

Solomon Alvo



This is a picture of my uncle Solomon Alvo. He was born in 1901 and was the youngest child of the Alvo family.

Solomon went to school at the Lycee, and he knew French really well. He also knew Italian. When Joseph left for Palestine, he took charge of the sales at the shop.

He was very educated, but very stingy. He didn't spend any money. He didn't get married, he didn't have children, nothing. And in the end, he donated his money to twelve different charitable foundations. And it was a lot of money, because he didn't spend any.

Before the war Solomon lived together with his parents and the family of his sister Rebecca. It didn't really matter to him, he was very happy.

He didn't have any living expenses because all house expenses were paid from the shop. Every Friday my grandparents would get money and they would pay the rent, the electricity, water, everything.

My father didn't approve Solomon's way of life. Grandmother used to say, "what is he going to become, we should marry him, you should find him a wife, and get him married".

Grandmother used to say this to my father and Uncle Joseph. And sometimes they would try to speak with Solomon, but he would discourage them and say, "it's my own business and you shouldn't be involved, it is my own business what I will do".

During the war, they had taken my uncle in forced labour, close to the city of Katerini. They had taken all the Jews there for the new railway and road they were building.

In Katerini we had customers that we knew from before the war, and they were bringing him food. My uncle worked until the community paid the ransom, for a couple of months. At that time many of the doctors would give you a certificate that you were unsuitable for work. They gave such certificates like that. I think this is why Solomon could leave. He managed to get a certificate that he was unable to work.

In 1943 after I had escaped from Thessaloniki and hiding in Athens, my uncle Solomon left too. Suddenly he rings and says, "I am in Athens, too". And Antonis Papahrysanthou says "we've been hit by a bomb".

Because you could tell my uncle, as he did not speak Greek well. He spoke Greek, but with a bit of an accent... Besides that, he had come to Athens before. And some people around the neighborhood knew him.

Yet Uncle Solomon stayed hidden in Athens until the end of the war. He didn't go through many adventures. He hid in Kolonaki at a family house that his friend Latronis had found him.

After the war was over, we had to do everything from scratch, me, my brother and my two uncles, Solomon and Daniel. Even though they used to be only employees at my father's and uncle's business, they supposedly did us a favour to take us in the business.

In the beginning, we did whatever our uncles were telling us to do. We knew nothing. However, when we started learning the business, they started being competitive.

Solomon especially, because he could see that the customers preferred me. He was jealous of me because he could see that I was calmer with the customers, more peaceful and I used to be helpful.

Solomon died in 1981. He wasn't married and he lived in a hotel. He used to live in "Villa Ritz", when "Villa Ritz" was still a hotel. Later, he rented a room at the "Hotel Mediterranee".

After the earthquake the Mediterranean was ruined, and he went to live at the "Macedonia Palace" Hotel. He had a room there paying by the month. It wasn't strange that he lived in a hotel.

He was on his own. Otherwise he would have had to find a house and an escort to look after him. He was very stingy and tight, he thought that it was cheaper to live in a hotel and eat out.