Nico Saltiel

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Thessaloniki
Greece
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Nico Saltiel is a quiet, but dynamic, 86-year-old man. He and his wife Rosy live in a comfortable apartment in the center of Thessaloniki. Nico Saltiel is not very tall. Having run a successful import-export business for almost 50 years, he is now retired. A veritable bookworm and a lover of classical music, Nico is fluent in Greek, French, English and understands Judeo-Spanish. However, he is extremely quiet and attentive and chooses his words with great care. Having survived the war and saved the lives of his younger brother and mother in a feat of courage, Nico nonetheless prefers to speak about current affairs rather than his and his community's past. At times, this silence and circumspection make him a very demanding interlocutor. But for anyone willing to listen attentively, this very silence and hesitancy are as telling as the most eloquent speech.

Family background

My grandfather on my father's side was Isaac Saltiel. He was born in Thessaloniki, but I don't know the exact date. He was a merchant. He lived with his wife Doudoun on Italias Street, which was after Agias Triadas [street in the eastern suburbs of the city inhabited by middle-class families]. At first, when the children were young they lived there too. Slowly-slowly they started leaving: some went to France and some to Italy. So out of their ten children only two or three were left here.

They had a maid and a horse carriage with which they brought home the daily shopping from the market. The maids were always Jewish. Grandfather Isaac was well off. I don't know when he died. I didn't know him, but I don't think he was still alive when I left for France. I don't remember him at all.

My grandmother Doudoun [Saltiel, nee Bourla] lived in this house until her death. Two of her children, who were single, Sam and her youngest daughter Margot, lived with her. The house had a courtyard. It was a two-story house and Grandmother lived on the first floor. It was a big apartment that she rented. As all the houses in the past it had a large living room in the center, rooms all around, and on one side, either right or left, was the kitchen.

I went to Grandmother's house often, either on Saturday or on Sunday, to visit her as well as my uncle and aunt. I used to stay there at noon for lunch. I loved my grandmother because she had many children but didn't have many grandchildren in Thessaloniki. I went there often with my

brother, but most of the time I went alone. My brother was too young.

The neighborhood was mostly Jewish. All the streets in the neighborhood, Italias and Misrahi streets, and most houses, across the street and next to the house, had Jewish families.

Grandmother Doudoun spoke with me in Judeo-Spanish 1. During the years I met her she wouldn't leave the house. In the neighborhood there were synagogues of course, but it was the men's duty to go to synagogue, rather than the women's. My grandmother organized the celebration of Jewish holidays, such as Rosh Hashanah, in her house with her children. There was always a mezuzah in the house.

Grandmother dressed in European style. She didn't cover her hair. When I came back from Paris and often went to visit her at home, the oriental style did no longer exist; it was rather a mixed or neutral style.

My grandmother had very many books at home. My uncle and aunt read them. When Grandfather was still alive, Grandmother went shopping. But when he died her daughter and son, who lived with her, took care of that. They kept the horse carriage all the time Grandfather was alive. Later, these carriages slowly started to disappear.

My grandmother was supported financially by my uncle, her son Sam, who lived with her. He paid the house rent.

Moise Venezia and Donna were my other grandparents. They had four children, my mother and three boys. Moise was probably born around 1870 and he died in 1941, the day the Germans entered the city. [Editor's note: The Germans entered Thessaloniki on 9th April 1941.] Moise had Italian citizenship and though he was born in Thessaloniki he kept his foreign citizenship. His family had been in Thessaloniki for a long time. He surely went to a Jewish school. He knew Turkish very well and he also knew Judeo-Spanish, French and Albanian.

Moise was a merchant. Before World War I he imported cereals from various countries. In the past we even imported beans from Hungary. But during World War II he switched to building materials. He must have been among the well-known merchants of Thessaloniki. But in 1922 he stopped working. Similarly to many others who made business with the Allied Forces [the French, British, Italian, Russian and Serbian armed forces who were fighting against the Central Powers and their allies in Macedonia and were stationed in Thessaloniki], he had made a lot of money from his deals during the war and so he chose to stop.

In 1922 he left for Lausanne because he was of the opinion that his boys had more opportunities to have a career in Lausanne than in Thessaloniki. This was because after the war a serious economic crisis struck Thessaloniki. They chose Lausanne because it is in the French part of Switzerland and my three uncles knew French well.

Moise invested the money he had made in commerce in a company, which he founded in Lausanne for his sons Elie, Jacob and Vitalis. This company was named Venezia and dealt in spare parts for bicycles. Grandfather Moise made his home in Lausanne and while my grandmother stayed there permanently, he traveled. He went here and there, stayed in one place for a while and then came here to spend some time. Here he had many friends and economic interests. He owned real estate.

My grandfather came to Thessaloniki two to three times a year. He didn't stay long in Lausanne. He would spend a fortnight there and stayed here for the rest of the time. He could have stayed here for months. Transportation was not easy at the time; it took two and a half days on the train to arrive. He owned real estate in Thessaloniki and loved the city very much.

When he came he stayed at our home on Evzonon Street [a street in the eastern suburbs of the city where many middle-class Jews used to live]. It was his home and we stayed there together with our mother when we returned from Paris. It was a big three-story house. He lived in one apartment and rented the other two. He rented them to several families, both Jewish and Christian. The house had a very big garden where he grew vegetables. It had a water pump which was called 'Tulumba.' Moise ate at home where my mother cooked. And at night he stayed home too. He didn't entertain himself while he was here, he didn't go to the movies. He went out however, walked with a cane, put on his hat in a careless way and went for a walk.

In the winter, though, he stayed in the hotel Majestic [one of the most luxurious hotels of Thessaloniki], which was on the corner of St. Sophia Street with the seafront [in the very center of the city]. He liked more the company he had there. He had friends who also stayed there permanently because it was better heated. His friends were General Kalidopoulos [a well-known General at the time], another politician named Serefas, and some others. They were his friends, his closest friends. They played backgammon and did not bother with politics and such things. They spoke Greek. His Greek was very good. He had learned it from commerce, because he was in the market for so many years and he didn't have many Jewish friends. He had more Christian friends. I remember a certain Molho who was a big trader and brought coal from England.

Moise went rather often to the synagogue near home, near Evzonon Street. In the synagogue Midrach Carasso, on Velissariou Street [a street in the eastern suburbs of the city], where the Gestapo headquarters were later. Midrach means small synagogue. It was a tiny synagogue with a big courtyard. A very lovely synagogue, I remember it very well. My grandfather took me there often because he was religious. And on Friday, my brother said, that he took him there too. He had to go at least once a week, on Friday night. And he also went on Saturday morning. He also celebrated the high holidays there. He didn't read religious books at home, neither did he pray there.

My grandfather knew Hebrew because when he was small he went to a Hebrew school. He knew how to read in Hebrew, the prayer books, but he didn't know how to speak Hebrew. My mother and I, on the other hand, don't know Hebrew.

Moise didn't deal with the communal affairs. He only dealt with religious issues, in other words, he was one of those who went to the synagogue. He didn't deal with political matters either. Holding Italian citizenship he didn't have the right to vote in the Community [after 1921 only Jews holding Greek citizenship had the right to vote in the communal elections]. The whole family was European-oriented. In other words they were not Zionist, neither my grandfather nor my father. I don't know if my grandfather gave some money to the Community's collections, but he most probably did. All the Jews contributed. And he also gave to the synagogue.

Moise also lent money to his Jewish friends. Many of those who had money lent money. My grandfather paid the tuition for the Lycée [the high school of the Mission Laique Francaise] 2.

There was a big age difference between us and Moise, so we didn't have a lot to say to each other. We had a formal relationship. I had my own circle, in the French Lyceum or Lycée, my studies, my books and he had his circle, his friends. He was a reserved person as a human being. He had a very good relationship with my mother. He had not lived with my father so as to have a relationship. At one point we left and when we lived here, we lived separately, so we didn't have a lot of contact.

I did not have a bar mitzvah. We were in Paris when I was 13 years old, and my father, who was a liberal and never went to synagogue, didn't care for religion much. So he never took care of it.

Moise's wife, Donna Venezia [nee Saporta], I remember very well. She was born around 1895 and died in 1965 in Lausanne. She spoke Judeo-Spanish and some Greek, but badly. She also knew some French, and read Ladino.

She was from a well-off family. Grandmother's family, her brothers, were educated. She had one brother who was a medical doctor and another who was a dentist. The family took care and sent them to Istanbul to study in the medical school and return here to work. So her family was well-off, but the habit then was to take better care of boys' education and not women's. They married young and did not get an education.

Grandmother Donna lived in Lausanne. She never came back after she went there. These trips weren't easy. Besides, she kept the house, her children were unmarried for some time, and she saw no reason to leave. I used to see her frequently when I lived in Paris because I often went to Lausanne. Every summer I stayed there one month or more. I spoke French with her rather than Ladino because I didn't speak it well. My grandmother didn't go out often. She would surely go to the synagogue, mostly on the high holidays, but not every Friday like men did. She didn't pray at home, and she must have had a mezuzah, but I don't remember for sure.

In the summer, in Lausanne, I spent my time doing various things, going for walks, swimming in the lake, visiting my uncles at their shops. I didn't go out for walks with my grandmother. After the war I went several times to Lausanne and saw her, but I don't think I went there from 1935 until the war. I corresponded with my uncles, my mother's brothers, but not with Grandmother.

My father was born between 1887 and 1890 and died in 1934 in Paris. His name was Shemtov officially, but they called him Sinto. He was a merchant dealing in textiles. It wasn't a family business. He chose this field because it was a common one. He had his shop on Victor Hugo Street [a commercial street in the center of the city]. The shops which were on that street, in an old building, were all alike, around 80-100 square meters each. They didn't have a window. It was a square surface with shelves whereupon lay the textiles and there was also a bench and inside glass doors. There wasn't anything like a time schedule; shops were open continuously from morning until night.

My father spoke very good French, Greek and Ladino. He had Greek citizenship. He was a Freemason, and those that frequented the Masonic loges were somehow indifferent to religion. We knew that he was a Freemason because he often went to the loge, but we didn't know where it was or what they talked about. He didn't go to the synagogue at all. I do not think he even went during the holidays. We celebrated the high holidays such as Rosh Hashanah, Pesach and Sukkot at home. Mother, on the other hand, was religious because of her father.

My father went to a club, known as ‘Club de Salonique’ [one of the most important clubs of Thessaloniki]. He went there once or twice a week to play cards. The ‘Club de Salonique’ was across the ‘Pathé’ [the most important Jewish-owned cinema of Thessaloniki situated in the eastern suburbs of the city]. He spent his time with friends rather than his relatives. He didn’t go out for fun with his wife Sarina. I don’t think they went to shows together. He read the paper. In Thessaloniki he read the French newspapers.

My mother, Sarina Venezia, was born around 1900 and died in 1975. She was born in Thessaloniki, but she had Italian citizenship. She had studied in the Lycée of the Mission Laique Francaise, both in the elementary and the high school. She therefore spoke very good French and Judeo-Spanish. She didn’t speak Greek well and didn’t know Turkish.

In 1919 she married my father Shemtov by ‘shidouh’ [arranged marriage]. Her father gave her quite a big dowry, 5,000 gold sovereigns. She had me in 1921.

She didn’t work at all while she was in Thessaloniki. She brought us up herself without a nanny. While we were here we had a maid at home. But she cooked the traditional Jewish dishes herself. I don’t remember what she cooked exactly.

Growing up

We left for Paris at the end of 1928 because my father’s businesses didn’t do well here. There was a general crisis in Thessaloniki and my father thought he had more chances and would do better in Paris. He preferred Paris to Naples where other members of the family went, because he didn’t know Italian. We left for Paris, all of us together.

Before we left for Paris, I remember we went for a visit on Velissariou Street. In a small house a little further from Evzonon Street, lived my grandfather and grandmother on my mother’s side. I was very impressed because they wore the ‘antari’ [the main traditional dress of the Jews of Thessaloniki, a caftan made of cloth or most usually of silk]. They both wore the traditional dresses with a ‘cofia’ [a traditional Sephardic head cover] and they just sat there. I remember we went to visit them a couple of times.

We lived in the center of Paris, in the nineteenth district [a lower middle class district in the north-east of Paris where many Jewish immigrants still live]. We stayed there all the time we were in Paris and didn’t change house. Our apartment was in one of these huge building complexes. We didn’t even know to whom they belonged, because they belonged to a big company. Ours was a big apartment with three rooms and a living room. And it was in a good neighborhood near a big park and a school. There were schools everywhere; it was a rather wide street in a very good neighborhood.

The shop wasn’t close to the house; it was 20 minutes away by subway. It was in a neighborhood called Sentier, in the Rue des Rosiers [the most Jewish street in Paris]. And my father continued to deal in textiles and ties. Mother was sewing the ties at home and Father sold them at the shop. Having never worked before, she started to work out of need. She seized the opportunity to find models that helped her cut the material. These were good ties. They sold because they were made of good quality silk material. She was a good and sophisticated craftswoman. She sat and worked in the living room. In the afternoons, when I didn’t go to school, I often watched her work.

I guess my father kept the shop by himself. The working hours were pretty long and I remember that when in 1935 the government applied the 40-hour week it was a revolution. It was a great thing, and was applied gradually. Before that, people worked for 15 hours a day.

Life in Paris was very different. It was a different environment and a different situation. Here in Evzonon, we lived in a neighborhood surrounded by Jewish houses. There, we were much more isolated. Long distances. For instance, I remember a family with who my father was friendly; they lived in Neuilly [a district in the north-western part of Paris]. We had to travel for one and a half hours by subway. We had to go on a trip, so to speak. Conditions were different, and much more difficult. We had no neighbors that were friends, and we didn't even know who lived next to us. Our apartment wasn't in a Jewish neighborhood [Editor's note: this is most probably incorrect] and there were no social relations between the families. Big buildings of eight stories each, with a lot of apartments.

My father was short, a little chubby and bold headed. He wasn't at all strict. My mother wasn't strict either. She was a very open character. She was a sociable person with friends. At home we didn't have very much to do with each other. I lived in my own world and Father was at work. In the evening, he arrived tired while I was studying for school. On Sundays and holidays, however, he was very nice, talkative and pleasant.

In Paris we celebrated the Jewish holidays at home. Mother kept the traditional mores. In Paris we went to the synagogue only on the high holidays. It was in a synagogue frequented mainly by Sephardic Jews 3. I think that at one point we went to a synagogue with my father because he had some friends and we went together with them.

My father wasn't a Zionist at all and in France he didn't get involved in politics because he didn't have the time. We never discussed his political beliefs. In Paris he read the French newspapers. He didn't play cards. Mother read newspapers both in Paris and here, but she never spoke of politics.

Mother did the shopping in Paris. Father didn't deal at all with matters of the household. I don't think he had the time. When we stayed in Paris we didn't have olive oil. There wasn't any olive oil and she used peanut oil or 'huile d'arachide.' This is what was sold at the shops. In Paris, if Mother went to the big shops, she went there every fortnight. She shopped on her own and we went to school.

While Father was in Paris he never came to Thessaloniki. Life in Paris was tough. It was during the recession, and as there was an economical crisis here, there too was the same. And surely the crisis had started from France and Germany. We were never careful with money at home, but business in general wasn't going well. The business didn't do any better in Paris. Everybody lived conservatively. We didn't go out to eat. Rarely on weekends, but never during the week. My parents didn't go to the movies, and I don't remember ever going to the theater. There was no spare time and the days were long and tiring.

On the main holidays, the French ones, such as 14 Juliet [July 14, the celebration of the French Revolution], we didn't go out at all. We didn't go to the parade. We didn't have a radio while in France, it was a novelty and not very widespread. Our fun on weekends was going for a walk in the park or to a friend's house, as was in general common in Paris.

In Paris my father had quite a few friends whom he met regularly on weekends together with Mother and us. They were old friends from Thessaloniki who had immigrated to Paris earlier than us. I remember a certain family, the Beraha family. My mother had fewer friends in Paris than in Thessaloniki. It wasn't easy for her in Paris. Here we had many relatives, cousins and friends; there she had none.

My father got sick and died from problems with his heart. He was buried in Paris, in the 'Père la chaise' cemetery. I didn't go to his funeral because Mother didn't allow it. When father died, we were naturally a little lost, and the fact that we had to leave Paris and come back here was somehow like being uprooted for us. The decision to leave Paris was taken by our uncles in Switzerland. They thought it would be better for our mother and us. Since our father had died, we didn't have the means to stay. The fact that our grandfather was here alone and had his own house was important too. It was the only solution. My mother, what could she do? She couldn't act in a different way. Stay in Paris and do what? We lived in a rented house, and we had to close the shop.

Father had nine brothers. Ovadia was a merchant and was married to a woman from Thessaloniki. He had already married in Thessaloniki before he went to Lyon around 1920. He died after the war in the 1950s. The deportations in 1941 had taken place only in Paris, in Lyon they were all saved, all our relatives survived. I never met Uncle Ovadia, we were not in touch with our relatives in Lyon, because it was quite far. We didn't even go to Lyon to see them, neither did they come to Thessaloniki. My father must have had a correspondence, but while he worked either in Thessaloniki or in Paris, he didn't have any professional relations with his relatives.

My father's second brother was Pepo. He was born around 1900 and died in 1992. He lived in Naples where he went in 1919. He went there because he knew Italian very well having graduated from the Italian school in Thessaloniki [one of the most important foreign schools in Thessaloniki]; He lived in Naples until his death in 1992. I knew him, even though we never went to Naples before the war.

In Naples he was successful in his work; he was a commercial representative and a journalist. He was educated, one of the most educated ones in the family. He had very little to do with religion. He married an Italian, a Catholic called Maria. He remained a Jew until the end; he didn't convert to marry Maria. Maria was of course younger, but not very much. She died before my uncle. He loved her a lot. They didn't have children and were very attached to each another.

During the war Pepo was saved together with Maria. He may have had some protection because he had married an Italian. He did not go to the extermination camp and I do not think he hid. Deportations in Italy took place mainly in Rome. I do not remember about Naples.

Pepo never returned in Thessaloniki after 1919, even though he is Greek and remained so until the end. Greek all the way through, all his life. He kept his Greek passport; he spoke Greek until the end and very well. In Naples he was close to the Greek consulate, but he never came back to Thessaloniki. When we visited him he asked me about Thessaloniki and he wrote to me often, three-page long letters, but he did so in French.

My father's third brother was Sam. He was born around 1890, if I remember well, and he died in 1960, in his seventies. He was unmarried. He was a 'représentant de commerce' [commercial representative], and dealt in imports and exports. When he was young he went to Germany,

Austria and Hungary to study languages and I don't remember what else. In any case, I remember he knew German very well, and he had also learned Hungarian and knew it perfectly. He also knew French and English very well. He was very well educated and loved foreign languages. Grandfather had financed his studies. Grandfather had enough money to sustain ten children. But he also had Sam and Pepo educated. The other siblings, including my father, had never gone to study at university.

Sam lived abroad for many years, maybe his studies lasted four to five years, but after that he lived abroad. He returned to Thessaloniki only before Grandfather died, around 1928. When he returned he continued Grandfather's business together with his brother Saul. The two of them represented many factories, mainly German, French and Italian. He also exported agricultural goods. The business offices were at 2 Ermou Street [one of the main commercial avenues of Thessaloniki]. The business did very well. He bought real estate and big plots of land in the port and in the municipality area.

In comparison with the Alvo business, my uncle Sam's business was much smaller. Before the war the Alvos had one of the two or three most important businesses in the sector of hygienic items, and they were very important in this sector. While my uncles' [Sam and Saul] businesses were, let's say, rating average. They did very well, but they were not among the most profitable.

Sam was the most successful in the family and was the big boss. He was very active, authoritarian and had principles. He had partners that were Christian, and this is why his Greek was excellent. He also dealt in other businesses in association with his partners.

Before the war it was common for a Jew to go into partnership with a non-Jew. Jews were very appreciated, especially as commercial representatives, because people trusted them. They were trustworthy. Before the war, commercial deals were based on word of honor. One gave his hand and it was his word of honor.

Sam, for example, had many partnerships with many Christians in Thessaloniki, with whom he didn't have a contract, nor common companies, or anything else. For example, he exported agricultural goods with a company name Dimitrakopoulos-Xenakis, with whom he had no contract. It was simply based on mutual trust. Their collaboration must have started in 1930. They bought the agricultural products, we exported them through my uncle's company, and figured out the accounts at the end of each month easily with no problem.

Sam did business with other friends too. Since he had many contacts with Austria and Germany, he came up with the idea to manufacture velvet tablecloths in Greece. So he made an association with a friend of his – he had many friends, close ones – someone named Konstandinidis Kostas. Konstandinidis was from Asia Minor and had a factory producing textiles on Langada Street [an industrial street on the western outskirts of Thessaloniki]. So my uncle proposed to him to bring the machinery from Austria, special machinery to produce tablecloths. And so they started the business in partnership. This must have taken place in 1930.

The business did very well and continued after the war, but not in partnership. Konstandinidis continued on his own. When the import of special threads for the tablecloths stopped, because of the war, my uncle decided to sell the machinery to Konstandinidis and to walk out.

My uncle did business with Jews too. It didn't make any difference. He had very close collaborations. With a certain friend, Molho, he imported certain products which he represented. He brought them under the name of a friend of his because he didn't want to bring them on his own. He didn't want to bring them under his name because he distributed them to clients and didn't want to raise competition.

My uncle wasn't a member of the Chamber of Commerce. He didn't go to clubs, neither did he play cards. He saw his friends. He had a lot of Christian friends and very close ones, who appreciated him very much because he was a man of integrity and very honest in his dealings. His friends were the lawyer Spiliakos who saved him, Dimitrakopoulos, who was his associate or his partner, and a director in the Emboriki Bank [Commercial Bank], who's name I cannot remember. He had many Jewish friends of course. Molho, Nehama, Beraha. The Molhos and the Nehamas had a shipping agency, with George Nehama, who died recently.

My uncle read philosophy such as Heine, Schopenhauer. He got into it while he studied abroad. He must have been reading a lot of Greek books because he knew Greek very well. He didn't have time to read the papers because he was very busy.

He didn't take part in the communal affairs and had nothing to do with Zionism. He was not a Zionist, rather, he was a liberal and admirer of the West. A Germanophile. It was his culture and he had great admiration for German education and culture. He was an admirer of Heine, of Schopenhauer. He read a lot of Schopenhauer. He read books mainly in German, but also a lot of them in French.

My uncle wasn't religious. I don't remember him going to the synagogue often. Not even on holidays. But he never ate pork, out of respect for the family tradition, not some other reason. And this was his limit and respect to tradition.

My uncle traveled a lot. He traveled to visit his relatives in Lyon and in Naples, and for commercial reasons generally in Europe.

During the war Sam managed to escape to Athens thanks to his friends. And in Athens some of his other friends took him in and that is how he was saved. These friends of his were Christians. He left when the deportations started. Because until the very last minute nobody believed that what happened could have happened. He hid in Athens until the end of the war. As soon as the Germans left, he returned straight back to take care of his affairs.

After the war he continued his work until 1960, when he died. He did exports and was a commercial representative, and continued to have Christian associates, as he did before. The main reason he came back instead of staying in Athens and organize a business there that would be more worthy, as many did at the time, was that his friends in Thessaloniki would help him more. And so they did.

After the war I never heard him discuss the issue of whether Israel should exist or not. This issue didn't preoccupy him. And he also didn't deal with the community.

Uncle Sam died in 1960 in Naples. At a certain time he got bronchitis. He also had asthma, and so he decided to stop working. He went to Naples, because here apart from me and my brother, he didn't have any other relatives. He chose to go to Naples, to his brother, whom he loved very

much, as well as his two sisters.

My father's other brother, Saul, was born around 1870. He lived in Thessaloniki all his life and spoke Judeo-Spanish, Greek, and French, but not very well. He spoke better Greek than French.

Saul was married. My uncle's Saul family was well off. They had Greek citizenship. They lived somewhere in the area of Agia Triada, in an apartment. He had a son, Ino, and a daughter, Daisy. He was a family man and not much of a society man like my uncle Sam. Besides work we didn't see Uncle Saul that much. There was no reason, since I saw him at the office where I went every day. He celebrated the Jewish holidays with his own family and we did with my mother's family. But with his children, my cousins, we had a very close relationship.

Saul wasn't religious, or not seriously so, but I cannot be sure, because there was such a big age difference between us that we didn't discuss such issues together.

He was in partnership with my uncle Sam. He was very industrious, and they had a very good working relationship without problems. Saul dealt with things other than those Sam dealt with. Sam dealt more with representations. Saul supervised the warehouse, the workers, and the exports. They concentrated on agricultural goods which they stored and prepared for export. A lot of work. He was very friendly to me at work.

With my uncles Sam and Saul we spoke in French. French was also the language we did our foreign correspondence in. We mostly used French. My uncle had a lot of correspondence in German and English, depending on the place of origin of the goods we represented.

My uncle Saul had nothing to do with the Jewish community. None of my uncles was a Zionist, since none went to Israel.

Saul and his wife died in the extermination camps. They were deported like everybody else. Saul didn't have a fortune and neither did he have property. He lived in a rented place. He had left his things and furniture at home. They left with their personal things in a bag and their belongings were looted by their Christian neighbors.

My cousins were older than me. There was a five to six year age difference with Daisy and some age difference with Ino. Ino must have been born in 1918. They both went to the Lycée. Ino must have gotten the Baccalauréat [the French high school diploma that gives access to university studies in France], and Daisy surely did too. Ino didn't go to university because there was no university here before the war. There was only one department [Editor's note: This is incorrect. The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki was founded in 1926 and at that time it had several departments]. So one had to go to Athens to study, and this was not easy because not everybody had the means to pay rents.

Ino and Daisy spoke Greek very well, French and Judeo-Spanish. Before the war we didn't go out together, I had my own circle and they had theirs. We met however, even though I don't remember where.

Ino wasn't a member of any Jewish associations. Before the war he worked in the office for a while and then he worked somewhere else, but I don't remember where. He didn't have a good relationship with my uncle Sam. He had his own ideas and Sam was a little strict. He wanted the

work done as he wished.

Daisy didn’t work at all after school.

They both survived the war. My cousin Daisy came back from Auschwitz, but we never spoke of her experience. She didn’t stay longer than a year in Thessaloniki. She went straight to Athens, because she too had a difficult relationship with our uncle. Not only were her parents dead, but she had no family here. So she decided to go to Israel, as others did too, looking forward to a better future. She didn’t keep her Greek citizenship. She married and took up the Israeli one. Today she lives in Tel Aviv. She came a couple of times to Thessaloniki after she left.

My cousin Ino was in the army and found himself in the Middle East and Egypt during the war.

My aunt Flora Noah was born around 1900 in Thessaloniki. In 1920 she left with her husband for Naples. Before the war she never came to Thessaloniki. I didn’t meet her then, but my uncles corresponded with her frequently. And Uncle Sam went to visit them often in Naples, every two or three years.

I didn’t meet her husband because he was arrested in Italy and died in an extermination camp. But Flora managed to hide here and there. After the war my aunt Flora continued to live in Italy. She didn’t remarry. She had a daughter who died in 1965.

Flora visited Thessaloniki after the war. She came a couple of times. Her Greek was very good, but we spoke in French. We also corresponded in French. I think that her relationship with the Jewish religion was better after the war. Besides, before the war, such Jewish communities as were the ones in Paris, but also in Naples, were not closely tied; I don’t know how it was in Lyon. Distances were long and they were strangers. Naples is a big city, and she most probably had none to go with to the synagogue. While here it is much easier. Our synagogue was five minutes away from home.

My other aunt was Ida Bivach. She married in 1920 and then they left and went to Naples. I don’t remember what exactly her husband did. He was a Jew from Thessaloniki. I don’t know when he died. He still lived after the war, but when exactly he died, that I don’t know. In 1970-1972, when we went to Naples, he was already dead a few years. Aunt Ida died around 1987. She had two children, Nina and Albert. They all survived the war. She corresponded with my uncles Sam and Saul.

After her was my aunt Bella Matarasso. She was born in Thessaloniki. My mother, Bella and a few others, whom I don’t remember now, had gone to the French Lycée and had a French education. Aunt Bella spoke French. Other members of the Jewish community, such as my Uncle Pepo, went to the Italian school.

Around 1920, Bella married and left for Lyon. After 1918-1919, because of the recession, everybody left, my mother’s siblings too, and many of my father’s cousins. Her husband’s name was Sam Matarasso. He dealt in silk textiles. Besides, in Lyon silk textiles were the main business. These were Lyon’s specialty. Bella never came to Thessaloniki before the war. But we corresponded. My uncle Sam had a regular correspondence with her. My aunt Bella survived the war and so did her husband and their two children, their daughters.

My father's second to last sister was Lucie Saranno. She also lived in Lyon. They had also gone to Lyon during the same period as the other siblings. I didn't have any contact with them.

Last was Margot. She wasn't married and lived in Thessaloniki. I saw her very often in my grandmother's house, where she lived with my grandmother and uncle Sam. She was a very joyous and pleasant girl. She spoke French and Greek, and Judeo-Spanish with my grandmother. She spoke Greek very well, without an accent. I don't think she went to the Lycée. She didn't work, she was sustained by Uncle Sam.

I knew she had a lot of friends and neighbors, as well as classmates from school. She used to go out for shopping, or to see some of her friends. But she didn't take us out for walks.

Margot wasn't really religious, but she would certainly go to the synagogue during the high holidays. The Saltiel family were not very religious, none among them was. Here in Thessaloniki, the middle class was very loose on religious matters. Those traditions were kept by other social classes, such as the ones that went to religious schools and let's say had a more intensive religious education. To the Talmud Torah went children from the poor layers of society, workers and clerks. There they learned Hebrew and had a closer contact with religion. While those that went to the French school, such as I, had started not to care. They didn't know Hebrew. None of my father's family knew Hebrew.

Margot left for the extermination camp with her mother. She didn't want to escape on her own. She could have left earlier with the help of Christian friends, but didn't want to abandon her mother.

My mother's three brothers Elie, Jacob and Vitalis, all three migrated to Lausanne around 1920. I met them in Lausanne. I didn't have contact with Uncle Vitalis because he was dead already by the time I went to Lausanne.

Elie was the eldest. He was a nice person. He was educated, active and very polite. He drove a car until he was 75. He went to the French Lycée, to the Mission Laique. He spoke French, Judeo-Spanish and Greek. He had not forgotten these languages because they left when they were already in their twenties. Besides, in Thessaloniki neighborhoods were mixed and they had many Christian friends.

Elie was a merchant. The three brothers were partners in a business selling spare parts for bicycles. Elie had a very wide field because bicycles were very popular in Switzerland at the time when cars were few. Elie never came to Thessaloniki. From 1920 until 1940, none of the three ever came; they were very busy with their work.

Elie married a Polish Jew name Tola, Uncle Jacob married Jeanine, who is still alive, and Uncle Vitalis married Yvonne. Elie has a son named Aldo. Jacob has a son too, named Manuel, and Vitalis has two children, a son and a daughter, whose names I don't remember.

When we came back, our grandfather sustained us but we had everything we needed. Before we had left for Paris, Mother didn't participate in any associations, neither did she in Paris. When we returned to Greece, she became very sociable. She had many friends, cousins and relatives. Her friends were all Jewish. They were of the same age, mostly classmates. There was a certain Mrs. Saporta, Mrs. Frances etc. Before the war she didn't have Christian friends.

I don’t think my mother went to the movies or to restaurants. Women didn’t go out unescorted in those days. There weren’t any places to go to. Apart from a couple of patisseries. It wasn’t common to go out. Of course she went to the synagogue, because my grandfather was religious and no doubt she followed the rules. She went to the synagogue during the holidays, but she didn’t pray at home. Besides the mezuzah, there weren’t any other religious objects.

Before we went to Paris, and after we came back, shopping was much easier because there were mobile merchants who came by the house. I remember that before the war, when we lived in Evzonon, the vegetable man would come by every morning. The fisherman and the fruit merchant, they would come by with their carriage. All shop owners before the war in the Modiano market [the covered market in the center of the city named after its architect, Elie Modiano] were Jewish. There were no special areas in the market where merchants were mainly Greek or others where they were mainly Jewish. But the majority were Jewish businesses.

My mother cooked herself, kosher, to avoid pork. She knew that from tradition. They ate kosher without knowing why they did so. At Pesach, for instance, we didn’t eat bread. I never ate pork, because I respected my mother, not for any other reason. Before the war people were not very strict about the kashrut, but tradition took care of that. In our family we ate kosher, but were not very strict about it. We didn’t separate the dishes for meat and dairy products. Before the war there were many Jewish butchers where they only sold kosher meat. But while in Paris, it was not easy for us to keep the kashrut. Here the Jewish butchers were many, while in Paris it wasn’t easy to find one. This was our limit of respect to tradition.

My mother read books in French, not in Greek. She didn’t buy the newspaper and we didn’t have a radio, nor a telephone. She didn’t discuss politics with us or anybody else. In 1934 we had no idea [of the rise of Nazism].

My mother was careful with her appearance. She had her clothes made by a dressmaker. She was of regular height, and when she was young she was slimmer. She was a very good looking woman. She never neglected her appearance, not even at home. She had good taste when it came to clothes.

My mother was from the high bourgeoisie. She differed from the middle class because she was educated, and because of the Lycée, where she had completed her French education. This social class were snobs. So snobbish that those like us, who had gone to the French Lycée, did not associate with those that went to the Italian school, we ignored them. Even though many of them were our brothers and cousins, our relatives. The Mission Laique was a top school.

My mother spoke to us in French. After 1935, when we returned to Thessaloniki, she didn’t supervise us with schoolwork. She trusted us with our studying. She had a very good relationship with my grandfather Moise, who loved her very much. Also our uncles, Sam and Saul, my father’s brothers, loved her very much. She didn’t have a preference over me or my brother Maurice.

She didn’t go on excursions. My grandmother went to spas, my mother didn’t. My grandmother went to Langada [a small town known for its spas, 30 km north-east of Thessaloniki] once a year. So she mainly stayed at home, like the rest of the inhabitants of Thessaloniki. Maybe her friends came visiting her at home, I don’t remember.

Before the war she didn’t speak to us about our father. She must have missed him, but she didn’t speak about him. She said nothing to us. What could she say?

After the war my mother spent the rest of her life in Thessaloniki. She stayed here until she died in 1975.

I remember my school years in France as being very pleasant. I didn’t have any problem to adapt, because I knew French when we left. At school I won a prize for my aptitude. I was the first in class. The school had only boys. I had no problem with my classmates, but there we didn’t have any friendships as I had here when we returned. Maybe this was due to the fact that I was a foreigner, because the French are not very hospitable. The teachers, of course, made no distinctions, but society did.

I returned from Paris in 1934. I was sorry to leave. I left my school, we changed environment, we changed country, it was difficult for me. But when we came back I adapted immediately. Naturally it was a very good environment for me, because here we had many relatives. But I missed Paris because of its museums, for instance.

In Paris I went visiting the museums on my own. I had been to the Louvre forty times. It is huge, how can one see it all? If I had a couple of hours I would see one part of it. My parents knew where I went and they did not object. I was 13-14 years old, but I went out alone. Also the parks were very beautiful. I went there with my mother and my brother. I never knew Paris by night, I did not wander around. The only thing that attracted me was the Louvre.

There was also a lending library near home where I also went. I borrowed a lot of books. This is natural if you care about culture. There was nothing else to do, anyway. There was no television, and I didn’t read the newspapers. The only entertainment was books, and for me personally the museums. My most favorite books were those of Montherlant [Henry, de (1896-1972): French novelist and dramatist] and of Romain Rolland [(1866-1944): French dramatist, essayist and art historian, received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1915], whom I liked very much. I did not read much poetry; we read a lot of it in school. But I read Verlaine [Paul (1844-1896): French poet of the Symbolist movement] and some others.

When I returned to Thessaloniki, my friends were not impressed that I had come from Paris. Of course they asked me out of curiosity and interest, but this did not make me somehow special. Maybe I was different to them, but I didn’t feel it.

In Thessaloniki I registered in the French Lycée. It was near our house since we lived in Evzonon. I started from the second class of high school and studied for three years: the second, the first, and the baccalaureate. The baccalaureate studies lasted for two years. The last year was the premier ‘bachot’ [Baccalaureate], and the second year was the ‘deuxieme bachot.’

The Lycée was a school which was mainly attended by people of the middle class and higher. We considered it a privilege, something outstanding, a French school. But others thought of it as just a very good school. All the families tried to send their children there. One didn’t have to take an entrance examination to be admitted to the Lycée. One had to be registered to a class and then follow courses. But we took exams at the end of the year. Some passed them and others did not. These exams were difficult. But I wasn’t worried. I liked school, and I liked the courses, certain

courses. It was nevertheless a difficult school, and it had French standards. And tuition wasn't expensive.

The Italian school was very good too. And so was the German one. Both the Italian and the German school also had a commercial section. The French had a commercial section where all the students were incompetent. They didn't do well in the regular school and that is why they went to the commercial section. Those attending the French school thought of the ones going to the Italian one as inferior, but it was not so. They were children from similar families to ours, but we were arrogant because we had been admitted to the Lycée.

All courses were French-oriented. In other words, History of France, Geography of France, all courses followed the French school curriculum. We didn't have anything about Greece. I followed only the French curriculum. When I arrived in Thessaloniki I didn't speak any Greek. We had gone to Paris and I forgot it, and before the war, before we went to Paris, I went to the French Lycée too. The rest of my classmates, though, either Jews of Christians, they all knew very good Greek. They followed courses in Greek. It was only one course twice a week, something like that. There were no other courses in Greek.

We had gym and music, and learned German, but not seriously. We didn't care. In the Lycée we didn't have a course on religion, neither did we have a morning prayer. Most of the students, 95 percent were Jewish. It was a secular school. In the morning we went straight to class. We had our own class. We also had chemistry labs. We didn't raise a flag in the Lycée either. On 14th July the school was closed, but I cannot remember if it also closed during the Greek holidays.

I didn't skip school, neither did my friends. We had no reason to do so. Classes were pleasant, and so was the environment, so why should we then? And it was also dangerous. What made school pleasant was that it had few students. And it was like a company, we were very attached to each other. And we were very competitive. Some did well and others did not. I studied a lot. Others may have studied less, but I liked studying.

I studied for the courses I liked. I mostly liked mathematics and philology. I was very good in those, but not so good in History and Geography. I was a top student because I was so good in Math and Philology, so it was overlooked if I didn't do so well in the others. I didn't have a good memory. I liked Philology because I read a lot, and I liked to write good essays.

I read French literature – literature in general. I especially liked what was fashionable then such as Balzac [1799-1850], Lamartine [1790-1869], poets. And the contemporaries, Jean Giono [1895-1970], Montherlant, and various others. I continued reading French books in Thessaloniki when I came back. There was an alumni association called 'Associations des Anciens Elèves de la Mission Laique Francaise.' It was in a building at the corner of Paraskevopoulou Street [a street at the eastern extramural district of the city]. It was a club with a huge space and had a library there. I did not buy books, I went there, borrowed them and read them.

For a certain period of time the librarian was my cousin Raul Benusiglio, who also lived in Lausanne. Raul asked me to help him, and he released himself, leaving me at his place as librarian, and so I read hours on end. I also read in Paris. I liked reading, this was my pastime.

We did not do any sports. Generally very few among the youth did sports at the time. Tennis was an expensive sport and was not very widespread, only a small elite exercised in it.

Most of the teachers were French. There was only one woman, the rest were all men. The French teachers stayed here permanently, in rented houses near the Lycée. We had one Greek teacher only, a certain Papadopoulos, who taught the Greek course which I did not attend. I liked him. He was young and closer to the students. He used to socialize with my classmates and this is how I knew him. I met him during the breaks.

In the Mission Laique we were around 20 youngsters in class. In the Premier [last year, the French Baccalaureate classes are counted conversely] we were around 12-13. Before the baccalaureate section there were also some girls. Among 15 students there were ten to eleven boys and around five girls. All 15 were Jews. We didn't have any Christian classmates. Only one Armenian and one Christian girl.

It was not easy. We were brought up in the French language. In other words, apart from me, my other classmates spoke French at home since they were children. This did not happen with the Christians. One cannot learn it as easily when one is ten or twelve, if one does not know it. It was a bit tough.

I had a classmate named Botton, of the known Botton family who had the jewelry shop, Isaac de Botton. Another one was Moise Agi. And another was Charles Pessah, who is now in Barcelona. He was in the class of Mico Alvo [son of Simon Alvo, of the Alvo Bros business]. The Armenian was Arthuro Muzikian. There were also two siblings Sam and René Molho. René is also a man's name. Nina Florentin was my classmate in the second class of the school, but during the second year of the baccalaureate she dropped out. She did not have the background to acquire it.

The courses were difficult and during the baccalaureate we were only five in class. We didn't have too many girls in the last two grades. Before the war they left in order to get married. They didn't care that much and their relatives were not so keen on educating the girls.

The teachers were very strict. They didn't give in. This is because they were French and they thought of us as inferior. They were governed by French arrogance. They showed some liking to me because I was a good student. I was especially liked by the teacher of Math and he brought me books from home. Relations between teachers and students were generally very pleasant. They were not formal at all.

There was a great difference between the French school in Paris and the Lycée in Thessaloniki. A different school and under completely different conditions. Nothing to do. A different school and a different atmosphere. The courses, however, the curriculum were completely identical. This is because the Baccalaureate is one and the same in France and abroad. French teachers came from abroad to examine you, it was an identical program.

In France, of course, the teachers were better. Those that came here were not the best. Who would care to go to a foreign country to teach? There were a couple of young ones, the others were old. These teachers came and stayed for many years. Each one with his wife. But they didn't get into the Greek world at all. One teacher, who was here with his wife for four years, didn't know a word of Greek. I wondered how his wife went shopping since she didn't know any Greek, not even how to

say ‘Good morning.’ The French have always been conceited when it comes to their language. They never try to learn a foreign language. For them above everything is French.

This French education made me acquire some love feelings for the French culture. Since my mother tongue was French, I especially liked their literature. But I didn’t identify with the French Revolution. I read a lot of history, but I didn’t learn it by heart, I didn’t care much about it. The democratic spirit of the ‘Republique’ was taken for granted.

School finished at one thirty. Then I returned home with my mother, grandfather and my brother. We finished lunch around 3-4pm, and then I went for a walk. I met my friends somewhere. Then at night I studied. The neighborhood I went to was Gravias [a street in the eastern suburbs of the city where many Jewish middle class families lived], because this was where my friends were. One was Hector Florentin, the other Moise Agi, who lived a little further down on Martiou Street, and the third one who now lives in Barcelona., was Charles Pessah. There were two or three more. They were all Jewish and were my classmates.

We met at Gravias where they lived and then we went for a walk. We went to patisseries nearby, such as ‘Ivi’ on Georgiou Street. This patisserie was owned by a Christian and it wasn’t one of the student’s parlors. It was, however, convenient since it was in the neighborhood where my friends lived. We went there and talked for a couple of hours and then we returned home.

I had my own room in the house, and so did my brother. I started studying late, around eight or nine, and sometimes I finished at two or three in the morning. And in the morning at eight, school again. This was the daily routine. My mother had no objection. In other words it was not strange. I did well and she had no reason to force me.

The Baccalaureate exams were written and oral. They took place in different periods. One week for the oral ones and one for the written ones. The oral exams were certainly a headache. French teachers came from Athens, I remember, special examiners, and the exams took place in the IKA [Idrima Koinonikon Asfaliseon, Social Securities Foundation] hospital, at Frangon [street in the western commercial part of the city center].

Among the two options I had for the Baccalaureate I chose to be examined in Math. There was no chance I would go to the university because I would have to go to Athens. My aim was to graduate and go work at my uncles’ office. None of my classmates went to the university, except the brothers Alvo. And another one of my classmates, Molho, started studying dentistry. The others did not. Those were difficult years to go to the university in Athens. Who had the means to go, to rent a house there? Here in Thessaloniki there was no university, only one or two schools, Chemistry and Law. [Editor’s note: Mr. Saltiel means there were not many schools and faculties.]

I maintained very friendly relations with my classmates. We met also after we graduated. The classes were mixed. But in the last class in the second bachot, of the second Baccalaureate, we were only boys. Because at that time, before the war, the girls weren’t supposed to be more educated, neither to go to work. They were destined to marry. That is why they didn’t continue. Some of them were smart enough, but they didn’t try too hard. One needed to study hard to manage.

There was also a lot of competition, and I felt antagonistic towards certain people who were in my group. Besides the whole class was a small group, and it was more like a friendly competition rather than jealousy.

We didn't discriminate at school, we didn't know who was and who wasn't a bourgeois. Neither did we care. All the houses were more or less the same. Neither did one show off one's wealth at the time. Except two or three families who had villas and such things. We were classmates and we were all equal. There was no such snobbism at the time.

There were no separate groups at school at the time. We even socialized with students from all classes. Such as Hector Florentin, who was younger, and Pessah who was in the same class with Mico Alvo, two years younger than me. I did form friendships very easily then. It was a closed circle, a small circle. I had four or five dear friends with whom I used to meet and go out more often. Boys and girls. Nina for instance was in our company.

Every fortnight we had a party in someone's house of course, but not with the parents there. We were older youth, why should the parents stay? And this was a party with whatever we brought. Somebody brought food, somebody else brought wine. And there came our classmates, boys and girls, from school. And we danced whatever was in fashion at the time. Tango, foxtrot. All houses had a gramophone, but I don't think we had one. But all our friends had records. I never thought of buying a gramophone.

The parties started at 5pm and ended at 8:30-9:00pm, 10pm at the latest. Afterwards, we went home. The girls stayed in the neighborhood, we didn't escort them. Everybody lived in the neighborhood. In those times, in the Lycée, the youth was flirting, which means couples went out on their own. And the girls' parents may not have been aware. But it was among friends, within the same society, it wasn't among strangers. There were youngsters of families that knew one another, sometimes even relatives. And this didn't go further than a kiss, at the most.

I started learning Greek in 1939, after the Lycée. I had no time to learn it before. With friends we only spoke French and Judeo-Spanish, which I didn't know. There was also no reason for me to know Greek. We spoke in French and there was no problem. My friends were brought up in Greece and often spoke Greek amongst themselves. This didn't bother me. There was no chance that we would speak in French in the street and the people around us would object.

At the time before the war, Thessaloniki was a multinational city and Judeo-Spanish was spoken in the open. It was spoken in the port, at the market and no one had a problem with it, no way. They may have made fun of us, but it was common to hear it. At the market, for instance, Jewish shops were one next to the other, and often they spoke among each other Judeo-Spanish unreservedly.

I also went to the movies with the same group of friends. We went to watch American and French films shown at the time. We chose a film, for instance, and said we'd go to this or that movie house tonight. All movie houses were very nice. The four that were in the center of town and 'Ilyssia,' 'Dionysia' and 'Titania' [renowned cinemas of Thessaloniki]. We never went to 'Pathé.' We mostly went to 'Ilyssia' and 'Dionyssia.' Before the war I went to the Fair [International Trade Fair of Thessaloniki, which took place every September]. I went with company, it was a feast.

I had a bicycle, but it wasn't mine, we rented it. I used to take it and go on excursions, such as to Panorama [small village on top of a hill north of Thessaloniki] or Peraia [a seaside resort east of Thessaloniki]. I went on excursions with my group of people, my friends, two or three friends. We went on Sunday. We set off in the morning and went riding with the bicycle. And we returned in the same way. We didn't have a certain place to stop. We went for the ride, we didn't have a picnic and didn't sit down anywhere.

None of us lived in the center of the city. Our neighborhoods were from Evzonon onwards. This was known as the area of Campagnas [countryside; area east of the city where most middle-class and upper-middle class families lived in detached houses]. We went downtown to go to the movies. There were three open air movie theaters in Aristotelous Square [the central square of the city]. There was nothing else. [Editor's note: due to the devastating fire of 1917, the city center was still in the process of reconstruction.]

After the end of the film we went back home. We didn't go to have a drink somewhere because there weren't any such places. There were a few patisseries in that part, no more. There was the Almosnino patisserie [the most famous Jewish-owned patisserie of Thessaloniki], where my grandfather Moise went. It was a simple patisserie in Aghia Triada.

There weren't any shops in the center of town. The commercial market was as of Aghiou Mina onwards [in the western part of the old city]. I didn't go to the shops. I didn't go shopping. My mother bought my clothes and shoes were ordered to be made. I never went to the department stores. Neither did my classmates. There were not any shop-windows at the rate there are now, so I didn't look at the windows. For instance many houses in Tsimiski Street [presently Thessaloniki's High Street] had no shops at the ground floor.

Neither did my friends of male classmates care about fashion. Some of my classmates were more elegant. Almost all of them wore a tie. Our female friends had their clothes sawn; some by their mothers. The way they dressed was according to their character. We didn't care much about that kind of thing. Of course, when we went to a party we all took better care, but up to the point we could afford.

My classmates didn't visit any brothels on Aggelaki Street [where many brothels were situated]. None. Only Dick Benveniste [president of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki in the 1970s], who was two years older and smoked while he was still a student, went to the 'girls.' This is what he told us. Otherwise, none of our classmates smoked. Smoking was not in fashion.

Besides school, I was not in any athletic associations. I never did sports, and did not watch contests. There was the Maccabi 4 where I never went to. Maccabi was an athletic and Zionist association. None of my friends had been there either. There was the Yachting Club, but I didn't go there either. Some of my friends went there, I think Mico did. There was also the Tennis Club, but we didn't go. I don't know of any of my friends that went.

I didn't celebrate my birthday. They didn't give me any presents either. They gave me an allowance for the whole week, but very little. We didn't expect more. Life was simpler. There were no bars or night clubs for us, we didn't know of such a life. Our only expenses were a pastry or two at the patisserie, the tramway fare, and that was it.

In the summer, school ended at the end of June. And once again we started in September. In the summer we stayed in Thessaloniki. My mother didn't go to the sea. I went with my friends. Before the war I didn't do any yachting. But in the morning I went swimming and in the afternoon we played bridge regularly. There were two or three places very near our house in Aghia Triada where we could go swimming. I had learned how to swim in the lake in Lausanne. My grandmother had sent me, rather, my uncle did, to a summer camp or 'colonie de vacances,' near the lake and there I learned how to swim. This was a summer camp for children of my age.

I didn't know anything about Zionism, nor was any of my classmates a Zionist. Probably this was accidental, but Zionists didn't go to such schools. Palestine didn't mean anything to me. It wasn't like a motherland in other words. If someone asked me where I was from, my answer would be: 'My family has lived in Thessaloniki for the last 500 years.'

But when we were in France we were Greeks. According to the law in France I was 'le petit grecque,' the young Greek. I was the only foreigner in class, and my surname was a Sephardic family name, but they didn't know it. The French didn't care about religion, the only thing they cared about, if they knew it, was your origin, your nationality, and my nationality was always Greek. I never took up French nationality.

In France, when they told me I was the young Greek, I felt flattered. It wasn't insulting, no. The French had a negative opinion of the Poles in general, and especially of the Jews that were Polish, and they couldn't stand them. They were the 'dirty Jews' ['sales juifs'], because they were an element that didn't want to be incorporated in the French society. I didn't know if any of my classmates at school were Jewish, such things we didn't know.

I personally didn't feel anti-Semitism. But I became aware of it later, by reading, learning details of what had happened until then, for instance. I had no idea at the time though. I didn't feel it personally because we didn't associate with the rest of society. We lived by ourselves. The Jews I knew didn't speak of anti-Semitism. About Campbell 5, for instance, nobody spoke. Besides, my folks had many Christian friends. And my uncles had business associates who were Christian. They also had friends, colleagues, bank directors with whom they collaborated. They didn't have a problem.

During the time I went to the Lycée, as of 1934-1935, that was the period of the rise of Nazism in Germany and Italy, but we had no idea. I don't know how this could be, we lived in a different world, and in general people ignored this situation. Even in France people had no idea.

I don't remember the Metaxas dictatorship 6. I didn't mind at all when the Jews of Thessaloniki were excluded from EON 7. We had heard of EON, but we didn't care. We lived in ignorance of the situation. We also didn't know anything about the communists. There was the concept of Communism which we all knew, and we all knew Karl Marx, but we had no special opinion. We didn't read political books and we were not interested in politics. We also didn't speak at all about religion. Nothing. We were all liberal. We cared more about culture, reading, philosophical and metaphysical discussions, such matters. We read the works of philosophers, Germans, French, both in and out of school.

Before the war, the street where we lived was occupied almost entirely by Jews. A medical doctor across, another one next door, a photographer that I remember, a little further down, a lady friend

of my grandfather across the street. In that neighborhood in Evzonon lived mainly the middle classes. We didn't make distinctions and we didn't know who had a lot of money and who didn't. Some were merchants, others were clerks. The poor lived in the suburbs.

The houses were two-story buildings. Almost all had a garden, and were built on big plots of land. We had a garden, a big courtyard at the back of Evzonon Street. In the back we had a garden with a water pump. On a small piece of land in the back my grandfather grew tomatoes and similar vegetables. My grandfather took care of the garden; we didn't have a gardener. I and my brother helped him. We picked the tomatoes.

Lily Molho lived across from us. Her family name was Alkalay. Her youngest sister was my classmate. We were together in the same class, the second class, in the Mission Laique. Then she left, she disappeared. But we saw each other because she lived across from us. The house still exists. It is among the few in Evzonon which is not ruined. A beautiful two-story house.

Before the war we knew there were working-class quarters. We saw the workers, they went around in carriages. They came into the city in the morning and headed for the port. At the corner of our office there were carriages with porters. It was in the center, in the Banks' Square [square near the port where the major banks had their offices]. But I never went to the working-class quarters.

These three to four years before the war started, I was never outside Thessaloniki. Those were not easy trips, moving around wasn't easy either. And I had no reason to go, neither in Larissa [the principal city in Thessaly, 150 km south of Thessaloniki], nor in Drama [a major city of Eastern Greek Macedonia, 60 km east of Thessaloniki]. I had no special reason. Neither did my mother travel anywhere.

Throughout this period my relation with my brother Maurice was very good. Maurice was seven years younger than me. In Paris he went to the kindergarten. Afterwards he went to a Greek elementary school and thus learned Greek. He then went to the Konstandinidis High School [the oldest Greek-owned private school of Thessaloniki]. Maurice was a classmate of Andreas Sephiha [president of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki in the 1990s]. But he had Christian friends at the time and spoke with them in Greek. At home, however, he spoke with my mother in French. My brother had his bar mitzvah. Before the war it was simpler. After the war it became more luxurious, let's say. At the time it was just a ceremony.

I finished school and only then did I start learning Greek. I had to learn Greek in order to be able to work. Also because I lived here and had no prospects of going anywhere else, I had to learn it. My uncle Sam found me a teacher, a certain Molho. And I had lessons for six months. Afterwards I slowly learned it by studying. But it was mainly the reading. The books, Karagatsis [important Greek novelist of the interwar period], etc. The dictionary, paper and pencil and taking notes. I learned languages easily. I found Greek difficult, because when I came back I didn't even know the alphabet.

I started working in the summer of 1939. Until the war started I worked at my uncles' office, and continued to live with my family. I didn't dream of any other job. I didn't have many choices. But this didn't bother me. It was pleasant, very interesting work. My relationship with my uncle was very good. But he was strict. Before the war my duty was to write on the typewriter. To write letters, letters no end. He dictated them to me.

The office was at 2, Ermou Street, on the square called the Banks' Square. It was at the junction of Frangon and Ermou Street. The Stock Exchange building was in the corner opposite. It was there even before the war. Many years ago. Those were very big offices in four big rooms. Prior to the war, my uncle Sam, his brother Saul, and three clerks worked there.

We had an employee who was very active, he knew foreign languages. He did the correspondence and had the responsibility of exports and of some of the houses we represented. We also had an employee, a girl, who did errands. Before the war they didn't have an accounting section. Things were 'flou,' I don't remember the way the state collected the taxes. Except for the girl who was a Christian, the others were Jews.

We spoke in French. Everything was done in French, the correspondence too. Only a section of it concerning exports to Germany and some German and Czech representations had its correspondence in German. And another section relating to England and a few other countries was done in English. But our daily routine was in French. I think that my uncles spoke to the errand girl and one of the employees in Greek, which I didn't know well at the time.

During the war

We didn't know that the war would spread in the rest of Europe. It was between France and Germany. It had worried us that the Germans conquered France so easily. It was of course very sad that the French lost the war. On the first day of war we knew that there was a war in Albania 8. Some friends of mine that were older than me went to the front. Dick Benveniste went. The feeling of patriotism was widespread. It was a time when life was a lot tougher. Providing supplies had become very difficult. At home we didn't have a shelter. Bombardments were not too frequent in most areas, and didn't worry me personally.

I had a cousin Daisy Saltiel who had become a nurse. She took lessons, she became a nurse and worked very much. The day the Germans entered Thessaloniki Grandfather died. He died where we lived, in Evzonon. He was old. It was a difficult period. When the Germans came I stopped working. We did no longer communicate with the rest of the world, there were no imports, the office had slackened and I did no longer go there. I did various jobs, whatever I could find. Black market. I had a friend who had a warehouse with razors and I helped him sell them. This was done in the open, there was no control. It was a difficult time.

Since Grandfather died, my mother had some income from rents and we lived on it. She owned some property. The house on Evzonon Street was ours. She had some shops on Kalapothaki Street [in the commercial district of the center of the city] and two apartments. My uncles Sam and Saul didn't help us at all. We didn't need any help.

There was of course great shortage in many things, but I don't remember that we starved. We shopped in our neighborhood. There was food, but in very limited quantity. There was lack of meat and fish. This is how it was in the winter of 1941. And the same was the case in 1942. We lived on income from rent, which wasn't much. This is because the rents were frozen. Some paid and others didn't, it was a bit tough. But we received some money and lived on it.

During this time I did nothing much. I would meet my friends, in the same places, in the house. A couple of times we went to Tsitsanis [Vassilis Titsanis, the most celebrated rebetiko folk song

singer and writer of Greece]. In 1942 he was somewhere on Pavlou Mela Street [street in the center of the city where Tsitsanis had opened a tavern], somewhere nearby. We went by coincidence. I had a friend who was a couple of years older than me, and who smoked, he was more modern. Boubis, he was more street smart. One day he proposed that I go and listen to bouzouki [Anatolian plucked folk instrument] and we did. I hadn't a clue about bouzouki. At the time it was associated with the world of hashish smokers and small criminals.

In 1942 I started working in the Jewish Community. I didn't have anything else to do and went there as a volunteer, to spend my time and write on the typewriter. There was always work to be done: lists, translations and other things. I worked there on and off until 1943. I remember Rabbi Koretz 9 . I just saw him when he came by the Community while I worked there. He was an important person. He was the chief rabbi.

In July 1942 the concentration of Jews in Eleutherias Square 10 took place. I was there also. There was an order for men from 15 or 17 to the age of 60 to present themselves there. We went there without any suspicion in mind. They didn't inform us why we had to go there. We got there in the morning and stayed there for four or five hours. It was a huge crowd. There were no people on the balconies. There were no tenement houses, only hotels and shops. I didn't suffer anything; the sun didn't bother me. Some among those that were at the front were beaten, or had to do some exercises etc. but I wasn't aware of it. And then I went back home and thought that worse could follow.

In 1943 [actually 1942] the German measures alarmed us. Everybody tried to survive. Of course, some were taken to forced labor work 11. Some, a little older than myself, went to the forced labor camps created by the Germans in Leptokarya [a small village 60 km south of Thessaloniki]. In a short while the Germans called on me too while I was working in the Jewish Community. They summoned me for forced labor. I remember we broke stones. Just like that, for no purpose, just because some entrepreneur who was a collaborator of the Germans had some land near Sedes, at the military airport [area east of Thessaloniki]. We sat down and broke stones. Never mind, we even cracked jokes. We were young lads, we had no idea what awaited us. We were not seriously aware of the dangers.

While I was in Sedes, I heard that in Redestos [a small village nearby] they had potatoes. I left many times to go and look or steal, I don't remember what, I think potatoes. I bought a sack of potatoes to take it along and bring it home. Because every day they took us on a lorry back into town.

In Sedes we broke stones. I stayed in Sedes 15 to 20 days, or a month, I don't remember exactly. And then a friend of mine intervened. He was a graduate of the Italian school, he knew Italian and had managed to go work under the Italians. So I went to a warehouse somewhere in Kalochori [a small village west of Thessaloniki]. And there it was much better, let's say. It was more pleasant because they fed us with spaghetti every day at noon. And we carried sacks, quite heavy ones. There were two or three Jewish porters, professionals, who showed us how to pick up the sacks and how to carry them.

And then the deportations started either at the working class quarters or in the ghettos. Because the Germans had created three ghettos, and emptied one after the other in an orderly way up until they reached the Community, which was near us in Evzonon, where the last ghetto was. Many

families had come from other ghettos to our house, since we had four apartments which we could rent. Some were crowded in one room or in two. Among them a family we knew, the Matarasso family. They were distant relatives, because one of their uncles was married to one of my father's sisters in Lyon.

I wore the star of David. They were distributed to us by the Community, if I remember well. It was a difficult situation. There was an atmosphere of terror. One tried to escape, others didn't risk it. There was a general atmosphere of fear both among the Jews and the Christians. Because those Christians that would be discovered to have helped Jews could suffer serious repercussions and be executed.

There was fear also among the Jews. I remember a cousin of mine, Errera, who with three of his friends, had agreed to escape with some 'caique' [small sailing boat] from the sea of Thessaloniki. And the guy who had supposedly arranged it – this scenario – and taken their money, betrayed them just after they gave it to him, and they were shot, all four of them. They were youngsters of 15 or 16 years of age. In the cemetery there is even a monument for those four that were then shot.

Some who were trying to help some of my friends or some older ones, to escape to the mountains, were sometimes successful. A lot of youngsters, however, didn't want to leave because they didn't want to abandon their parents, especially the girls. For the girls it was even more difficult to escape. Where would they go?

Throughout this time I occasionally met with my friends. Everybody took care of his ill state, some worked. I remember a friend of mine made shoes, somebody else became a fisherman, some other wandered around, it depended. We were somehow isolated from each other. Some of my friends tried to leave. Some must have left before the deportations, without letting anyone know, of course. Everybody tried, in secret, for his sake without informing anyone. I was, for instance, very close to my cousin who was executed by the Germans. I loved him very much, and he was my cousin and we played bridge together, and even so, I didn't know he was trying to leave.

Margot, my aunt, and my grandmother were deported before we got to the Baron Hirsch camp 12. We did not know it, only a posteriori. How could we have known? Yes we did know that the ghetto of 25th March Street was evacuated 13, but we didn't know anything else.

I want to come back to the Matarasso family, who lived in our house. He had a lot of money, of course. He had a jewelry shop and such things. It was a very wealthy family, and they found a way to survive. But he was on the list of rich Jews that the Germans knew about. These people the Germans had occasionally forced money out from. He was listed, in other words, in their records. The Germans found out immediately that he had escaped, and they made it sound as if my mother was to blame. She, as the house owner, was supposed to have let the Germans know that they had left. So they arrested her.

It so happened that my brother, who was much younger than I, was at home. This was taking place during the second or the third deportation load, in March 1943. They informed me in the Community where I worked as a volunteer, and I immediately ran to see what was going on. Since I knew German, I went straight to the Gestapo. There I found out that they kept her there. I tried to protest and say this or that, but of course it was not taken into account, and they ordered us to

leave immediately. To take our personal belongings and to go to the Hirsch camp, in the old railway station. We went there on the very same day, of course. There was nothing to be done.

We stayed there for a fortnight with my mother, where, upon a conversation, we found out that the Italian consulate was providing certificates to Italian families in order to move them to Athens, which was occupied by the Italians. This we hadn't taken into account before.

My mother, who was a daughter of an Italian citizen, thought then that she too could acquire a permit and leave from Macedonia [Greek Macedonia, occupied and administered by the Germans] to go with us to Athens. But the thing was that for these procedures she had to leave the camp and go to the consulate, and leave us behind in the camp. For two days she was beside herself, she cried continuously, it is difficult to describe her feelings.

She managed to get out of the ghetto because she went to the Germans' collaborators and explained the situation to them. And some of those Jews that were there and were helping the Germans knew my mother and they knew that she really was an Italian's daughter. She said, 'I want to go out to get the papers so I can leave,' and they accepted it. It wasn't easy to get out, you had to have a good excuse. The permission for her to get out of the camp was given orally by the Germans, after a recommendation. The application was carried out by the collaborators.

Finally she managed to leave. It took her ten to twelve days. I don't remember exactly how many days were necessary for the procedure. She went back and forth to the consulate to acquire the necessary papers, to prove she really was an Italian's daughter, and to come to pick us up in order for us to leave. And we did.

My brother and I stayed in the Baron Hirsch camp for six or seven weeks, for something like two months. [Editor's note: this period is significantly longer than the period Mr. Saltiel's mother was away, so it must be inaccurate.] During this time trainloads left every five days. These deportations didn't take place according to some name list, they deported anyone they could lay their hand on, crowds of people. The Germans raided one house after the other, yelling, 'Raus, raus' ['Out, out!'] and chased them to the old train station where they loaded them on the wagons. The camp was empty and three or four days later more people would arrive.

We were young and had this hope that we might leave and therefore we hid. We had no protection, simply out of cunningness. We hid under the beds. During this time of course we stayed without food, because during the days the people were imprisoned they somehow fed them. But in the days the ghetto was empty, there was no food. During this time we had absolutely no contact with our mother. So we stayed there without our mother for 15 days.

After that she came and picked us up. We went to Evzonon Street, gathered our things, and realized our house had been looted. The house had been emptied of its Jewish lodgers and people had stolen everything. In the meantime we had given certain things to the Italians also, in order to thank them for helping us.

When I came out of the camp and found our house on Evzonon Street looted, the only thing I found under a staircase were some books, among them a dictionary they had given me as a present in Paris, as a prize, and I took it along. I was pissed off that they had taken our furniture; we had very nice furniture.

I don’t know how, but I decided to go to the Gestapo to complain and ask to get the furniture back. And they gave us some back. They gave me a SIPO [German abbreviation for ‘Sicherheitspolizei’ or ‘security police’]. These SIPO wore badges, they were policemen., We went straight to one warehouse and they gave me some furniture, which I sold to get some money since we were going to leave anyhow. We were left without any money, except for what we had taken along, but this too we had spent.

And one day we got onto the train heading for Athens. It wasn’t a non-stop line; it had a change in Bralos [a place along the railway line in mainland Greece], because the train couldn’t go through at a certain point. They loaded us onto lorries to continue, and then we took the train again somewhere in Atalandi [a small town in mainland Greece], and then we reached Athens. There they took us near Omonia [a central square in Athens], to an empty high school, where there were twenty other families of Italian citizens who had left before us from Thessaloniki. These were real Italians, not like my mother who had married a Greek citizen. And we stayed all together for a while.I didn’t like this concentration, which was dangerous, even though deportations had not begun then in Athens. I simply thought we would be better off if we were separated. So we went and lived in a house on Alexandra’s Avenue, in Gizi [a neighborhood in central Athens]. In a very beautiful house, we rented a small apartment in our name, since there were no deportations yet. In other words we didn’t know if the situation would change. We of course rented the apartment from a Christian.

Six months later, after the surrender of Badoglio 14, they started hunting the Italians. Both the soldiers and the officers. And I remember that next door lived a lady who had a boyfriend, an Italian officer. As soon as these things happened, he threw away his uniform, wore civilian’s clothes and hid in this house. A few days later we saw him with a carriage selling tomatoes.

After we had left the Hirsch camp in Thessaloniki, when we lived on Kalapothaki Street while getting ready to leave Thessaloniki, we were in need of money and sold a shop to my uncle’s former partners. Those were called Dimitrakopoulos-Xenakis. We sold them a shop in the building on Kalapothaki Street. The price we got wasn’t very high of course, but this too helped us. We lived on it for a while in Athens. But after a while since we didn’t have any money once again, we did some work in Athens. We took a bench selling soaps. My brother of course helped me; we sold ‘Sapone di lusso.’ And this is how we managed to survive.

After the surrender of Italy by Badoglio, some Jewish collaborators started going around in Athens, but nobody knew us. This was taking place among the Athenians. Nevertheless, it wasn’t easy for us to stay in the center. People knew us, they could have traced us somewhere, in some grocery shops where we had used our food allowance tickets we had gotten with the help of the Italians, to buy food etc., so we tried to go somewhere else.

At first we went to Nea Philadelphia [an Asia Minor refugee settlement on the outskirts of Athens], and stayed there for a while. And after that, I don’t remember how, we were approached by two members of EAM 15. They offered to help us. They never gave us their names, and that is why we couldn’t find them after the war. They acted anonymously and with a lot of precaution. They proposed to us to leave Nea Philadelphia, where it was not that safe, and to move higher up. They proposed Nea Ionia [an Asia Minor refugee settlement on the outskirts of Athens].

In Nea Ionia most of the inhabitants were from Asia Minor, who knew very little Greek. There was no fear they would understand us. We told our mother not to speak, to pretend she was deaf and dumb, so she wouldn't betray herself. And then they issued identity cards for us. My new name was Niko Alvanos. There were two sources for issuing identity cards in Athens. One was that of Evert 16 , who was the chief of police, the other was that of EAM. The EAM had orders to help the Jews. And with these identity cards we had some cover.

Since I wasn't the type of person who would sit at home and we also were in need, because we didn't have any money, I went to downtown Athens. There were some 'gazozen' busses, as they were called at the time; those were like small lorries with a boiler at the back. They came by on and off. And one of those EAM people, who had helped us, came and visited. And because he made conversation with us, he realized I had to find some work to do.

He proposed to me to work on tobacco leaves. It seems he too did some work of this kind, either before or at the same time, I don't know. He knew nevertheless and he taught me, he gave me couple of instructions and some simple books. He also brought me in contact with someone who brought tobacco leaves from Agrinio [a major tobacco center in western mainland Greece]. I bought leaves from him, and I cut them and made pipe and cigarette tobacco packets.

I had fabricated a primitive scale and I thought of going and selling tobacco to the Germans. In Menidi [a neighborhood on the outskirts of Athens] there were the houses of the officers and pilots who had a base in Tatoi [the area where the Athens airport was situated]. And the Germans, of course, didn't have tobacco for the most part. I went there on foot from Nea Ionia. How I managed I don't know, the distance is a few kilometers. I went a couple of times a week. The Germans I met in coffee shops around Menidi. I didn't take money from them, I took bread or cans, or cigarette paper. I spoke broken German so they wouldn't know that I knew the language and wouldn't get suspicious, thinking I was some spy.

I knew German very well at the time. Before the war in all the schools I went to, also when I was in Paris, we learned it as a second language. I had chosen German. Most people chose English. In the Lycee, when I came back, all my classmates learned some kind of English. I continued with German together with three other chaps. Carlos my friend, Botton and someone else, whom I don't remember. There were three of us and we learned German from a certain Mr. Neftel. An Ashkenazi teacher in the French Lycée. And now I remember that before the war the gothic script was still in use. It was the first thing I learned. I couldn't write German otherwise. Only in Gothic script. Afterwards I forgot it. No, let me rephrase that: I did not forget it, I rejected it.

For me it was like a game, let's say. I was young and cool… in general the Saltiels are known to be weird. And neither did my brother nor my mother knew what risk I was taking. It was a very dangerous job. They knew I went somewhere, but not exactly where, this they didn't know, so they wouldn't worry. There was no reason for me to tell them where I went. And it was a distance, as I recently calculated, of 12-15 kilometers. back and forth. I was young and I had no problem. And one day I went to Athens. There was a market for cigarette paper on Athinas Street [a main commercial street in downtown Athens], and there I traded them or sold them. I also sold cigarettes. And this is how we survived, until the Liberation [the Germans abandoned Athens in October 1944].

I knew of EAM since 1942-1943, because some of my friends had contacts and went to the mountains: Hector's brother, Moise, and our two friends, the Cohen brothers. These had contact with their friends with whom they were very close. Some of our friends that were not away, like we were while in Paris, had old friendships with the Christians in the neighborhood. And some of them were leftists or had friends that were communists.

In Athens we had ration tickets from the Germans and for a while we went to pick them up. Even though it was dangerous and this was stupid. I nevertheless went. I also went to the Kaufmann bookshop [the most important foreign-language bookshop in Athens] on Stadiou Street and borrowed books. I went to concerts. When I went downtown to sell tobacco paper, which I collected from the Germans, I sometimes went to a concert. There were some revues; these were concerts of popular music, somewhere near Omonia. And since I was near there, I went. My brother went out in the neighborhood, he went shopping, he also did something, I don't remember what exactly. My mother stayed home, she cooked and didn't go out. We had brought some clothes with us.

I saw Hector and Nina when we lived on Alexandras Street. Maybe we met by accident because we lived in the same neighborhood. I went to see them a few times. Another time I went to Nea Philadelphia, I don't recall where, and I met the sister of a friend of mine. The one we had gone to Tsitsanis with together. And she recognized me, I also recognized her, we kissed and hugged, and I asked for my friend's news. She said he was well and made an appointment for me, so I met my friend who came to find me. I brought him cigarettes because I had some and he did not.

A while later he told me that his older brother tried to find a way to escape, as Nina did, of course, separately from one another, one family after the other. They escaped through Euboea by boat. But we didn't have money, so there was not such a chance for us.

Uncle Sam survived because he hid in a house in Athens. He had money. I didn't even know where he was, we had lost touch with each other. He must have left Thessaloniki before us: at the beginning of the deportations or even before. He left his mother and his sister behind. Everybody tried to save his own neck.

I saw my aunt Margot during the occupation, because I went to visit my grandmother. During the occupation my uncle Sam still sustained them. They lived together. At one point Sam wanted to leave, but Margot didn't want to leave and abandon my grandmother, because it was difficult for her to move. She wasn't a very old woman. But at that time a 65-year-old woman was a grandmother.

Saul and his wife were deported. His two children survived. My cousin Ino was in the army, but my cousin Daisy was arrested with her mother and father. They left before the deportations, before us. Daisy went through two or three camps. She wasn't in one camp permanently. There were transports. She survived, but her parents did not. And she came back.

When Daisy returned from the camp she stayed here for a couple of months. She had no one here any longer; both her mother and father were killed in the camp [Auschwitz]. Her brother too was in Athens. She believed she would have a better future in Israel. It seemed she had contact with her friends, and picked up and left. She did wrong of course to leave, because would she have stayed here she could have married and made a family, as many of her age did. But she wanted an adventure.

My cousin Ino was in the army, he was a lieutenant. At the time he was in the Middle East and did not go through the occupation in Greece. Afterwards, when he returned, he stayed in Athens for a while. He married, but they didn't get along well the little time they lived together. Then he wanted a divorce, and he picked up and went to Italy.

The end of the war found us in Athens, in Nea Ionia. I went out in the streets to celebrate together with the others. We learned that the war had ended from the papers. And about the bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we learned that from the newspapers too. It was a decision of the United States, so that the war would end.

As soon as we saw that the Germans had left and that we were no longer in danger we went downtown. We sought an apartment, and we found a nice one, in the center of Athens, on Kallidromiou Street, if I remember correctly.

About a month after the liberation my uncle Sam was the first to leave for Thessaloniki to put things together. To reorganize the office, to meet old friends, and to see how to reorganize some work. We stayed in Athens for a while, until February 1945, I think. I was working. We had created some mobile business in the center, on Sophokleous Street. And I remember we once again sold soaps, out in the street.

I even went there during the civil war, the so-called 'Dekemvriana' 17. There were demonstrations. I had been in one, from Omonia to Klafthmonos Square [a square in downtown Athens]. But this demonstration was progressing very slowly, they were shouting, singing, holding flags. I don't know why, but I left the demonstration at one point and went back. Maybe I was bored or they waited for me at home or something like that, and I had to go.

Afterwards I heard that as this demonstration continued until Syntagma Square [the main square of Athens in front of the Parliament building], policemen were waiting there and they started to shoot them. There were killings. It was the first demonstration, at the beginning of December. And in this demonstration I gather I held a red flag. We personally had been saved by people from the EAM.

During the Dekemvriana, I remember I followed things closely, though I didn't take part. I had no connection whatsoever. We had gone through so much, that we didn't need this. We no longer had connections with EAM. Those that had saved us had disappeared. We don't know what became of them. We didn't even know their names. They acted completely anonymously.

Kallidromiou Street is high up, and we lived at the highest point, on Strefi Hill. And one day, as my brother sat in the bathroom, a bullet passed next to his head. A stray bullet. Because they were shooting from morning until night, even during the night occasionally.

After the war

We returned to Thessaloniki in February 1945. The first scenes of Thessaloniki when we came back were very sad. Very, very sad. Almost everyone, from a population of some 50,000-60,000, had disappeared. The few survivors from the camps started to come back. During the time we were in Athens we had, of course, heard they had gone to the camps.

When we returned we went to live in our house in Kalapothaki. The Evzonon house was occupied by various families that had appropriated it illegally in order to stay there. In one of the apartments

in Kalapothaki stayed a policeman with his wife. We told them that it was our house and that we wanted to live there too. In the beginning they gave us a room, and then a second one and then they left thanks to us putting pressure on them. Then came another relative of ours, Mr. Benrubi. He didn't have anywhere to go and came there with his daughter.

Various families lived in Evzonon. Later on we collected rent from them. Some rent, very low, because there was a rent control after the war and rents were extremely low and frozen. And there were some that paid and others that did not, it was a whole procedure. It was difficult. This situation continued.

We did not go back to Evzonon. We stayed on in Kalapothaki, until I got married. The house in Evzonon did not belong only to us; it belonged to my mother's three brothers. My grandfather had four children, three boys and my mother. But in his will he named my mother as his heiress. On the one hand because he had endowed the boys, and on the other hand because it was the only way to save his fortune, as my mother was a Greek citizen. Otherwise, it would have been frozen because it was considered the property of foreign citizens since they were Italian citizens who lived abroad. There was no way to export money or exchange it. In other words, he could not have the rent income, and so he left it to my mother.

Years after, of course, my uncles claimed their part and at one point the house in Evzonon was sold. It was divided into four parts, between the three brothers and my mother. It was sold to a Greek from abroad, so they would get the money. It must have been sold in 1975, because when Mother died we were building it in association with a building constructor. My brother kept one apartment and I also got one.

Upon our return to Thessaloniki I started working at my uncle's Sam office. We were the only two left from the family and we started trying to put work in motion: representations and exports, again in partnership with the company Dimitrakopoulos-Xenakis. I was an employee, not a partner. After the war the office continued to have employees. The clerk was the same and we had two Christian girls. The business did very well.

There were a lot of problems before we started, but there was a lot of work too. The borders had opened and so business started. In general the market was in need of imports which had stopped for three years. We still had representations from before the war and new contacts of which my uncle took care. We brought in merchandise and did exports. We had our own storage houses, and very many clients and collaborators that were Christian. We didn't have many contacts with Jewish merchants, since most of them were no longer around. In Thessaloniki we were one of the biggest representation offices.

My brother started working too, and my mother had some income from rents, low rents, nothing big, but it was something nevertheless. During that time the Joint [18] helped too. I did not get anything there, because the Joint dealt mainly with people who had returned from the camp and had nothing. Those, who didn't even have a family, nor a house, nor money or anything else. These were helped very generously by the Joint.

In 1946 the first elections took place, I did not react and went to vote. [Editor's note: The Jewish Community of Thessaloniki called for abstention because the Jews were to vote in a separate electoral college]. The Civil War [19] didn't touch me at all, as I was so busy. Besides it was far away,

in a different area. We were not politically involved, not I in any case.

During that period, in the 1940s, I didn't go to the synagogue at all and neither did I attend any other activities in the Community. I never dealt with the community. And after the war my relation with the Jewish religion didn't change at all. It stayed the same.

During that time, I don't remember exactly when, some friends and I, among them Mico Alvo, created the 'Club of the Friends of the Sea.' This is where we spent our free time. I had a great love for the sea. Mico and I saw each other a lot before the war. I, of course, knew him but from far. He belonged to a different social class. After the war we were in the club together with another ten friends. It was a meeting place. We also had some small boats and went sailing a couple of days a week. Either on Wednesday or Thursday or on Saturday and Sunday. We sailed to Aghia Triada. I had my sailing boat too. It was made by some boards of scrap wood, of poor quality. There were not too many girls, but some came for a ride on the sailing boats.

We went out to eat. We went to 'Luxemburg' [a renowned restaurant and dancing club of Thessaloniki], for dancing, of course. I went out with other Jews of my age. But there were also Christians in my company, and good friends, very close friends. There weren't too many Jews left anyhow. The Christians were my friends' friends. Some of them, for example, were classmates of Moise Florentin, Hector's brother. Moise had not gone to the French Lycée. He had been in a Greek school. This is because there was a law that after a certain age one had to go to a Greek school. [Editor's note: In 1931 a law was passed stating that all Greek citizens should attend state-run elementary schools.]

So Moise had gone to a Greek school and had Christian classmates. And after the war he had a big apartment of one of his uncles on Gravias Street. This is where another five or six of his old friends went and settled, of whom one did not have a house, the other wanted to leave his parents' house, and thus they all stayed there. So I went and I met them and we became friendly. One was a journalist, the other worked, say, at his father's shop, another was a liquor merchant, had a small factory of liquors. They were very good friends. They loved us very much.

In 1950 I went to the army, the year the Korean War started. Until then I had the right not to go because as an orphan I was considered the head of the family. So I served less in the army, something like a year and a half. I presented myself in Haidari [a district in Athens with a military training camp] where, I think, I stayed for a month. And after basic training I was sent to Drama and then to Corinth [a city in northern Peloponnesus 60 km from Athens], and after that to the school for interpreters, because I had applied for foreign languages. From the school of interpreters I was posted to the American military command in Kozani [a city in western Greek Macedonia, 70 km west of Thessaloniki].

Around 1951 the Americans undertook the training of the divisions that the English had before. A lot of officers had come. At first, when I went to Kozani, there were eight or ten American officers, majors or generals, each directing a sector, so to speak. Strategic tactics, training of the army. My work as an interpreter was translations. We did written translations of the texts the Americans had with them to give to officers of our own army, and during the training I translated since none among the officers we had then knew how to.

I learned English because I wanted to forget German. In 1945 or in 1947, I don't remember exactly, a friend pushed me to go together with him to a language school for English. And I went for a semester, but I was bored. Because in this school the training advanced very slowly, and because I knew other languages such as German and French. So I had no problem learning the language. In other words, with the help of a dictionary and books. I translated from magazines and books with the help of a dictionary. I took a pencil and paper, wrote things down and this way one can learn. A couple of hours of work every day, and one can learn on one's own, if one wishes, but there is work to be done.

It was not hard for me, besides I had the example of my relatives. My uncle knew eight languages, my grandfather knew four or five, I think. I work fast and I read fast. Not everybody reads with the same speed. I read very, very fast, almost vertically. I have read thousands of books.

I remember that when I started learning English and I reached a point where I could read, I went to the American library. Then I went to the British Library. I went through all the books. I went to work in the morning, and in the afternoon, and sometimes at night until ten or eleven I read.

This job I undertook as a secretary helped me very much because I sat with the dictionary and worked for many hours. I had to learn English for the work my uncle assigned to me. It was a condition that I had to learn English very well because a large part of our work was in English.

I didn't stay in Thessaloniki during the time I was in the army. In fact I remember that after my training in Corinth, I went to an infantry sector outside Larissa. I had become a distributor of rations and taught English to some officer, the commander of the battalion I was serving in. It was very pleasant and I had a good time. When we went to Haidari for instance there were many of our acquaintances from Thessaloniki. And with some who were from Thessaloniki who I didn't know we became very attached.

It was known I was a Jew because of my name. But with those friends I made in the army, I never had a problem because of that. Neither with the officers. During the Jewish holidays they gave me a leave of absence. It was an opportunity for me to ask for a leave and come home. The leaves of absence were something like a routine in the army. And there was never any comment.

During the first years after the war Athens and Piraeus started developing faster, while Thessaloniki stayed idle. And there were more prospects for Athens to develop. Many people from here left for Athens and instead people came from Trikala, Larissa and Volos [three major cities in Thessaly with important Jewish communities before the war]. They came to find a better future in Thessaloniki. These communities in Thessaly and further down in Athens are Romaniote Jews, not Sephardi. They came to find a better future in Thessaloniki which was closer to them. And for us, the Thessaloniki Jews, he who does not know Judeo-Spanish, is not considered a Jew. But they were Jewish all right. They had their synagogues, and were even more religious than us. Those were smaller communities, and they were more attached to one another.

Around 1955 some of my friends chose to leave for Athens. More precisely, during this time three of my very good friends decided to do business in Athens. They thought it would be a more profitable activity. Some succeeded and some did not. One was Haim Botton, the other was Freddy Abravanel, and the other was Armando Modiano.

Moise Florentin was also one of those who left to Athens in 1955-1957. He was one of my closest friends here while he worked for an uncle of his, his mother's brother. But at a certain point he decided to go to Athens. None of my acquaintances left for Israel or the US. Some left for the US in 1945. Among them were those who didn't find a family or a family business they could have continued, and thus decided to go to the US.

In the 1950s I had also decided to go to the US. I had applied and my application was approved, but my mother didn't agree and I didn't want to go alone and leave her here. I don't know for what reason I took this decision. In the first years the financial situation was a bit difficult.

My mother's life changed a lot after the war. Everything changed. Thessaloniki's physiognomy was very different because so many Jews were lost. Very few of us were left. My mother had five or six friends she knew before the war and she spent her time with them. They were Jewish.

In fact my mother took the initiative and created again a society, an association of Jewish women called WIZO 20. WIZO was inactive during this time and my mother and some of her friends took initiative and they gathered and decided to continue this work. After the war she was the first president and kept the presidency for six consecutive years. Before the war I don't think she participated. We were not here. She took this initiative because she wanted to contribute. She could feel something ought to be done. But they didn't collect much money, as there simply wasn't any money at the time. The work was mostly social, mainly in Thessaloniki.

Besides WIZO, my mother had no other dealings with the Community. She went to the synagogue because my grandfather was quite religious. Not excessively, but he honored the traditions. But I didn't see any change in my mother after the war. She was a sociable person. She went out very much. And because she was a widow, and, unfortunately, there were many widows who were available for company they went out together. They met in houses, in our house or in some other house. With them she only spoke in French, and also in Greek, but not in Judeo-Spanish.

My mother didn't go on vacation. I don't think she had political beliefs. Not that his was something that didn't preoccupy her. She had a very good relationship with her grandchildren. But she didn't stay with them at night because they had somebody at home permanently.

When the war ended my brother was 16 or 17 years old. He had his bar mitzvah at an older age in Thessaloniki when we returned. It was a very simple ceremony. He didn't receive any presents. It wasn't common for children to get presents when they had their bar mitzvah. It was during the years when things were very simple and very poor. My brother learned Hebrew for his bar mitzvah. He took lessons with a rabbi. He most probably went to the synagogue. Very few people were able to do this job.

When we came to Thessaloniki my brother went to high school in Konstandinidis for a couple of years. But before he went to school he worked for a couple of years. He worked at the Zaharopoulos bookshop, not in my uncle's Sam office. And this because he didn't know how to write well in French and was very young. But I told him to finish high school. We supported him with some rent income and with what I made. But he also got an allowance.

After my brother finished school he had a friend and classmate who was a merchant's son and had a big business with iron wares. It seems his friend proposed to him to go and work in their shop.

And he worked there until the day that he retired. The business was called Sephiha, 'Ifestos' [Vulcan] Sephiha.

Before I met my future wife Rosy I had relationships mostly with Christian girls. In our company it didn't make a difference whether they were Jewish or Christian. But this didn't attract me because to make a proper family with one from another religion was not so... Of course, we had relations with some Jewish girls with whom we went out dancing but innocently, without...And not alone. We were say two or three friends and we had two or three girls with whom we went out dancing.

There were then some music clubs with orchestras somewhere in the Depot [a neighborhood in the eastern suburb of the city, which took its name from the nearby tram depot], where a lot of people gathered. These were girls of our age. But when I decided to get married I wanted to get a girl younger than me.

At one point when I turned 35 and started to have a better situation financially, I thought it was time for me to stop my bachelor life and to get married and have a family. At that time marriages were fixed. Many people came to the office constantly from Larisa, Volos, from Athens, with girls who wanted to get married. They were exclusively Jewish. And here there were also a few.

Rosy and I got married in 1957. I knew her very well because I knew her family, her mother I knew less. Her father I knew better because our uncle Sam advised him and protected him. And since I knew Rosy, I thought of her. I told my uncle Sam who agreed and spoke with her father and we got engaged. I did make a choice, a sensible choice, as they say.

Rosy's father was Alphonso Levy and her mother Sol Levy. Before the war Alphonso was the director of the Community. My uncle advised him not to go back to this position, but to open a business. He opened an office and started dealing with his own representations. He was a very nice man, very active and very friendly with everybody. He tried to deal with various activities. He ran around all day. After the war he continued to be active in the Community. He also had friends who participated actively. He himself was vice president of a Jewish organization which had various activities, social, educational etc., the Keren Kayemet Leisrael, KKL, the Jewish National Fund 21. He had many friends in Israel with whom he corresponded. He went very often to Israel for trips to see his sisters and brothers. He had two sisters and two brothers. As a personality he was very pleasant. I had a very good relationship with him. The fact that he was a Zionist and that my relationship to Israel was very loose, did not create any problem. Alphonso died in 1995.

Sol was younger than Alphonso. She was very good, a very good cook and housewife. She was a different character than Alhonso, had a different disposition. Everyone has his own disposition. She was sociable, but not all that much. She didn't participate at all in social activities. Her company was mostly couples who liked each other and visited each other often, and mostly her sister.

Alphonso and Sol spoke Judeo-Spanish with each other. When the four of us met we spoke in Greek. Alphonso's Greek was good, since he had been the director of the Jewish community before the war. Sol spoke very good French and Judeo-Spanish. Sol died around 1990, she was not that old.

After the engagement we started going out together. We got married a few months later. It was a regular wedding and ceremony. There were guests. We were so few then. My mother invited many

of her friends. For our honeymoon we went to Vienna. We stayed there for more than 25 days. It so happened that one of Rosy's friends married at that time also, so we agreed to go to Vienna together. The four of us spent some time in Vienna together. We had a lovely time, free of cares, very nice.

After the marriage we first stayed in the same house where we had stayed before in Kalapothaki. We took the apartment next door, which we had emptied, and my mother and brother lived on one side and we lived on the other, in our own apartment.

After the marriage, my life was completely different. That's because there were two of us now and we had many friends, other couples. We went out with other friendly couples. At first with one of Rosy's classmates, Papadema was her family name. We met with them a lot, I remember at one point we went out with them every evening for a walk. To the movies, everywhere, we went dancing. I remember in Aretsou [a seaside resort very close to the east of Thessaloniki] there was a dancing club where we went every so often, 'Water Lilly' it was called. I used to dance before and after my marriage.

After I became a soldier and was away for a year and a half, I didn't go to the 'Club of the Friends of the Sea' again. I didn't bother. After I came back from the army, I don't remember by who I got persuaded to do so, but I registered in some other club, the B.A.O. [Byzantine Athletic Club], an excursion club. And I went on excursions, long before I got married. I went every Sunday, and sometimes for the entire weekend, on an excursion somewhere: to Chortiatis [a mountain nearby Thessaloniki], Mount Olympus, Chalkidiki [a peninsula nearby Thessaloniki], various places. In Aghia Anastasia, along that way. On foot. Five to six hours on foot. After we got engaged, sometimes Rosy came with me, but she didn't really enjoy it.

In 1960 my uncle retired from the business. He wasn't married, and had some health problems and wanted to leave. Here he had no one except us, but he had two sisters and a brother in Naples, who invited him to go and live with them. So he decided to leave. As a result I remained alone and I somehow reduced the business. In other words I stopped the exports; I couldn't do both things. And I tried to develop the imports, the representations' sector. I didn't have any specific imports that did really well. These things continuously change. One has to adapt.

We had a lot of textiles, the textiles didn't do that well, so I decided to find other products. At first I turned to iron wares. My first representations were from a contact I had at the International Trade Fair of Thessaloniki. They had a stand, and let's say that they started some contacts. Then I turned to representation of hygienic products. I also had some collaborations with friends from Athens who needed a person to develop the Thessaloniki market. And this opened other doors to me, with other representations of houses in the market of hygienic products. These friends of mine from Athens, who had the hygienic products, were Jewish: Abravanel and Amarillio.

The business did very well, the turnover continuously grew. In every branch, we had clients in every specialty. There was a lot of competition from other representatives and factories from abroad, because every representative was representing his own factories.

The choice of representations is often a question of luck. Luck, coincidence, if certain people look for factories through their friends, third parties.

There were some products we brought that were very, very successful. An English factory from Leeds produced woolen textiles for men's suits that were very popular. One enjoyed working with this material because it was a very good product that the customers appreciated.

My customers were in the majority Christian, because the market had drastically changed after the war. The big clients were Christian businesses. Thessaloniki was a small city in the 1950s and 1960s and we had friends. My uncle had friends that knew who he was and trusted him and this relationship was transferred to me.

The fact that I was Jewish didn't stand in the way, on the contrary. This is because some representatives, from Athens mainly, were liars and were not reliable in their business dealings. But they trusted me more because the Jew in general tries to win trust and to behave properly, so that he doesn't risk to lose a client, and so that he can invest in his work. This is a smarter tactic than fooling the client.

Before the war and just after the war the promise, that is the commitment, played a very important role. It meant that when you say something you must do it, as if it is a written commitment, even if it is not. Say, for instance, in the business of exports that we had before the war, we had a typical oral agreement with the associates at the office which was based on mutual trust. We didn't have a contract or anything else. We got money, gave money, did exports, and in purchases we also had full trust, very kind and correct. And this was never shattered.

There weren't many Jewish merchants here. Not in my area of products. Except for Alvo in products of hygiene with whom we didn't work that much. I had other more important clients who preferred me a lot more than Alvo. The Alvo family had a somewhat different policy. They wanted to have exclusivity of their products, I didn't give exclusivity, and so we didn't have a very good collaboration. We almost had none at all. I didn't have relationships with other representatives who did similar things like me. Except for my friends in Athens who were representatives and with whom we had collaborated.

The atmosphere in the business was very good. I had employees, two women. One of them, whom I had for many years, got married, had a daughter, then divorced and continued to work for me. The other, who was single, married and left my office. They were secretaries. Took calls, did the correspondence and took care that orders were properly executed when I was away on a trip or visiting clients.

The salaries were paid according to the state law. When business was good, I remember, for many years we gave a bonus to the employees, at Christmas. I kept the business until I retired in 1995. I didn't participate in any professional associations, but I had to be a registered member in the association of representatives. I never ran for office, because I didn't have time for this kind of thing, neither did I have such ambitions.

Throughout my work, I had no problem either with the Income Tax office or the authorities. When I hired employees I didn't ask what their political beliefs were; no one paid attention to such things. I would hire people that were recommended by people I knew.

The work pleased me; it is a very interesting kind of job. One deals with people, one meets people, it is a sociable profession. During the week my time schedule was visiting clients in the morning,

and office work. Often I came late at noon, and once again in the afternoon because at the time we had a lot of correspondence, and it was my personal job to keep it updated. At the time we had no other way to communicate. Letters no end which I wrote until 10-11 at night. The employees, the girls, generally filled in the order files, notes, took care of the daily routine. But the correspondence I had to do myself. The whole week went by mainly at work and during the weekends I was with my family.

I was away very often. Sometimes in Athens and sometime abroad. And when I was here I went visiting clients every morning for two or three hours. I took a lot of trips to France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Finland, Holland, and Poland, where I've been a couple of times. Those were trips that lasted four to five days, not longer. At the time hospitality was much more developed. Later it was reduced, mainly after 1985, because businesses tried generally to cut down expenses, and mainly hospitality expenses. Before that foreign businesses were very generous. They often paid for the hotel and entertained us not only during the day but they also invited us out at night.

Sometimes my wife came too. Everything was very pleasant. To see a foreign city is always interesting. Paris, Amsterdam, Reims, where I went many times with my wife. Hospitality was cordial because we had very close and pleasant professional ties. On all these trips there were not any Jewish monuments I would go visit. I never went to see a concentration camp in Poland. I didn't want to. The rest, museums, monuments and other similar things I did visit when I had the time.

I never hid my origin when I was introduced to people. Besides, they asked your name, where you came from etc. I told them straight out we were refugees from Spain, something like that. Naturally, I also said I was Greek. They knew of Greece and they asked various things connected to whatever they had learned at high school.

Germany and France had the history of Greece in their main curriculum, and this certainly interested them. I was a Greek and a Jew, both. I didn't make a special effort to approach factories that were Jewish owned. Sometimes one doesn't even know that. For instance, once I acquired a representation of a company in London named Barkley's. Later, when I asked to meet the director I met someone called Shatz, who was a Polish Jew.

Rosy never worked after we got married. We had three children. The first, Tony, was born two years after we got married, in 1959. Tony is a derivative of Sinto [Sinto in Judeo Spanish stands for the Hebrew name Shem Tov]. It was my mother's idea to change Sinto to Tony. And two years later, in 1961, we had Solita.

I took Tony out for walks and excursions. I liked that. I didn't have much time to deal with the children in the middle of the week. It was more my wife's occupation, my mother-in-law's and my own mother's too. And in the first years we always had some help when the children were born. She would help with the housework or keep the children when we were out. She also stayed with the children at night, because she slept in the house. But on the weekends and during vacations, it was my duty to take care of my family.

We wanted more children, but it didn't happen. We had a third child, but much later. And he died when he was five years old.

Our life changed very much after the children were born. We didn't go out less because we always had someone to help and this allowed us to go out at night. At a certain time we went out every night. We went to the movies, to restaurants, music halls. Always with other company. There was this one couple that we met with very often. Our friend was called Vassilis Zoras and he was married to a classmate of Rosy's; they were Christians too.

There was no chance I would go out alone without Rosy, or with my own company. We were always together. Neither did I play cards. Those that went out alone were those who played cards, bridge or backgammon. I didn't have such hobbies. Neither did I go to football games. Often we went out with my father-in-law and my mother-in-law and the children.

With the children we didn't speak Judeo-Spanish, but often they followed the conversation. Both of them understand it. We spoke with them in Greek, never in French. My mother spoke Greek.

The children started going to summer camps. During the first years it was the Makedonika school summer camp in Chalkidiki. Afterwards, Solita went to the YMCA summer camp in Agios Nikolaos [a spot on the Chalkidiki peninsula], and Tony mostly went to the school's summer camp in Chalkidiki.

After 1972 we decided to go have a vacation in Chalkidiki and chose to go to a Xenia hotel [the first, state-run chain of hotels in Greece], in Paliouri, where we stayed for one month or 40 days. Until then we didn't go on vacation. We spent the whole summer in Thessaloniki, and kept the shop open. During this time also Rosy stayed in Thessaloniki. Where could we go when the children were so young? We didn't have a house in Chalkidiki, nor anywhere else and there were no hotels. The Xenia at Paliouri was the first hotel one could go to.

The beach was very nice at Xenia and we had very good company. But we stopped going after a while because the others stopped going too. These were Christian couples. Rosy I and the children liked the sea very much, but there were no hotels where one could go anytime one wished. Say, one wanted to go to Palini [Palini Beach Hotel, one of the biggest and most important hotels in Chalkidiki] on 15th July, there were no rooms available. And I personally don't like hotels very much.

In Xenia it was different when we were young, it was more pleasant. But over the years one expects more things and we chose to have our own house. We've had this house since the beginning of 1970, in Flegra, in Chalkidiki. It is more practical to have one's own house and go whenever one wishes. At the time I worked very much and could stay no longer than 15 or 20 days in a row. And we preferred to go on weekends, which is difficult to do in hotels. We found the house because many friends we had made in Paliouri had also bought houses there.

I acquired a radio between 1948 and 1950. I had learned to drive a car in the army, but didn't get one afterwards. I bought one a couple of years after I got married. I had three beetles [Volkswagen Beetle]. They were inexpensive and practical. It didn't accelerate easily when it was uphill, especially when we were four or five and sometimes six people in the car, the latter when the maid came along as well. My friends and I had no problem in buying German goods. I have friends who bought exclusively goods from Germany. For instance, I have a friend who brought all his products, 100 percent, from Germany.

We didn't think there were any elements of the Jewish tradition we had to transmit to the children as they grew up. Of course when my in-laws were still alive they had friends who were much more religious than us. And they often organized dinners twice or thrice a year with 10-15 people, where all traditions were strictly kept. So the children learned about Jewish tradition.

We didn't discuss the children's upbringing with my mother or my in-laws with regards to Jewish religion or the Sephardic heritage. Maybe there were discussions, but not intentionally so. We did what we had to do, and didn't abolish anything. We didn't have a reason to disagree because we did what we had to do. My in-laws or my mother didn't insist we ought to do something more or something less. My father-in-law kept the traditions and we, out of respect to them and to our religion, our nation, also kept them.

Tony was taught Hebrew by the rabbi for his bar mitzvah. I don't recall for how long, two or three years. Surely the Hebrew one learns for his bar mitzvah is limited. One is taught only to read some part of the Bible [Old Testament]. The bar mitzvah is a ceremony where one invites the family, relatives and friends, some Christians too. These ceremonies always take place in the Monastir synagogue 22. But Tony didn't have a bar mitzvah because the little kid was ill.

Solita had a bat mitzvah, but this is not like a bar mitzvah. Three to four girls of the same age celebrate it together in the synagogue. They wear a long white dress. The bar mitzvah is a religious celebration where the young man reads a part of the Torah, while the girls don't read. The Jewish religion doesn't integrate the female aspect. For instance, for a prayer ten males are needed. Women just listen. B'not mitzvah took place before the war too.

If I recall well, Tony went to 'Makedonika Ekpedeutiria' elementary school [the most important private elementary school in post-war Thessaloniki, where many Jews sent their children] and after that he went to Anatolia College 23. Some Jewish children went to this college because it was and still is the most expensive school. And because my wife graduated from this school we thought it would be the proper school for our children too.

In the American school there were of course many Jewish students, boys and girls, and it was common that they should be exempted form the course of Religion. This was also the case in 'Makedonika,' and there were many Jewish children that went there too. On the Jewish holidays the children would have permission of absence. This too is commonly accepted, the Americans know it well. And so they did in 'Makedonika,' they too knew it and applied it. I never dealt with these details myself; it was my wife's duty. But I do not remember us facing any problems.

In school, Tony and Solita were very good students. Tony was good. Solita had some problems in the beginning. Later she learned to concentrate seriously. She was good, very good. But Solita was a bit of a revolutionary, and my wife had to face trouble a couple of times.

All these years I didn't participate in housework. There were no things I undertook such as cooking myself, for example. I had so much work at the office, that there was no time left.

After college, Tony went to university in Israel. The choice was in part his and ours as well. We thought it was preferable he would go to Israel where we had relatives instead of going to Paris or London. In Paris or London we had nobody. He first went to Tel Aviv where my father-in-law's sisters lived, and three to four years later he went to Jerusalem. This is where he graduated. He

studied Sociology and stayed for seven years in Israel without doing any post graduate course. He learned Hebrew very well and knew it in the first two years.

In Israel, where there are many foreign, French and American, students, courses are in English during the first years. It was a very good experience for Tony. Life was carefree, very nice. After that he came back, went to the army and came straight to my office. And after my retirement he took the office up on his own.

Solita also went to 'Makedonika' school and afterwards to the American College. Then she took her university entry exams and was accepted in the School of Law. She worked for a year after she acquired her degree and did a post graduate course in the London School of Economics. She came back, worked for another year and left again to get another degree and to work for a while for a barrister in London. Then she came back and got a job here.

I remember the graduation ceremonies at Anatolia College with some, not much, emotion. There was a stage. Tony wore a red shirt. When he graduated from the university in Jerusalem we didn't go to the ceremony, but we visited him a couple of times during the time he was studying. When Solita graduated here we went, but not in London.

Tony is married to a Christian. He married ten years ago, in 1995, and we have two grandchildren, a boy and a girl. My grandson is called Nikos and my granddaughter Nana. They are ten and nine years old. The fact that Tony fell in love with a Christian was a big problem, because we naturally didn't want him to marry a Christian. In the same way Christians do not wish for their children to marry a Jew or a Muslim. This became an issue that caused a lot of friction and fights.

We hadn't encouraged our children to socialize with other Jewish children, there was no such aim. Besides they had our own example, which was that we socialized equally with Jews and non-Jews, without discriminating. Of course we sent them to the Jewish Club [a club run by the Jewish Community for the youth], but without insisting that they should only socialize with Jews. This never occurred to me, I am not a racist. Solita has fifteen girlfriends that are all Christian.

The community's club was meant to be for younger kids. There is one club for adults too, but I never went there, because all they do is play cards. A place where women used to meet, mostly to play cards. The only thing that has happened on and off recently is that the association 'Greece-Israel' holds a big dinner once a year, where we go. This association aims at the tightening of relations between Jews and Christians. One of the people in charge is Micos' [Alvo] daughter. In the association's gatherings there is usually one who hold a ten-minute speech. He is usually a Christian. We are not members, we are just supporters. We have a lot of friends in this organization and want to contribute and help them.

In Thessaloniki I also participated in the events of the art society 'Techni' ['Art,' the most important literary and artistic society of Thessaloniki during the 1960s and 1970s]. One of its founders was Maurice Saltiel, who was a very good friend and I wanted to support and help him. And I became a regular spectator. I was interested in the events and I fully enjoyed them.

I knew Maurice, we were not related, may be we were distantly related. But after the war he was a very good friend, younger than me. His shop was at the corner of Plateia Emboriou [lit. 'Square of Commerce,' situated in the commercial part of downtown Thessaloniki]. I often went there and we

talked about many things in general, but we also did business together, he was also my client. He sold textiles and I was his sales representative.

Maurice was a fine man. He cared more for art, for the ‘Techni’ art society and its activities, rather than his commercial profession. That is why he gave it up to dedicate himself to ‘Techni.’ But he got deceived, because when Zannas [Alexandros Zannas, offspring of one of the noblest families of Thessaloniki and the founder of ‘Techni’], who liked him a lot, died, the others, who were jealous of him, pushed him aside. And while he had closed his shop with the aim to dedicate himself to art, he ended up being pushed aside.

Maurice worked very much, because it’s simply impossible to create such an association without a lot of work and without method. He was very methodical and very ambitious in this field. He wanted to do things. He didn’t so much care about literature as he did about music. He was a musician himself. He played the violin beautifully since he was a child. I don’t know how he was saved during the war. This we didn’t talk about. His wife is Christian; he married her long after the war.

In the art society ‘Techni’ they never talked about the Jews of Thessaloniki. This was not one of the topics that occupied this society. Its subjects were exclusively artistic. When I first went there I wasn’t married yet. I don’t remember going there with Rosy.

There were no other artistic associations that I went to in Thessaloniki. Only ‘Techni.’ It was an artistic association, but at the same time it was also a milieu of progressive people. Those who were members of its committees were often distinguished personalities, very interesting and liberal. Other Jews followed the activities at the ‘Techni.’ Such were Freddy Assael, and some others, but few. Those were hard times and everybody cared mostly about his bread-winning occupation which wasn’t easy.

I didn’t buy books, because for me libraries were a very easy alternative. I read Greek books, but very few. Less than English or French ones. These latter attracted me more. Besides I read English books by necessity in order to learn better English. And French because I was used to read French literature or art books. For instance, in the British Council [after World War II a branch of the British Council, a cultural organization funded and run by the British state, was established in Thessaloniki], I borrowed many books about archaeology, which I was very interested in, and still am, and I read a lot. And same thing with architecture, I borrowed a lot of books from the British Council on this subject. I didn’t follow Greek literature at all. I didn’t attend any literary soirées.

Archaeology interests me. In Paris, when I was young, eleven or twelve, I thought one weekend of going to the Louvre. And I enjoyed it so much that thereafter I went very often. I went on my own, of course, by subway. I visited the archaeological museum while I lived in Athens during the occupation. And I also went to the Parthenon for at least 30 times. When we went to Istanbul we were taken right and left [to the European and Asian side of Istanbul], and I had heard there was a very good archaeological museum, and I told the driver to let me off near it. I went there on my own. It is a general interest which is confined to Antiquity. I don’t visit churches that much.

Before the war one of the main entertainments for me was to go to the movies. There were very good films, and many movie theaters. I liked American films both before and after the war. They screened more American films in the cinemas than French ones. I saw them all, because those that

were shown were all good films. I enjoyed comedies, as were those of the Marx Brothers [famous pre-war American comedians] and Monsieur Hulot [famous post-war comedies by French director Jacques Tati]. I wasn't a cinephile, but we went often. It was a classic entertainment. We didn't go to clubs or cafeterias. There weren't any as there are today. We didn't go listen to bouzouki either. I don't like the theater, but in Athens I went to musicals. I enjoyed them very much.

I listen to a lot of classical music. In Paris, in the Lycée, I was taught music. They played us a record and then they explained to us. They told us who wrote the piece and what its meaning was. A nice and well-taught course. And this is what had impressed me then. This definitely stimulated me, because at the time I had no idea. When I was in Paris I couldn't go to concerts, alone I couldn't go.

I started listening to music after I bought a stereo and started buying records; this was long after the war. Here in Thessaloniki, I went for many years to concerts of the state orchestra in the festival hall of the university. I went when I liked the program. I went alone, Rosy never went to concerts. In the 'Megaro' concert hall in Athens I have been innumerable times. This hall was founded in 1990 and I started going from the very first month. For a certain time I had a house and a car in Athens, for business reasons. Every 40 days I used to go there and stay for a week. And instead of going to tavernas and other stupid entertainment I chose to go to the 'Megaro' which had very nice programs, in contrast to the ones we get here that are worth nothing.

I especially like Mozart and Bach, and pre-classical music, Vivaldi for instance. I developed this interest for classical music by myself. My mother played the piano before the war, but not after the war. She played before we left for Paris. I remember her very well, she played so and so.

I did vote in the communal elections. After the war there were some parties in the community which differed according to personal interest. In other words, one could have been so many years in the Community, and may have taken advantage of it. Because there were always accusations from one party against the other. So it is time that they go so we can come to power. Simply, I was never interested in this sort of thing. I personally voted for people I know and trust. I prefer the people I know, rather than opportunists and those whom I have no reason to trust.

I watched the activities in the Community from a distance. I didn't care much and wasn't interested. Even though those that came to power were close to us. For instance, one of the first presidents was my uncle Haim Saltiel. Later, a classmate of mine, Dick Benveniste. After him another close friend, Andreas Sephiha, who was a classmate and a friend of my brother, with whom we were very close for years. At one point Mr. Leon Benmayor, who was a friend of my father-in-law, was the president. Various people, who were very close to us, didn't encourage me to become involved myself more actively. They knew I wouldn't accept.

In the Community things were never good, and what can one expect from a Community that will soon disappear. It is of course sad; it is only a reminiscence of the old community's glory and has no future. From 1945 onwards it has been desperate, a remnant of the old community.

Solita participated in the museum management. I do go to the events organized by the museum. I have visited it, and I thought that the two exhibitions that were organized there were very good. A lot of work and preparation. An important success.

I don’t think that my attitude towards the Jewish religion changed after the war. I went to the synagogue only during the high holidays, during Passover and weddings and celebrations. Religion never attracted me very much, simply because I never learned Hebrew. And one feels bad when the others hold books they read, even if supposedly they don’t understand what they read. I did try a couple of times to learn Hebrew by myself, but I didn’t manage. I now go to the synagogue rarely.

My mother died in 1975 and we did the annual Kaddish, but it has been years now we haven’t done it for practical reasons. The yearly Kaddish is a ceremony that can take place either at the synagogue or at home. In the past they used to do it at home, but now not enough people come. There have to be ten men and there aren’t. Now they don’t gather as many even at the synagogue.

However, we mention my mother by name during [Yom] Kippur in the synagogue. During Kippur there is a special ceremony when the rabbis mention the names of the dead. Everyone who ascends the bimah to read a passage from the Torah has with him a list and the rabbi reads it, first the men and then the women. Some fuive to ten names. I don’t go up to the bimah because I don’t know how to read, my son Tony does. And so the rabbi mentions the names of the family’s dead. Tony goes to synagogue during the holidays too, and so does Solita. Solita doesn’t know Hebrew. Tony keeps traditions in a similar way as we do.

We started learning about the Holocaust in 1945, when the survivors started to come back. First came a cousin of mine, Daisy. She told us stories, not too many, but in any case we knew what had happened. What did we know? We knew who survived and who died. They didn’t feel like telling us a lot. It was due to the necessity to survive and that people had to work in order to live. And this is general. It so happened in France and Germany, they tried to forget somehow.

I started reading about the Holocaust around ten years after the war. There were no books during the first years. The first books were written by my friend Mrs. Counio and another friend of mine, Marcel Nadjari, whose manuscript was found much later buried in Auschwitz. A friend and classmate of mine, René Molho, who lives in America, wrote a small book about the history of his family that was killed in the extermination camp. The most important book was of course that of Erica Counio.

These publications didn’t change the way I looked at this period. This is because we knew everything since we had lived through these events. And I didn’t start talking more. Some events that were organized starting at the beginning of 1990, about the history of Greek Jews, I did follow, from morning until night.

I never spoke about the Holocaust to my children because they knew about it and had heard about it from my mother-in-law and my wife. I didn’t want to speak about it on any occasion. There was no reason, there were books. We had many books at home. There wasn’t any encouragement though, and it wasn’t an issue that came up in our discussions.

Shortly after the war there weren’t any celebrations on behalf of the victims of the Holocaust. At a certain point, however, the Community took initiative to build a monument in the cemetery. There were some celebrations, but a lot later, in 1955.

I do go to the ceremonies for the commemoration of the Holocaust. These haven't changed over the time. The only difference is that in the meantime many of the survivors of the camps have died. Because the tradition is to call the survivors, ten or twelve, I don't remember, to light a candle. They become fewer and fewer. These commemorations take place in the synagogue. It's a religious ceremony for the day of remembrance. Psalms, speeches and candle lighting. Once Venizelos [prominent local MP and ex-minister of the Greek socialist party PASOK], and another time Psomiades [the prefect of Thessaloniki] spoke, on other occasions our own people do.

The ceremony at the Concert Hall is something recent and was introduced a year ago. But our own ceremony in the synagogue is something else. It is a different ceremony. And where the anniversary of the creation of the State of Israel 24 is concerned, it is especially celebrated by the 'Greece-Israel' association with a big evening event.

In the past the Jewish presence in Thessaloniki was ignored. Let us take into account that Thessaloniki had a very small population before the war. And as it grew it absorbed a lot of people from villages, and small towns of the inland, who had no idea that there were Jews in Thessaloniki. These people simply didn't have a clue.

However, people in politics or those that were mayors knew. When I heard them speaking about Thessaloniki as the 'bride of the Thermaic Gulf,' or 'the city of Alexander the Great,' Byzantine city etc., I understood that they didn't speak at all for the Jews of Thessaloniki. Silence for a long time. It was done intentionally, and there was ignorance from those who didn't know.

A girl asks you in a federal office, 'What is your name?' - 'Saltiel.' - 'What name is that, what are you? French, from Chile?' - 'No, Jewish,' I say. 'Did you come from Israel?' I say, 'Did you come from Koritsa?' [Editor's note: a city in southern Albania with a significant Greek-speaking population]. This has not changed. Since the Jews are an extinct element, or under extinction, it is natural.

In my daily contacts I don't feel like talking about the Jews of Thessaloniki, and sometimes I even stop such conversations. I have no reason to discuss such issues with people I don't know, and give them a lecture. Since they don't know that once the city was Jewish, let it be.

I never got involved with politics. I didn't want to get involved and I didn't care. And I have an aversion. I did vote, but I have an aversion to politics. There are of course some worthwhile politicians, there is no doubt, but unfortunately the results of the state government are very unpleasant. There never was a perfect government or party. They all make promises and especially so on where Thessaloniki is concerned. We have heard 100 times we will do that or the other and nothing happened. I always thought this way.

This indifference of Athens towards [Greek] Macedonia and especially about the issue of the name brought us to the Macedonian question [the controversy between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the 1990s over the name of the latter]. They let it drift, so after many generations everybody believes that Macedonia is theirs. Nobody made a point at a certain moment for various reasons. On the one hand the indifference of the Centre and the Right, and on the other hand the fanaticism of the Communists who did not want to bring up this issue for fear it would upset Tito 25.

I could tell even before 1990. Those that traveled could see the label ‘Macedonia.’ This bothered me, it was disgraceful. But it was silenced and so it was imposed. When an issue like that is neglected and not discussed, two, three generations later it becomes established. Then it is over and one can no longer react. The others will rightfully wonder where you were all this time and how come you thought of it only now.

I had pinpointed the problem and so I talked about it to people in Athens who were involved in politics. I had for instance a friend who was president of the Chamber of Commerce. He was in a very good position and had to do with ministers on a daily basis etc. I tell him, ‘You have been indifferent for so long, and you thought of it now that it is too late?’

I didn’t go to the demonstration in 1993. [Editor’s note: In 1993 almost one million Greeks demonstrated in Thessaloniki against the use of the name ‘Macedonia’ by the F.Y.R.O.M.]. I was too old at the time. I agree with those that claim that Macedonia is Greek. Alas, how else can it be? Naturally, Thessaloniki was Greek also. But if these same people say Macedonia is Greek and Thessaloniki too, and the Jews never existed, this is something else. This is irrelevant.

I didn’t go to watch whenever national parades such as on 28th October [national holiday celebrating the Greek-Italian war of 1940-1941] took place in Thessaloniki. I did participate in national parades when I was a soldier. I didn’t even go when the children took part in it. It was too much for me to stand there.

I did put up the flag during the celebrations of 28th October and 25th March [the day of the commemoration of the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire in 1821]. I still do put it up because we have some national consciousness. We are Greek subjects, we have a Greek passport. Those that don’t put up the flag consider this as a matter that is self understood. Maybe we have a more developed awareness.

In the past I didn’t despise politics and politicians. I didn’t have a political consciousness before the war. But after the war I had a very developed political awareness. In general, I judged that politicians are not up to their office. They make promises but do nothing. I like Karamanlis 26. Except for Karamanlis’ time there was not, let us say, a general direction. Every minister, every prefect, whoever, did whatever came to his head. There was never a general policy. Everyone did whatever. Simitis 27 was very sympathetic. And Karamanlis, the uncle, did many things I approved of. Papandreou 28 not so much, no. I never trusted him; he was an opportunist, a thief.

After the war, most of the Thessaloniki Jews voted ERE 29. They never moved towards the Center Union Party 30. They still vote for the right.

It didn’t have any connection that I voted for ERE and at the same time followed the ‘Techni’ events. ‘Techni’ wasn’t a political organization. No, it may be that some members of the board were leftwing, but this didn’t mean anything. Maurice wasn’t politically oriented either. We never spoke of politics with Maurice; he did have a position, but never expressed it.

During the 1950s and a little of the 1960s [the post-civil war decades when authoritarianism and anti-communism dominated Greek political life] I never felt I should be careful with what I said. I never made public statements, neither did I do so in the newspaper, but I said what I felt and discussed it with friends and acquaintances.

I remember the assassination of Lambrakis 31 in Thessaloniki. I was here. The climate was terrible. I was not only something that just put me down, but much more. I was not scared by the dictatorship 32. I was not scared by the Germans, would I be scare of the dictatorship? I had no reason to be afraid. I was neither a communist neither did I have any active part anywhere.

I did buy a newspaper, a Thessaloniki paper, not an Athenian one. I bought ‘Macedonia’ 33. For many years. But ‘Macedonia’ is no longer a newspaper I like. I stopped buying it. Ever since it went under, I stopped buying it. For a long time I bought it every day, the janitor brought it to me.

There still are certain Sephardic dishes that we cook. My mother often cooked traditional dishes, but my mother-in-law did so even more. One of my favorite dishes is the lamb my mother-in-law cooked. She also did small cheese pies very well.

After the war and the Holocaust my connection to my Jewish identity changed. I became much more Jewish. What happened with the Holocaust, no doubt influenced the identity of many Jews who before the war thought of their Jewishness as something taken for granted, while after the war there was a change in their mentality.

After the war, I didn’t notice any change in the way that Christians treated me. We had not faced a problem from that point of view. Neither did I face a problem because of my identity card where my religion was registered as Jewish. I didn’t speak a lot with my Christian friends about the Holocaust, or about the Jews of Thessaloniki. In the first years we didn’t even talk about the State of Israel.

When the State of Israel was created we were all very happy. It was a very pleasant development. In other words, let me say that the state of mind of the Jews changed completely. They finally had their own state. This I felt too, but not especially in connection to Zionism. I never contributed in any way to the State of Israel.

We have been to Israel a few times. These trips are like a pilgrimage. We went for general purposes. First to see Tony who was there. Afterwards we went a couple of times to see Rosy’s relatives, and some friends of my own who live there. The first time it was an extraordinary feeling. A very well-organized state, very laborious and very developed. And the museum in Jerusalem. The Jewish Museum. In the first years these people worked like crazy to build roads, houses, the kibbutzim, extraordinary agricultural cultivations. A great development. This made me feel very proud as a Jew. I felt differently as a Jew.

There are some places of reference that every Jew who visits Israel has to see. The Wailing Wall, the Jewish Museum in Jerusalem, is of course very important, Yad Vashem 34. In addition there is a very beautiful museum in Jerusalem, the museum Beth Hatefusoth, which is near the house of our friends, the Florentin family.

I didn’t relate to the Wailing Wall as if it was an archaeological site. I was extremely moved because it is a site of pilgrimage. There is no doubt that when one is there one feels the religious atmosphere. I have never placed a wishing note.

We also went to the Holy Places, and to the Muslim temples. I visited them some time ago when it wasn’t restricted. And I did this even though Rosy’s relatives told me not to go. I went because I wanted to see them.

Most of the people we met there were not the most fervent Jews, and they were not religious. I'm pointing this out because one also meets a small minority of 5-6 percent who are extremely religious. In other words, these are those that for the most part do not work and are dressed differently, as they used to dress in Poland when they lived in their ghettos. Our people there, however, that is Rosy's relatives and my cousin, are liberal and normal.

The Lebanon war 35 in 1982 was something that made a great impression on me. I was against it but of course we don't have the right to state our opinion on such things. They know better than us, but in general I didn't approve of it. And at that time they had an excuse, but since then they overdid it. These are issues we don't discuss with our relatives or friends in Israel. Not even with Hector and Nina. When we are together we speak of other things. We don't go into details. We discuss them among us.

In the Lebanon war in 1982, the Christians didn't change their position towards us. No one dared tell me anything. I don't give anyone the excuse to speak to me. My friends and acquaintances know that I am not among these people that will listen to anything. There were of course some comments that bothered me, but I didn't pay much attention.

I retired around 1991-1992. My life hasn't change at all since then. One changes, however, over the years. In the past, I used to spend ten hours at the office. Slowly-slowly I reduced the office hours, especially since my son took over the business. Right after I retired, I worked regularly. But it has been some years now that I no longer spend so many hours there. The time has passed and I get a bit tired. For the last five or six years or so I have not been going out in the evenings any longer. We have a lot of friends, but they also grew older and don't go out as much any longer.

Glossary:

1 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.

2 Mission Laique Française

French Mission School, founded in 1905 in Salonica. Many Jews studied there in the interwar period.

3 Sephardi Jewry

(Hebrew for 'Spanish') Jews of Spanish and Portuguese origin. Their ancestors settled down in North Africa, the Ottoman Empire, South America, Italy and the Netherlands after they had been driven out from the Iberian peninsula at the end of the 15th century. About 250,000 Jews left Spain and Portugal on this occasion. A distant group among Sephardi refugees were the Crypto-Jews (Marranos), who converted to Christianity under the pressure of the Inquisition but at the first occasion reassumed their Jewish identity. Sephardi preserved their community identity; they speak Ladino language in their communities up until today. The Jewish nation is formed by two main groups: the Ashkenazi and the Sephardi group which differ in habits, liturgy their relation toward Kabala, pronunciation as well in their philosophy.

4 Maccabi World Union

International Jewish sports organization whose origins go back to the end of the 19th century. A growing number of young Eastern European Jews involved in Zionism felt that one essential prerequisite of the establishment of a national home in Palestine was the improvement of the physical condition and training of ghetto youth. In order to achieve this, gymnastics clubs were founded in many Eastern and Central European countries, which later came to be called Maccabi. The movement soon spread to more countries in Europe and to Palestine. The World Maccabi Union was formed in 1921. In less than two decades its membership was estimated at 200,000 with branches located in most countries of Europe and in Palestine, Australia, South America, South Africa, etc.

5 Campbell Fire (Pogrom on 29th June 1931)

Responsible for the arson of the poor neighborhood Campbell was the Ethniki Enosis Ellas - National Union Greece, short: EEE also known as the 3E or the 'Iron Helmets.' This organization was the backbone of fascism in Greece in the period between the two World Wars. It was established in Thessaloniki in 1927. The most important element of the 3E political voice was anti-Semitism, an expression mostly of the Christian traders of the city in order to displace the Jewish competitors. President of the organization was a merchant, Mr. G. Cormides, there was also a secretary, a banker, D. Haritopoulos, and chief spokesman Nikos Fardis, editor-in-chief of the newspaper Makedonia. The occasion for the outbreak of anti-Semitism in Thessaloniki was the inauguration of the new Maccabi Hall in June 1931. In a principal article signed by Nikos Fardis, from Saturday, 20th June 1931, it was said that Maccabi of Thessaloniki had placed itself in favor of an Autonomous Greek Macedonia. The journalist "revealed" the conspiracy of Jews, Bulgarians, Communists and Catholics against Macedonia. Two days later, the Ministry of the Interior confirmed the newspaper's allegations despite the strict denial of the Maccabi representatives. All the anti-Semitic and fascist organizations were aroused. This marked the beginning of the riots that resulted in the pogrom of

Campbell. Elefterios Venizelos was again involved after the 1917 fire, speaking at the parliament as Prime Minister, and talked with emphasis about the law-abiding stance of the Jewish population, but simultaneously permitted the prosecution of Maccabi for treason against the state. Let alone the fact that the newspaper Makedonia with the inflaming anti-Semitic publications was clearly pro-Venizelian. At the trial, held in Veroia ten months later, Fardis and the leaders of EEE were found not guilty while three refugees were found guilty, but with mitigating circumstances and therefore were freed on the spot. It is worth noting that at the 1933 general election, the Jews of Thessaloniki, in one block voted against Venizelos. [Source: Bernard Pierron, 'Juifs et chrétiens de la Grèce moderne,' Harmattan, Paris 1996, pp. 179-198]

6 Metaxas dictatorship

The elections of 1936 produced a deadlock between the two main bourgeois parties, the Liberals and the Populists. The political situation was further polarized by the gains made by the Communist Party of Greece (KKE). Disliking the Communists and fearing a coup, King George II appointed Ioannis Metaxas (1871-1941), then minister of war, to be interim prime minister. Widespread industrial unrest in May allowed Metaxas to declare a state of emergency. He suspended the parliament indefinitely and annulled various articles of the constitution. By 4th August 1936, Metaxas was effectively dictator. Patterning his regime on other authoritarian European governments (most notably Mussolini’s fascist regime), Metaxas banned political parties, arrested his opponents, criminalized strikes and introduced widespread censorship of the media. But he did not have great popular support or a strong ideology. The Metaxas government sought to pacify the working classes by raising wages, regulating hours and trying to improve working conditions. For rural areas agricultural prices were raised and farm debts were taken on by the government. Despite these efforts the Greek people generally moved towards the political left, but without actively opposing Metaxas.

7 EON

National Youth Organization, founded by the Metaxas regime on the model of the Italian youth fascist organizations.

8 Greek-Albanian War/Greek-Italian War (1940-1941)

Greece was drawn into WWII when Italian troops crossed the borders of Albania and violated Greek territory on 28th October 1940. The Italian attack of Greece seemed obvious, despite the stated disagreement of Hitler and the efforts of Ioannis Metaxas, who was trying to trying to keep the country in a neutral stance. Following a series of warning signs, culminating in the sinking of Battleship 'Elli' on 15th August 1940, by Italian torpedoes, and all of these failing to provoke the Greek government to react, the Italian Ultimatum was delivered on 28th October 1940, and it demanded the free passage of the Italian army through Greek soil, as well as sole control of a series of strategic points of the country. The rejection of the ultimatum by Metaxas was in line with the public opinion in Greece and led to the immediate declaration of war by Italy against Greece. This war took place mostly in the mountains of Hepeirous. In the Greek-Albanian War approximately 12.500 Greek Jews took part and 513 Greek Jews died fighting. The Greek counter-offensive pushed the Italians deep into Albania and the Greek army maintained the initiative throughout the winter capturing the southern Albanian towns of Corce, Aghioi Saranda, and

Girocaster. [Source: Thanos Veremis, Mark Dragoumis, 'Historical Dictionary of Greece' (London 1995)]

9 Rabbi Koretz

Tzevi Koretz, the last chief rabbi of the Jewish community of Salonica (1943-1943). Koretz, an Ashkenazi Jew, is engraved in the historical memory of the survivors of Salonican Jewry and, by extension, in the collective Jewish memory, as a foreign traitor who collaborated with the Nazis in order to save himself and his family [Source: Minna Rozen, “Jews and Greeks Remember Their Past: The Political Career of Tzevi Koretz (1933–43),” Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society n.s. 12/1 (Fall 2005), pp. 111–166]

10 Eleutherias Square

On 11th July 1942, following the order of the German Authority published by the local press, 6000-10.000 (depending on different estimations) male Jews aged from 18-45 were gathered in Eleutherias Square, in the commercial center of Thessaloniki. The aim was to enlist/mobilize them to forced labor works. Under the hot sun the armed soldiers forced them to remain standing for hours and imposed on them humiliating gymnastic exercises. The Wehrmacht army staff was taking photographs of the scene, while the Greek citizens were watching from their balconies. [Source: Marc Mazower, 'Inside Hitler's Greece' (Yale 1993)]

11 Forced labor in Greece

In July 1942 all male Jews aged 18 to 45, were registered and dispatched to work sites on the outskirts of Salonica and to the nearby towns of Veria and Katerini where they were used as laborers. The work sites were organized along military lines, each headed by a commander who was a former officer of the Greek army, under the supervision of Greek engineers and German military personnel. Malnutrition, physical abuse and deplorable living condition led to illnesses, epidemics and deaths. After lengthy negotiations, in October 1942, the Nazi authorities and the Jewish Coordinating Committee decided for the buy-out of Jews drafted into Nazi forced labor. The Jewish Community of Thessaloniki would have to pay 2 billion drachmas. [Source: Rena Molho, 'Salonica and Istanbul: Social, Political and Cultural Aspects of Jewish Life' (The Isis Press, Istanbul, 2005), p. 63]

12 Baron Hirsch camp

One of the poorest Jewish working class neighborhoods near the old railway station in Salonica. During the German occupation it was turned into a ghetto, the so-called Baron Hirsch Camp, where the Nazis assembled the Jews before they deported them.

13 Salonica Ghettos

The two ghettos in Salonica were established by the Germans on Fleming and Syngrou Streets, in the east and the west of the city respectively. These were formerly neighborhoods with a dense, yet not exclusively Jewish population. There was no ghetto in the city before it was occupied by the Germans. (Source: Mark Mazower, Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44,

New Haven and London).

14 Surrender of Badoglio

Pietro Badoglio (1871–1956), Italian general and Prime Minister. When Mussolini was deposed in 1943, Badoglio was chosen to head the new non-fascist government. He made peace with the advancing Allies, declared war against Germany, but resigned soon afterwards (Source: «Badoglio, Pietro». A Dictionary of World History. Oxford University Press, 2000. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. 30 August 2007. http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t48.e314).

15 EAM (National Liberation Front - Ethniko Apeleutherotiko Metwpo)

Founded at the end of 1942. It was the combating section of the left-wing Resistance. (Source: J. Hondros, Occupation and Resistance: the Greek Agony, New York, 1983).

16 Evert, Angelos

Athens' police chief during 1943, ordered false identification cards to be issued to all Jews requesting them. (Source: http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/greece/nonflash/eng/athens.htm)

17 Dekemvriana (lit

"December events"): The term "December events" is used to describe a series of armed clashes that took place in Athens in December 1944 and January 1945, between the forces of the (communist) left and the forces that belonged to the rest of the political currents from socialist democracy (like the Prime Minister George Papandreou, leader of the "Democratic Socialistic Party") to the extreme right. The British were involved in the fight. The clashes ended with the defeat of the leftist forces. The events of December 1944 in Athens are regarded as the first act of the Greek Civil War that ended in 1949 with the defeat of K.K.E., the Communist Party. (Source: Wikipedia).

18 Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee)

The Joint was formed in 1914 with the fusion of three American Jewish committees of assistance, which were alarmed by the suffering of Jews during World War I. In late 1944, the Joint entered Europe's liberated areas and organized a massive relief operation. It provided food for Jewish survivors all over Europe, it supplied clothing, books and school supplies for children. It supported cultural amenities and brought religious supplies for the Jewish communities. The Joint also operated DP camps, in which it organized retraining programs to help people learn trades that would enable them to earn a living, while its cultural and religious activities helped re-establish Jewish life. The Joint was also closely involved in helping Jews to emigrate from Europe and from Muslim countries. The Joint was expelled from East Central Europe for decades during the Cold War and it has only come back to many of these countries after the fall of communism. Today the Joint provides social welfare programs for elderly Holocaust survivors and encourages Jewish renewal and communal development.

19 Greek Civil War (1946-1949)

Also known as Kinima or Movement, fought from 1946 to 1949 by the Governmental forces, receiving logistical support by the United Kingdom at first and later by the United States, and the Democratic Army of Greece, the military branch of the Greek Communist Party (KKE), was the result of a highly polarized struggle between leftists and rightists which started from 1943 and targeted the power vacuum that the German occupation during World War II had created. One of the first conflicts of the Cold War, according to some analysts it represents the first example of a post-war Western interference in the internal politics of a foreign country, and it marked the first serious test of the Churchill-Stalin percentages agreement. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_Civil_War)

20 WIZO in Greece

Women's International Zionist Organization, founded in London in 1920 with humanitarian purposes aiming at supporting Jewish women all over the world in the field of education, economics, science and culture. A network of health, social and educational institutions was created in Palestine between 1921 and 1933, along with numerous local groups worldwide. After WWII its office was moved to Tel Aviv. WIZO became an advisory organ to the UN after WWII (similar to UNICEF or ECOSOC). Today it operates on a voluntary basis, as a party-neutral, non-profit organization, with about 250,000 members in 50 countries (2003). The history of WIZO in Greece began in 1934 with a small group of women, which was inactive throughout WWII. In 1945 WIZO was again active in Greece because of the efforts of its first president, Victorine Kamhi, who eventually moved to Israel. After her retirement she was named an Honorary Member of WIZO. (Information for this entry culled from http://www.movinghere.org.uk/stories/story221/story221.htm? identifier= stories/story221/story221.htm&ProjectNo=14 and other sources).

21 Keren Kayemet Leisrael (K

K.L.): Jewish National Fund (JNF) founded in 1901 at the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel. From its inception, the JNF was charged with the task of fundraising in Jewish communities for the purpose of purchasing land in the Land of Israel to create a homeland for the Jewish people. After 1948 the fund was used to improve and afforest the territories gained. Every Jewish family that wished to help the cause had a JNF money box, called the 'blue box.' They threw in at least one lei each day, while on Sabbath and high holidays they threw in as many lei as candles they lit for that holiday. This is how they partly used to collect the necessary funds. Now these boxes are known worldwide as a symbol of Zionism.

22 Monastir Synagogue (Monastirioton in Greek)

Founded in 1923, inaugurated in 1927 by the Aruesti family who during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), along with other Jewish families of Monastir (today Bitola), sought shelter in the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki and settled in the city. This synagogue survived the destructions during World War II because it was used as the headquarters of the Red Cross.

23 American College (or Anatolia College)
School founded by American missionaries in Merzifon of Asia Minor, in 1886. In 1924, after the invitation of Eleutherios Venizelos, it was transferred to Thessaloniki. During the interwar period it had many Jewish students.

24 Creation of the State of Israel
From 1917 Palestine was a British mandate. Also in 1917 the Balfour Declaration was published, which supported the idea of the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Throughout the interwar period, Jews were migrating to Palestine, which caused the conflict with the local Arabs to escalate. On the other hand, British restrictions on immigration sparked increasing opposition to the mandate powers. Immediately after World War II there were increasing numbers of terrorist attacks designed to force Britain to recognize the right of the Jews to their own state. These aspirations provoked the hostile reaction of the Palestinian Arabs and the Arab states. In February 1947 the British foreign minister Ernest Bevin ceded the Palestinian mandate to the UN, which took the decision to divide Palestine into a Jewish section and an Arab section and to create an independent Jewish state. On 14th May 1948 David Ben Gurion proclaimed the creation of the State of Israel. It was recognized immediately by the US and the USSR. On the following day the armies of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon attacked Israel, starting a war that continued, with intermissions, until the beginning of 1949 and ended in a truce.

25 Tito, Josip Broz (1892-1980)
President of communist Yugoslavia from 1953 until his death. He organized the Yugoslav Communist Party in 1937 and became the leader of the Yugoslav partisan movement after 1941. He liberated most of Yugoslavia with his partisans, including Belgrade, made territorial gains (Fiume and the previously Italian Istria). In March 1945 he became the head of the new federal Yugoslav government. He nationalized industry but did not enforce the Soviet-style collective farming system. On the political plane, he oppressed and executed his political opposition. Although Yugoslavia was closely associated with the USSR, Tito often pursued independent policies. He accepted western loans to stabilize national economy, and gradually relaxed many of the regime's strict controls. As a result, Yugoslavia became the most liberal communist country in Europe. After Tito's death in 1980 ethnic tensions resurfaced, bringing about the brutal breakup of the federal state in the 1990s.

26 Karamanlis, Konstantinos (1907-1988)
Prime Minister, President of Greece, and one of the most influential figures in post-war Greek politics. In 1955 Karamanlis founded Etniki Rizospastiki Enossis (ERE, National Radical Union), a right-wing and staunchly anti-communist party that won the elections of 1956, 1958 and 1961 and led the post-war reconstruction of Greece. Karamanlis' long term as head of government rallied against him in 1963, an assortment of political opponents under Georgios Papandreou. The assassination of a left-wing deputy, Grigoris Lambrakis in Thessaloniki in 1963 by extreme right-wingers contributed to his electoral defeat in 1963. [Source: Thanos Veremis, Mark Dragoumis, Historical Dictionary of Greece (London: Hurst, 1995)]

27 Simitis, Konstantinos (b
1936): successor of Andreas Papandreou as president of PASOK and Prime Minister of Greece. Simitis drew PASOK towards the political center and made it appealing to the liberal voters. Under Simitis, PASOK won the general elections of 1996 and 2000 [Source: Thanos Veremis, Mark Dragoumis, Historical Dictionary of Greece (London: Hurst, 1995)].

28 Papandreou, Andreas (1919-1996)
son of Georgios Papandreou. A charismatic politician, Papandreou founded PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) in 1974 and remained its undisputed leader until his death in 1996. National independence, popular sovereignty, and social liberation constituted the main points of PASOK's ideology which has been described as leftist populist, combining national pride with faith in the general will. In practical terms, PASOK drew the bulk of its constituency from among those who felt that they had missed out on the development bonanza of the late 1960s and the 1970s. Under Papandreou, PASOK won the elections of 1981, 1985 and 1993 [Source: Thanos Veremis, Mark Dragoumis, Historical Dictionary of Greece (London: Hurst, 1995)].

29 ERE
Etniki Rizospastiki Enossis (National Radical Union). It was founded (in 1955) and led by Konstantinos Karamanlis, one of the most influential figures in post-war Greek politics. A right-wing and staunchly anti-communist party, it won the elections of 1956, 1958 and 1961 and led the post-war reconstruction of Greece. Karamanlis's long term as head of government rallied against him in 1963, an assortment of political opponents under Georgios Papandreou. The assassination of a left-wing deputy, Grigoris Lambrakis in Thessaloniki in 1963 by extreme right-wingers contributed to his electoral defeat in 1963 [Source: Thanos Veremis, Mark Dragoumis, Historical Dictionary of Greece (London: Hurst, 1995)].

30 Center Union Party
Moderate party founded by Georgios Papandreou (1888-1968) in 1963. Although Papandreou's main task was to defeat Konstantinos Karamanlis's ruling party in 1963, he was associated with efforts to liberalize the state and became the object of devotion for an assortment of followers. He resigned from his position as Prime Minister after clashing with King Constantine II in 1965. The Colonels' coup of 21st April 1967 was partly motivated by the likelihood that Papandreou would have won the impending elections. [Source: Thanos Veremis, Mark Dragoumis, Historical Dictionary of Greece (London: Hurst, 1995)]

31 Lambrakis, Grigoris (1912-1963)

Left-wing deputy, assassinated in Thessaloniki in 1963 by extreme right-wingers. The assassination of Lambrakis created uproar and contributed to the electoral defeat of Karamanlis in 1963 [Source: Thanos Veremis, Mark Dragoumis, *Historical Dictionary of Greece* (London: Hurst 1995)].

32 Colonels' coup and regime (1967-1974)

Led by Colonel Georgios Papadopoulos, army units overthrew the parliamentary government on 21st April 1967. The Colonels' coup was partly motivated by the likelihood that Georgios Papandreou's moderate Center Union Party would have won the impending elections. It established a seven-year long harsh military dictatorship that ended in July 1974.

33 Macedonia

Daily newspaper in Thessaloniki written in Greek and published since 1911. Before the war it supported the liberal Party and was strongly distinctive for its anti-Jewish article writing and journalism.

34 Yad Vashem

This museum, founded in 1953 in Jerusalem, honors both Holocaust martyrs and 'the Righteous Among the Nations', non-Jewish rescuers who have been recognized for their 'compassion, courage and morality'.

35 1982 Lebanon War

Also known as the 1982 Invasion of Lebanon, and dubbed Operation Peace for Galilee (Shlom HaGalil in Hebrew) by Israel, began 6th June, 1982, when the Israel Defense Forces invaded southern Lebanon in response to the Abu Nidal organization's assassination attempt against Israel's ambassador to the United Kingdom, Shlomo Argov, but mainly to halt Katyusha rocket attacks on Israeli population in the northern Galilee region launched from Southern Lebanon. After attacking Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Syrian and Muslim Lebanese forces, Israel occupied southern Lebanon. Surrounded in West Beirut and subject to heavy bombardment, the PLO and the Syrian forces negotiated passage from Lebanon with the aid of international peacekeepers.