

Alvo Mico With His Brother Danny And Others Who Escaped From Greece



This is the whole group that we escaped together. We all reunited in Cairo when Danny arrived as well.

Standing first from right is me, standing first from left is Antonis Papahrisanthou, second from left seated is my brother Danny, seated on the left is a flying officer and seated on the right is Pandelis Tsihlis.

After escaping from Thessaloniki, I stayed in Athens from the Easter of 1943 onwards. It must have been around May or April.

A month later Antonis already started to tell us that there will be a team of officers who wanted to leave for Cairo. Antonis was second lieutenant. Not on active service, but at the logistics corps.

They had hired him to keep their books of the Military Pension Fund (MPF) of the Air Force, because he was a graduate of the Business School. Many officers were coming to get paid at the MPF, and they started stirring things up, since they knew that the rest of their colleagues had gone to Cairo and were all promoted to higher ranks.

So they were saying, we should not be left behind. It was a team of about 20 officers from the air force, 10 from the navy and 2-3 from the infantry. And they had bought a boat. We would go to a beach in Euboea, which is the closest mainland place to Turkey and the boat would come and take us.

Antonis had told us to go with him. Antonis didn't have any money. We financed Antonis, but the two of us did not go together. I went alone, because we thought that I should go first and if it

worked, Danny would follow the same path.

We gave 30 sovereigns, I think. That was a lot of money at the time. With two gold sovereigns you could feed a family for a month.

The way the system worked was that you would buy the boat and it would come and pick you up and it would get you through, but after that the boat would stay with the captain. At every journey the captain, would get a new boat.

We passed from the mainland to Euboea, and all night we walked through it until we got to the other side. The small port where they would come to pick us up was called Akeoi. I don't know why, we waited there for about 15 days.

The boat didn't come to pick us up. I remember when we were staying there for fifteen days, I used to wash my clothes in sea water. We didn't have much water or soap or anything like that. At that very same port the boat that was regularly doing the transport between Greece and Cairo came by.

It was one of the Greek secret agency. The 2nd office of the Greek government at Cairo owned it. They had it as a liaison. For us, this was very good, because this ship was very fast, it had really good engines and it was armed. I remember it was the 15th of August when we got on the ship. It was Virgin Mary's holiday, on the 15th of August 1943.

They put us on the boat and they put us down to the hold. We weren't on the deck because airplanes were going by. And they had put up the Turkish flag.

Thankfully, that night there was a great tempest. In the boat, it wasn't just our team. There were many other villagers who were leaving. As an adventure, to go and fight. The villagers that came with us knew nothing about the sea. And they started throwing up.

At four in the morning we arrived at a beach at Tsesme at the other side of the Aegean, in Turkey. The captain left us and the Turks collected us. First, they took from us whatever we had. They mainly wanted watches, fountain pens, and matches. Matches or lighters were not allowed at that time in Turkey.

After they had taken everything, they said, "we will give you in, in Mitilini". "We will take you to Mitilini and give you in to the port authority, to the Germans there".

One of us would then say "no, take this". We were offering our things to them on our own. After they had made sure they hadn't left us with anything else, they said, "let's go to the Greek consulate".

They brought busses and took us to Tsesme, the city, and they shut us inside an inn. That's where they would put us until our papers were prepared so that we could pass through the control. Later on, they came from the consulate at Izmir and took us.

In Izmir, once more they put us inside an inn from which many had passed by before. The control was done there after which they put us on the trains. We were finally at the hands of the Greeks, of the allies.

We had to get on the train to go to Aleppo. Aleppo is in Syria, the nearest place to the Turkish borders. At Aleppo they also interned us for two reasons, one to pass the control for spies and two to check whether we had any diseases.

We were on quarantine. We stayed there for 3 or 4 days. We had a lot of food there. Everyone jumped on the food there. And because we ate out of gluttony we spent all three days sick. I was fortunate that the one who questioned me was an Englishman from Thessaloniki.

He was called Donaldson. He had a shop with fine liquor and food etc. It was like a grocery shop, but with luxury goods. Black caviar, fish roe, and champagne. Donaldson knew my father. So, when he heard my name,...

Then we had to go through the recruitment office. Since I was together with all the people from the air force, who were from group captains to pilot officers, they told me that "you will come with us to the air force".

And for as long as I served in the army I was everyone's favorite kid. From there they told us that we would go to Gaza. There were army camps there for all the Greek who had to do their first training, the infantry training there. There were land army officers there to train us.

All this happened in October 1943. When we got to Tchesme we sent a message to Danny that we arrived and that we were all right. So he decided to take the same route and come. But they were more unlucky than us. I left in August. Danny left a month later.

They stayed for a long time up in the mountain in Euboea. There was only one hut on the beach for the shepherds to stay in the winter. They lived in a house like this. When they arrived there, it was abandoned. My brother stayed there for much longer.

He arrived in Gaza about three months later, in December or January 1944. He went through the same training as we did when we first arrived. He later went to Cairo where he passed his medical tests. I think we met there just before I was leaving for South Africa.

My brother with a friend of his had just arrived in Gaza. Because we had contacts through Papachrysanthou, he was able to get a permit to leave and come to Cairo.

We all gathered there with Papahrisanthou and two of his colleagues who had escaped with us, and we took a photograph all together.