Jojo Baruh at the age of 18. On June 1st, 1974. Yusuf has a store about electricity on Bannkalar caddesi (Banks street). She had a daughter named Selin and a son named Ediz. Ediz is 27 years old, Selin is 25.

We had beautiful friendships in Caddebostan where we spent our summers. We would go with them to the sea as well as play games, and dance, we laughed a lot, our days passed wonderfully. I can tell you this, the friendships that I just mentioned with the friends from Elmadag, we never found again. There was such an intimacy that, for example one day, our friend Esti's son Ceki was sick, they were scared that their other son Moris might catch it, we left our home, Mordo and Ceki went to our house, we went to Esti's home. All three of us would sleep in the same bed. But I have to go to work in the morning, it is the middle of the night, 3 or 4 a.m., Esti is still talking. That is how we passed the time. We were very very close. This illness lasted for one month. Mordo there, us here. In the choice of friends of course being Jewish was important. But we also had very good Turkish neighbors and friends apart from this. There was one Sara Hanim (Mrs. Sara) and one general colonel. We were so close that the general colonel would come to stay with his relative. He had a bag of documents, he would come and leave his bag at my house, so we could play cards, hide the bag so the guests cannot see it, he would say, he had so much trust in us. I would hide it in the closet. Also we were very close with Sara hanim. We lived in a bungalow in Caddebostan. Sara hanim came to visit us. She used to stay with us. There was a hall at the entrance, we gave her a metal bed, she laid on it. We went to bed inside in the bedroom. Morning came, I have to go to work, I have to go through the hall, I open the door and looked to see if I can get out, I saw Sara hanim has dropped her cover and is lying half naked with her underwear and such, if I open the

door and go out, she will wake up and feel bad, so I gently closed the door and left through the window of my bedroom. We had such nice times.

We traveled a lot but not with the children. We went to England 4-5 times, we stayed in Italy, in Milan for one month, we went to Germany, to Munich, we went to Paris and Israel.

We used to go to my wife's father's house on seder nights, later when they went to Israel, we would hold it in our house. Now we go to our daughter's house.

We observed all the holidays in our family. Kashrut was observed. At that time, one cousin, Mose was a butcher. The meat, poultry was kosher, it would come from there. Lobster, shrimp, pork would not enter our house, we observed Passover. On Saturdays, my mother would light two candles, and I saw this at the movies later on. She said a prayer, the table would be set with a tablecloth, a tuile cloth. When my father came from the synagogue, the cloth would come out, the candles would be lit.

I would go to the Ashkenazi synagogue in Yüksek Kaldirim when I was little. I used to go to Heyder (after school Hebrew classes) for two years, after school. They would give classes to prepare for bar-mitzvah every day in Yüksek Kaldirim. There was the rabbi Segal, there was Rav Shapira. Usually Yiddish was spoken, the reading was in Hebrew. We translated the Hebrew we read to Yiddish. When my father died, I went to temple every morning for 11 months. Kaddish is very important for us. When my father died, it wasn't like it is now, a rug used to be placed on the floor and we would sit on the floor for 7 days, that is how it needed to be done for mourning. I was working then, there was a boss, Hamburger, he was Ashkenazi too, he was on a trip. I was alone in the office, I would sit on the floor. But 2-3 days later, I had to go and see if there was mail or telegraphs, so they put ashes but thin ashes into my shoes so I could not walk comfortably, I had to be sitting for seven days.

Currently I still go to the synagogue on Rosh hashana, on Yom Kippur. There are now only about 100 families left as Ashkenazim.

When my father went to the synagogue sometimes I accompanied him. Again my father would pray on the day of the Sabbath at home with wine, and we would listen.

We had the bar-mitzvah in the synagogue, at the Schneider Temple. There were no balls or such outside then, 80 years ago. I remember reading a lecture, one rabbi even gave me a book, a bar-mitzvah book and shoes as a gift. I don't remember if we did anything at home.

When I was little, I liked Passover the most because my mother cooked delicious dishes, our foods. There was Lorkes, Kugels, Matzo balls, Gefilte fish. Gefiltefish: You buy one big striped mullet and one mackerel. First you clean the scales, then you remove the skin especially from the mullet without tearing. Then you remove the bones of the fish and the flesh of the fish is ground with a meat cleaver. Then it is mixed with a sauce made from eggs, salt and pepper and refilled into the skin that was removed from the mullet and cooked. After it is cooked, it is sliced. The meat that does not fit into the skin is made into meatballs. My father used to love Passover a lot, he did not want it to end. He would say I wish it continued for another month.

There were no "donme"s [5](#) from Salonika among our friends and relatives, only an acquaintance where I worked was Karay [6](#), Levi. We worked together in Becker pharmacy. When Becker

imported drugs, we needed a pharmacist to import the drugs, and that was Levi. I thought he was Spanish, but he was Karay. He spoke Spanish better than me. He later opened a pharmacy in Tophane. The Karays resemble our Sephardim, only they believe in the Torah, they do not believe in the additions of the rabbis. I learned Spanish from my wife and my friends.

## **World War II and the Turkish Jews**

I was a soldier when the Holocaust was taking place in Europe, from 1941-1944. and Anatolia was in the dark. The lights would be out in Kayseri, in Malatya [two cities in the central section of Turkey called Anatolia], there was no electricity at night. We were 550 non-Muslims in the military, Greeks, Armenians and Jews, ten corporal sergeants and one officer. They gave us blue uniforms for the airport, then an order came, they removed the Armenians, they gave them brown uniforms, to build roads. We went from town to town and were discharged from Canakkale [the Dardanelles]. I did not encounter antisemitism during this time. There wasn't any in Istanbul either.

About the war, we were afraid in general during that period. Stalingrad comes to Russia and what will happen and so on. We were in Bandırma then, we built 3 plazas on the hill and 2 Jewish soldiers had a fight between themselves for whatever reason. One sergeant said the non-Muslims have rebelled. When we were getting up in the morning, all of a sudden, don't move, we are surrounded, a load of soldiers have circled us with machine guns. Then they looked, nothing is happening, they retreated.

I remember the first time we heard about what was being done to the Jews in Europe. Of course, now even today, I do not wish to see Germans because of this. The Germans took and killed 3 siblings of my father-in-law. One was in Lyon, the other in Marseille, and one more in Paris. They took all of them, sent them to camps, which camp I do not know. But one of them returned. He returned to France weighing 40 kilos (88 lb.s). They gave him food slowly, little by little, cookies and such, because the stomach became smaller. He also had a large number on his arm.

During World War II, a boat full of Jews came to Istanbul, they had run away from the Germans. They kept them here. The community intervened, as far as I can remember, they took them to Barinyurt [old people's home], it was Goldschmith school then. And everyone went there to visit them. But they did not allow meeting them. There was the police. But I gave a sweater to a child.

I don't know if this boat was the Struma [7](#) or another boat. Later they returned all of them to the boat, we heard later on that it went under while leaving Çanakkale. But was it Struma, or another boat, I cannot know.

We were soldiers when the Wealth Tax [8](#) was implemented during wartime. They did not impose it on me but they did to my older brother, the one who married Mayer. We even went to the mayor, my older brother asked for time, he said let me finish my military service and then pay. They did not accept it. He had a big apartment in Beyoglu, on Sürterazi sokagı (street), Mayer Apartment. At the time it was registered for 350,000 in the registrar's office. They sold it with foreclosure for 110,000. A wealth tax of 256,000 liras came. And they said, "thank your lucky stars that you are a soldier, otherwise you were going to go to the military". That is how he was saved.

Also about the 20 military classes [9](#), at the time they took the men into the military, there were no young men left. The women had to go out to the streets and sell lemons and such in Kuledibi, in Şişhane, because there were no men. I went as a bakaya [new conscript who, because they were



not present at their first muster, are charged with desertion] to the 20 military classes because I did not go when I should have. I did 3 years of military service. But I was comfortable. I was giving German lessons to the officer who I was an orderly for. Later my older brother came. He came the third time. He stayed for 7 months because he was old.

We heard about the Thrace events [10](#) but I don't remember much. The ones from Edirne know about it.

We were delighted with the birth of the Israeli nation. There was our rabbi in Taksim. Rabbi Saposnik. Saposnik was Austrian. He was a cantor in reality. When there was no loudspeaker in the synagogue in Yüksek Kaldırım, his voice reverberated there. Later on he changed to Israeli citizenship. When the first Israeli embassy opened in Taksim, I remember, the daughter of Saposnik, I don't remember the name, had raised the flag. The Jews all congregated there. Later on the embassy moved.

We did not have the opportunity to do aliyah there. I worked at Becker for 10 years. It was a big firm based in London. You know, Unilever, same firm, they are part of a group. Becker decided to import and to work as representatives, they will close the other departments and they left. They told me let's place you in Unilever. I said I don't want to be in an office, I want to be out in the market. I told the manager, you are leaving these firms, then put them in my name. We were 3 employees who left Becker, we opened an office and became the representatives of these firms. The ones I remember were British firms like Rank Taylor Hopson, Edwards High Vacuum, and Baird & Tatlock Ltd. They were big firms. Becker did not work with little firms. If it wasn't for this job maybe I would have gone to Israel. But I could not go after taking on this work. But among our acquaintances, the older and younger brother of my wife left. My mother and older sister left.

We would talk about the subjects of Judaism and Israel among our friends. We talked a lot. For example, I do not allow talk against Israel, I react.

Today our communication with the Jewish community has lessened. We are not members of any society or club, we cannot take part in any activity but we continue applying our religion as before. We try to go to the synagogue on holidays but it is now difficult for us to go from here.

When we are alone with my wife, we sometimes talk in Judeo Espanyol, and sometimes in French. We talk either Turkish or Spanish with our friends, and Turkish with our daughter.

We did not live through any disagreements with our children as far as raising our grandchildren according to Jewish traditions. They know that they are Jewish.

We used to gather the family before and my wife would cook, but we cannot do this anymore, our daughter does it now.

From the beautiful friendships we had in the past, now we have one Zelda Behar, and one Fani Romi, we get together with them. We play a card game named Burako. It is a game like Canasta. We see each other once a week. A year ago, I had to sell my car. I developed cataracts in my eyes, I couldn't see well anymore. I had surgery in one eye and sold the car. When we had the car, we could go out, stroll, eat out. But now it is difficult without a car.

We were living in Sisli when the massacre in Neve Shalom in 1986 [11](#) happened and while we were shopping from the greengrocer, he told us that a massacre happened in the synagogue. We were very worried, immediately we called the kids. Telephone calls came from Israel, from France, asking if anything happened to us. One of my friends died there. At first I did not know who had died, then I looked at the names, I saw there is a Barokas there. When I was working in Becker, he was working in our export department. He retired, I now have a house too, I will be comfortable now, he was saying. We felt very bad. They interned him in our Ashkenazi cemetery.

We felt very bad when we heard about the bombings in November of 2003 too [12](#). We heard about the sounds of the bomb all the way here. Our daughter immediately informed us.

## Glossary

### [1](#) Journal d'Orient

The main newspaper of the French-speaking Sephardi Jews in Turkey, it was published between 1917 and 1971 by Albert Karasu, his wife Angele Loreley and Jean de Peyrat idi. It consisted of four pages of daily news. The paper ceased publication on 25th August 1971, when Albert Karasu retired.

[2](#) The 20 Military Classes: In May 1941 non-Muslims aged 26-45 were called to military service. Some of them had just come back from their military service but were told to report for duty again. Great chaos occurred, as the Turkish officials took men from the streets and from their jobs and sent them to military camps. They were used in road building for a year and disbanded in July 1942.

### [3](#) Inonu, Ismet (1884-1973)

Turkish statesman and politician, the second president of the Turkish Republic. Ismet Inonu played a great role in the victory of the Turkish armies during the Turkish War of Independence. He was also the politician who signed the Lausanne Treaty in 1923, thereby ensuring the territorial integrity of the country as well Republican People's Party. Ismet Inonu was elected president on 11th November 1938, one day after Ataturk's death. He was successful in keeping Turkey out of World War II. as the revision of the previous Treaty of Sevres (1920). He also served Turkey as prime minister various times. He was the 'all-time president' of the CHP

### [4](#) 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.

## **5 Donme**

Crypto Jews in Turkey. They are the descendants of those Jews who, following the example of Shabbatai Tzvi (leader of the major false messianic movement in the 17th century), converted to Islam. They never integrated fully into the Muslim society though and preserved various distinctions: they married between each other, performed services in distinct mosques and buried their dead in separate cemeteries. Up until the Greek annexation of Southern Macedonia (1912, First Balkan War) they lived in Salonika and were relocated to Ottoman territory (mainly to Istanbul) with most of the rest of the Muslim population later.

## **6 Karaite**

Jewish schismatic sect, founded in Persia in the 8th century. Karaites reject the Oral Law, the Talmud, and accept only the Torah, but have developed their own commentaries. In Russia the Karaites initially enjoyed the same rights and suffered from the same oppression as Jews, however, after the 18th century they were given the right to purchase land. During the Nazi occupation they were not persecuted, as they were not considered a part of the Jewish community. Up until the end of the Ottoman era, Haskoy was the center of the Karaite community in Istanbul; however, they also lived in Karakoy. Today Turkish Karaites are part of the greater Jewish community, but they bury their dead in a separate plot at the Jewish cemetery and mixed Jewish-Karaite marriages still have a problematic status.

## **7 Struma ship**

In December 1941 the ship took on board some 750 Jews - which was more than seven times its normal passengers' capacity - to take them to Haifa, then Palestine. As none of the passengers had British permits to enter the country, the ship stopped in Istanbul, Turkey, in order for them to get immigration certificates to Palestine but the Turkish authorities did not allow the passengers to disembark. They were given food and medicine by the Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish community of Istanbul. As the vessel was not seaworthy, it could not leave either. However, in February 1942 the Turks towed the Struma to the Black Sea without water, food or fuel on board. The ship sank the same night and there was only one survivor. In 1978, a Soviet naval history disclosed that a Soviet submarine had sunk the Struma.

## **8 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.

### **9 The 20 military classes**

In May 1941 non-Muslims aged 26-45 were called to military service. Some of them had just come back from their military service but were told to report for duty again. Great chaos occurred, as the Turkish officials took men from the streets and from their jobs and sent them to military camps. They were used in road building for a year and disbanded in July 1942.

### **10 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.

### **11 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.

### **12 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.