

Mico Alvo

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Thessaloniki

Greece

Interviewer: Paris Papamichos-Chronakis

Date of interview: October 2005-March 2006

Mico Alvo is an extremely lively 84-year-old man. He and his wife Mari live in a beautiful house in Panorama, Thessaloniki. Mico is not very tall; he has blue eyes and is always ready to enjoy good company.

In the past fifty years he has run one of the longest and most successful hardware and sanitary article businesses in Thessaloniki. Having retired in the early 1990s he is now busier than ever.

A member of two Jewish foundations, he commutes every day to Thessaloniki, while in the evenings he often goes out to watch a movie in the cinema or see a concert.

Mico is fluent in three languages: Judeo-Spanish, French and Greek. Such is his linguistic ease that he would often speak to me in Greek, to Mari in French and reply to his friend calling from Barcelona in Spanish!

A man of many worlds, Mico seems to perfectly combine a strong sense of Greekness with a pride for his Sephardic Jewishness. In this sense he is a true Jewish Salonican of the 20th century.



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• Family background

My surname is Alvo and my first name is Haim. From Haimico it became Mico, and I use only Mico, even though it says Haim on my ID card. I was born on 28th June 1922, in Thessaloniki, which is where my parents and all my other ancestors were born, too. My family must have originated from Portugal. I know that because the name Alvo is widely used in Portugal.

Usually in Sephardic families the first child that is born would be named after the paternal grandfather and the second one would be given the name on the maternal grandfather. I got named after Haim Alvo, while my brother was named Danny after Daniel Saltiel.

The same procedure applied to the girls. In case the first child was a boy and the second one a girl, then the second one would take the name of the maternal grandmother. Each side of the family had the right of one name of the first born children.

My paternal grandfather was called Haim Alvo. I don't remember when he was born. I think he died when he was seventy years old, in 1937 or 1938. He went to both a Turkish and a Greek school, and the religious school where rabbis used to teach. It was called Talmud Torah. He spoke Turkish fluently.

My grandmother on my father's side was called Rachel and she died during the occupation. I think it was in 1942. I think that her paternal surname was Barzilay or Menache. My father, Simon Alvo, was born in 1889. His older brother, Joseph Alvo, was born in 1887. So, if my grandmother was seventeen years old when she first gave birth then she must have been born around 1870. She must have been the same age as her husband.

I think that in Rachel's family there must have been rabbis as well. They were not well known rabbis, but the ones from the smaller synagogues. Her family was middle class, or lower middle class, just like Grandfather's. What I mean is that they would have enough money to make a living, but that was it.

My grandmother was completely illiterate but had a practical mind. She had a great impact as the head of the family. In Jewish families the women were really the mater familias. They would run the place. Rachel knew a few Turkish words and Ladino [1](#). That was it. She later learned Greek because she had maids that were Greek. And she picked it up from her maids. Rachel started having a maid when she got too many children.

Grandmother got married very young, when she was around 13-14 years old, and she immediately had children. My grandfather used to tell me, one day his parents told him, 'You know, today you are not going to school.' 'Why?' 'We are getting you married today.' That's how it used to happen with weddings, the parents would arrange them. And the funny thing is that most of these marriages were successful. There were no divorces then, it was very rare to hear about a divorce.

Rachel's first son was Joseph. The second was my father Simon. I think that there must have been another one in the middle that didn't survive. Then they had a daughter, Olga, then it was Daniel, followed by another daughter, Rebecca, and the last one was Solomon. Olga was born two or three years after Simon. Daniel was born later on because again there was another one in-between that didn't survive. I know that the youngest one, Solomon, was born in 1901.

My grandparents Haim and Rachel were regarded as lower middle rather than proper middle class. They had some relationships with some Christians. All the residents of old Thessaloniki used to have good relationships with Armenians and Christians but not quite such good ones with the Turks.

My grandfather Haim Alvo started from scratch. He had a cart in Fraggon Street [one of the oldest commercial streets in Thessaloniki] and he used to sell various tools like screwdrivers, pliers,

hammers. All kinds of iron tools. He continued working at my father's shop after 1913.

He used to come to the shop until about 1938. He would go around the shop and watch what the employees were doing. Whenever he would see someone lazing about, he would pat his back and ask him, 'What time should I wake you up?'

We had customers who used to come from Thrace, Turks. They usually sat cross-legged. I remember Grandfather with one of them, his name was Halil and he was from Komotini [city in the region of Thrace, 270 km east of Thessaloniki]. They both wouldn't sit on chairs, but on the counter, and they would order coffee and tell stories.

My father was in the office. He was occupied with the sales mostly, and less with the customers. His older brother would deal with the customers and, later on, when his other two siblings joined them, they were at first like employees with shares on the earnings.

Simon and Haim didn't intrude in each others affairs in the business. Haim wasn't involved with my father's part of the job. He would simply watch. He would watch, he would meet a couple of customers, when he would come down they would chat, but that was it. They loved him at the shop.

They used to call him 'tio' - uncle in Spanish. Tio Haim, tio Haim. This is how the employees would call elder men: Tio. Not only the employees would call him Tio, but also some customers and generally other people he knew.

Haim, like many others, didn't even know what entertainment meant. He didn't go to the 'kafenio' [café]. Maybe he would play a game of cards or backgammon. Backgammon had its glorious days then. My grandfather had six children. How could they bring them all up? There wasn't any time left for fun.

They would open the shop at 7 in the morning and shut it at 9 o'clock at night. They would work non-stop, except on Saturdays. But they also worked on Sundays. They didn't have enough time. The family would get together only on holidays.

My grandfather Haim had some good friends, but I didn't know them. I never met them because they weren't coming around to our place.

Grandfather was a short, slim man, had a beard and thin hair. He was sickly. I think he had pneumonia a couple of times. At that time things were really difficult with regards to medicine. They didn't have antibiotics like we do today.

And I remember my mother or one of her daughters-in-law would go help because Grandmother couldn't manage on her own. But even while being sick, he would still go to the shop. Until 1937-1938 he used to go regularly. After that he stopped and stayed home. He would only come around every now and then for a visit.

He was a very pleasant man. He had a good sense of humor. He had the same kind of humor as Uncle David. He enjoyed me paying him visits and keeping him company every so often. When he stopped going to the shop, he read books. He was reading books in Spanish, in Ladino.

However, he didn't have many. When he had finished one book he would read the next one and when he had finished that one, he would get again the first one and start reading it again. I remember one of these books, 'Sotto il Ponte de los Suspiros,' which means 'The Bridge of the Sighs.'

He must have read it at least four or five times. He read it to pass his time, always with the same level of interest. He also read the papers. At that time he read the paper Aksion [2](#), which was published in Ladino.

I didn't ever see him dressed up traditionally or with a fez [3](#). He wore a normal hat, a Chapeau melon, a kind of Borsalino. He was always clean, shaved, simple and tidy, nice but simple.

Grandfather Haim didn't participate in Community affairs at all, as he wasn't one of the important members of it.

I cannot say that his was a religious family. Here things were loose. There were many that were religious, but there wasn't any fanaticism, none at all. Of course everyone would keep the Yom Kippur fast. Grandfather Haim might have gone to the synagogue every Saturday, because every neighborhood had a synagogue. And this way it wasn't difficult to go. Thessaloniki had about forty synagogues [4](#). The elders would go. Haim used to go to the synagogue Sarfati, on Gravias Street, because it was close to his house.

My maternal grandfather I remember used to get up at five in the morning every day. He would read until six and he would then go to work. Haim didn't do that. He was more liberal. Still, they kept all religious feasts. Other traditions that Haim kept, but my father later didn't, was that unlike my father, Haim ate kosher food, didn't mix milk with meat etc.

I don't know what my grandfather's everyday life was like. All I know is that when my grandmother was ill, he would come home and stay with us, or, again, if Grandmother went on a trip to some health resort, he would come and stay with us. He really liked to eat.

For example, we are not supposed to eat shrimps and things like that; well, he was crazy about shrimps. He would say to my mother, 'Adina, tell me when will you cook again these gouzanikos?', which means 'these little worms.' He really liked them. But he wasn't too much of an eater. And his health wasn't very good.

I remember the house where they lived after I was born. It was on Koromila Street at the fourth stop of the tram. They were renting it from an Armenian. It was quite a nice house. At the beginning, before the Great Fire [5](#), everyone lived down in the center of the city.

The Jews were the ones that suffered most from the fire because the area where they were living, from the White Tower [6](#) all the way to the city center, burned down. My grandmother and grandfather lived much better after the fire, even though it took them a few years to recover.

They used to tell many stories about the fire. First of all, in the way they would keep track of time: they would say, 'two years after the Fire,' or, 'three years before the Fire'. We say B.C. and A.D., back then it was before or after the fire. They regarded the fire as a starting point, or a turning point, because the whole city of Thessaloniki got ruined.

They all gathered in the houses of the few families that lived in an area that wasn't burned. If someone, let's say, had a house with four rooms, the relatives would come and he would put one family in each room. You can imagine how this was, and under what circumstances they had to live.

My grandparents on my father's side didn't live alone. Rebecca, my father's sister, was a bit neurasthenic and sickly. Since her husband [Sido Saltiel] didn't have a very good job, they lived together with her parents and her two little girls. There was also the younger brother, Solomon, who wasn't married.

They all lived together. My father's and his brother's business took care of their house expenses. They knew that every Friday they would get an allowance out of the shop for the expenses of the house.

To tell you the truth, I didn't really go to Grandmother and Grandfather Alvo's house. I used to go there only on holidays, for dinner. They had two tables, one for the adults and one for the youngsters. We couldn't all fit at one table. It was really nice at dinner, when there was one table with the adults, some fifteen to sixteen people, and one with the youth with more than ten children sitting around and teasing each other.

Grandmother Rachel did all the chores in the house, and she had a maid. She didn't leave the house because she was illiterate and didn't know how to read. When they were about to rent a new house she would ask for a house on a main road so that she could watch what was going on in the street. She would sit in front of the window and watch the people on the street.

I don't know if she did the shopping herself. They didn't go out to shop then, they would bring everything around to the house. The kid from the shop would knock on the door every day and say, 'Good morning, what would you like me to bring you today?'

Then the grocery man would come by with his donkey, then the butcher would ask, 'What do you want to get for tomorrow?' And the same with the fruit seller. She wouldn't go to the city center to do her shopping. She would go only to get other things there like shoes or clothes. And she wouldn't go with her husband, but with her daughter or her daughter-in-law. I know that my mother and my aunt usually escorted her.

Grandmother Rachel dressed the usual way, in European style. I don't know if she had friends. If she did have friends, it must have been someone from around the neighborhood. Grandmother stayed at home, she didn't go to the cinema or the theater.

She wouldn't have understood anything anyways, as she was illiterate and couldn't read the subtitles. She would go to a wedding, to a bar mitzvah, things like that. She was closer to tradition and religion than her husband. She would start shouting, for example, if Grandfather would go out and eat. Or, if he didn't want to keep the fast, she would tell him off. They did have religious books in the house, but on the other hand, I don't remember ever seeing her in the synagogue.

She was a gentle person. Gentle, but tough. She would rule the house. Even though she was illiterate, she would keep all the bills. Grandfather would bring the money, he would give all of it to her, and she would give him back pocket money. He didn't check up on her at all. She wouldn't allow it.

Grandfather Haim loved all his children. Grandmother had a preference for my father and Olga, who was born just after him.

Their eldest son, Joseph Alvo, first went to school at the Talmud Torah and later on, I think, he also went to the Alliance school [7](#). I don't know why he and my father were in the same grade at school despite the fact that Joseph was two years older. I could never figure this out. Did his parents send him to school later than the rest? Was he perhaps sickly and that's why they didn't send him straight away? I really don't know.

Joseph was my father's partner at work. They started the business together. At the shop my father was in charge of the supplies and Joseph was in the sales. One thing I remember - because we used to live in the same house, they lived on the top floor and we lived on the ground floor - was that at noon they would come home from the shop in a taxi to eat together, and then they would leave separately with the tram.

Joseph was a gentle character. He got along really well with my father. They were very close to each other. There was never any tension between them. Joseph spent as much time at the shop as my father, that is, every day. But he was never as active as my father. My father used to go to the shop a bit earlier every day. I remember my mother complaining about this: 'Why do you leave earlier every day? Your brother goes only later, why don't you go later too?' But he was very punctual.

Family ties were very close. My father and my uncle lived in the same house. They built it together. Their wives would also see each other very often. And most importantly, when there was a health problem they would always support each other very much.

Joseph got married to Bella Amarilio. She was from Malta. Here, the Amarilios were well known in the market. They were importing iron, steel, and those kinds of things. They had quite a big company and one of the companies, SIDMA, is still in the stock market. It was based in Thessaloniki before the war and in Athens after the war. Bella was the oldest child. I know that she was slightly older than my mother, four or five years older. If we say that my mother was born around 1901, she must have been born in 1896 or 1897.

As I mentioned before, Bella was born in Malta, not in Thessaloniki. Her family was Maltese. She spoke English, because Malta was something like a British colony then. They were British citizens. Only much later did they come to Greece.

They survived [World War II] because they left for Israel [then Palestine]. Her other siblings though, who didn't go to Palestine and stayed here and opened a business, when we were at war with the Italians [8](#), the British ships came and took them to the Middle East since they had British citizenship.

Bella had three brothers. Leon was the younger one and the only one born here, so he automatically had Greek citizenship. Leon even served in the Greek army. He was a bit older than Marcel and they used to hang out together. In fact Leon's daughter got married to my cousin Nico Alvo, the son of my uncle Daniel.

Uncle Joseph and Aunt Bella had three children. One boy who was seven years older than me, Marcel - the name comes from the Hebrew Mazliah - and Renee, a name derived from Rahil or,

more European, Rachel. She was about two years older than me, so she was born around 1920. The third child, the youngest one, was Julica. She was younger than us; she must have been born after 1925, around 1926.

Renee had a terrible fate. After she had gone to Palestine, she got married there to a man from Thessaloniki. When she gave birth in 1941, about a month before the Germans entered the city, she got an infection and because there wasn't any penicillin or any other medication, she died. She gave birth to a daughter. Her grandparents, Joseph and Bella, brought her up.

Joseph didn't participate at all in Community or public affairs. I don't know if he was even at B'nai B'rith [9](#). Joseph supported the Zionists. His son influenced him to go there.

Joseph never seemed to disagree with my father. I don't think that they had any arguments. They used to argue with their younger brothers that weren't partners in the business. They did participate in the business, but only in the earnings.

Joseph used to go to the synagogue. Not often, but occasionally. During the religious holidays he would often take me with him. He would say to me, 'You are coming with me.' On Rosh Hashanah, for example, he would take me with him, while my father wouldn't go. Joseph would go to the synagogue a bit more often than my father. Maybe he was a bit more religious, but not really much more.

Bella was very beautiful and my uncle was madly in love with her. That's what they used to say. There wasn't any friction between my mother and Aunt Bella, even though sisters-in-law often don't get along well, especially when they live so close to each other and watch each other's life closely. They got along fine. Most of all, you should have seen the way they supported one another when either one was ill. When Renee was ill and had to get some medicine and Bella couldn't make it, my mother would go up and give her the medicine. Sometimes when Renee would argue with her mother, she would go up and convince them to make up.

My mother and Bella had some common chores. They did the shopping together. They would go together and buy fabrics and go together to the seamstress. Bella was always asking my mother's advice on how to make a dress. My mother was more elegant than her and since Bella had realized this, she trusted her and always took her advice.

In 1932 Joseph left for Palestine. For one, because he wanted to avoid that his son had to do his military service, but also because his son was a Zionist. In fact, he used to say that he will go there and go to the school for agricultural studies. He didn't take agricultural studies there and went to a bank instead. In Palestine Joseph was working for a bank. I think he was a partner at the Recanati Bank.

He was still interested in the business in Thessaloniki without being present or working. My father promised him that his part of the business wouldn't be touched by anybody else. Each one owned half of the company. He would take part of the earnings, as usual. Until the Germans came, they would share everything. He would come and visit us in Thessaloniki at least once a year, but Father never went to visit him. Daniel went a couple of times.

Joseph settled in Tel Aviv. They rented a very beautiful house in a central avenue. They felt very lonely there. They didn't have the circle of people they had here. They didn't have their friends

around or anyone from the family. Joseph wanted to drag with him someone from the family because he felt very lonely there. But he didn't succeed.

Daniel went and didn't like it at all, especially the water. 'What kind of water is that?', he was saying, 'This smells like a rotten egg. How do you drink this water?' In fact my father insisted very much on their coming back. 'What are you doing down there?', he used to tell them, 'come back and we will all live together.' Luckily they didn't come back and were saved by pure luck. Joseph died after the war, in 1965.

Marcel was a Zionist. He used to tell me sometimes, 'We will do this, we will do that.' That a state would be created, and the state of Palestine would become a Jewish state. He was a supporter of Herzl [10](#). We used to hang out with Marcel because he thought of us as his younger cousins.

We played chess together. He had a bicycle, and he would put us at the front sometimes and we would go around the neighborhood. Marcel also went to the school of the Mission Laïque [11](#). He didn't go to a Greek school at all. He really should have done this, because he never learned Greek like we did.

Olga's education was like my father's. She spoke Ladino, French, and Greek. Not really good Greek, like my father. Olga was married to an Ashkenazi, whose name was Bernard Landau. They got married here in Thessaloniki. They must have gotten married close to the time of my mother's and father's wedding, around 1920. He was a sales representative. He was fluent in German. And his sister was a midwife and she helped with the birth of all the children of the family. Her name was Karolina.

Olga lived in Thessaloniki opposite her mother's house on Koromila Street. They had their own house. Bernard stood quite well economically. He was a sales representative and was taking a commission that at the time was 5 percent. His job was very interesting and at the time you could get a lot of money by this profession. He knew many German brands as he was an Ashkenazi and fluent in German. They would travel to Germany and get the exclusivity of a brand and import it.

I suppose that Olga wasn't religious either, nor was her husband who was an Ashkenazi..

Olga had four children, two girls first and later two boys. The elder boy was called Victor who was a great mind in mathematics. Yvonne was her eldest daughter, who was a bit younger than me. And after her was Rachel. She was the same age as my brother. In fact, I used to play with Yvonne and my brother with Rachel. Victor was younger than both of them, and a few years later Mico was born, whose real name was Haim, too. He was given the name of Grandfather. We were going to the same school as the girls, to the Mission Laïque. That was the only mixed French-language high school. Mission Laïque had another school that was for girls only.

Rachel went to the girls' school, while Yvonne was in our school. Out of all of them, only Yvonne survived the war because during the occupation she got married to a guy who had Spanish citizenship and left for Spain. His name was Gattegno. And then she went to Israel.

Daniel, my father's other brother, was at the shop doing the accounting. Before working at the shop he worked at the Amar bank [12](#). It was a well known bank that mainly dealt with businesses. I think that they deliberately sent him to work there, to learn accounting. He was responsible for keeping all the books of the shop. He started working after I was born, between 1925 and 1930. He

had gone to school at the Lycée. He spoke French very well and also Greek he knew better than all the others.

He got married to a girl from Volos. I think she was a Romaniote Jew [13](#) because she didn't know Ladino. She spoke only Greek and she learned Ladino later. Her name was Esther Matathia. We knew her as Roula. She was a great woman and a very beautiful one. When she lived in Volos, everyone knew her. Their marriage was an arranged one. Roula had an uncle here who was a notary, Samouilidis. He arranged it.

Daniel and Roula had one girl and one boy. The girl's name was Rachel. She was called Marie then. Because when they went to the mountain [14](#) during the occupation she changed it to Marie. And the son was called Nicos. He is my cousin and he lives here in Panorama, too. He still runs the business. Rachel was five years younger than me and Nicos was thirteen years younger than me.

In the business, Daniel was doing the accounting. He had a very good relationship with my father and their brother Joseph. We didn't have any problems. But he only received part of the earnings. They didn't have shares. They used to live on Vassilissis Olgas Street, in the 25th of March area, on the corner of Vassilissis Olgas and Marasli Street. The house was theirs. They bought it after it was built.

Daniel was always worried about his health, so he didn't eat much. He was slim and he ate little because he was afraid of his cholesterol level. When they would serve him a plate of food to eat, he would tip the plate so the fat would move to the side of the plate. And all the time he was saying that he was unwell.

Daniel's relationship with religion and tradition was a very distant one. I never saw him going to the synagogue. Maybe he went and I wasn't aware of it.

Rebecca lived with my grandparents. She was married to someone that sold shirts, who wasn't very stable in his earnings. His name was Sento Saltiel.

My father had a good relationship with Rebecca. He would get upset seeing her being neurasthenic. As I mentioned before, she had some health issues and was neurasthenic. They went to the doctor's very often; the doctors followed her state of health closely. I don't know, but I think that she was bit neglected. Maybe it was due to her health. They didn't regard Rebecca in the way they did Bella, for example. Rebecca was the younger one. You could say that she lived off my father and her uncle. They sustained her, even though she was married and had two girls.

Solomon, who was the youngest boy, went to school at the Lycée, and he knew French really well. When Joseph left, he was in charge of the sales in the shop. He was very educated, but very stingy. He didn't spend any money. He didn't get married; he didn't have children, nothing. And in the end, he divided up his money between twelve different institutes. And it was a lot of money, because he didn't spend any.

Before the war he lived with his mother. He didn't have any living expenses because Grandfather and Grandmother paid everything from the shop. Every Friday they would get money and they would pay the rent, the electricity, water, everything.

My father didn't approve of Solomon's way of life. Grandmother used to say, 'What is going to become of him? We should get him married, you should find someone for him, a wife, and get him married.' Grandmother used to say this to my father and Uncle Joseph. And sometimes they would try to speak with Uncle Solomon, but he would discourage them and say, 'It's my business and you shouldn't get involved, it is my own business what I do or don't do.'

In my father's family the two older brothers, Joseph and my father, were the heads of the family. When Joseph left all the family, the entire burden, fell on my father. One time they had a dispute with Landau. Landau had trading agencies of products that my father used to sell. And he complained that my father was buying from others and not from him. This dispute lasted a long time as Landau was very strict with people. He had a certain character.

In order to threaten them in a way, Landau didn't allow his wife to go to her mother's. Whenever Grandmother used to come and visit, she would cry and complain to Father, 'What will we do with Simon, please do him the favor and buy from him. It is a shame. I want to see my daughter.' Father didn't like this behavior. He was thinking to himself: 'why should he make me change my supplier that I do business with and force me to buy from him.' This lasted about three or four years.

My maternal grandfather was called Daniel. I think he died around 1949 and he was about 80 years old then. His first wife was Rosa. Her maiden name was Gattegno. Rosa died very young from kidney problems, when my mother was around 15 or 16 years old. It must have been around 1913-1914, at the beginning of World War I. His second wife was Rosa's sister, Mathilde. There was a big age difference between Rosa and Mathilde. They were nine siblings. Rosa was the third one. Mathilde was the eighth one. Mathilde was about my father's age. She died in Canada, in 1973. Her daughter had immigrated to Canada and she followed her.

Grandfather Daniel Saltiel went to school. He went to a Turkish school, but he probably learned more in the Jewish school.

Daniel's first business was to sell and place windows. He used to say that he had fit all the windows of the warehouses at the old railway station. He then changed his profession and became a lumber merchant. That was when I was around ten years old or maybe even younger.

When he grew older, he said that he couldn't carry glass and climb up anymore. So he started as a lumber merchant and did really well. He mostly brought wood from Romania and Yugoslavia, and the top quality wood they were bringing from Sweden.

Grandfather wasn't the first one in the business, but he was good. He worked hard; he would travel for business especially around eastern Macedonia. Many times he also went to Balkan countries for supplies. He would travel to Romania and Yugoslavia very often. His employees were an accountant and a porter. They were both Jewish.

He first opened a shop on Aggelaki Street. That's where his shop was. That area is where the brothels were, but also the wood suppliers. When Aggelaki Street changed and became a busy street, all the wood suppliers moved from that area to the old railway station.

The area used to be called New Xyladika [New Area for Wood] and it was near there that my father had his factory. They were almost neighbors. This must have been around 1930. In fact he was so close to the train station that every day when he went to work, he stopped at the station for his

coffee.

He liked watching the trains go by. And when it was time, he would go and open the shop. He would go back home early. He was back at around seven in the evening. He always came home early. He never stayed out late, which was strange.

The lumber merchants were the first profession that worked without a lunch break. They worked from seven in the morning until four in the evening. They ate lunch at work. My grandfather, as it used to be at the time, had an usher in the shop who they used to call servant. He was an assistant, he would carry things, and go here and there, as there weren't any telephones at the time.

Daniel lived at the Constantinidis bus stop, where the School for the Blind is. So he would send this servant from Aggelaki Street to his house on a tram. Grandmother had three of these pans that fit inside each other. He was sending him there, and Grandmother would have them ready.

She would put in one of them the salad, in the other the food and in the third one the fruit. And he ate there, at work. And there was a couch there too where he would lay down for his siesta after his lunch.

Grandfather Daniel knew Turkish. He spoke a bit of Armenian and Hebrew, and he knew how to read too. I don't know if he spoke Hebrew but he certainly knew how to read it. He didn't know French very well. All the merchants and manufacturers spoke many languages. My grandfather learned Greek because of the business. He had to learn Greek because although he was working with Jews, he also had many other customers.

He mainly worked with the regions of Serres [city in northern Greece, 100 km north-east of Thessaloniki], Drama [city in northern Greece, 170 km north-east of Thessaloniki], and Kavala [city in northern Greece, 165 km north-east of Thessaloniki] where he always went by train. And he had a habit: He used to take many things with him on the train, food and the rest. He would eat and would offer something to the whole wagon. It didn't matter who he was traveling with.

Daniel didn't own a house, he rented one. He had a house in the 'School for the Blind' area, close to the Italian School. There was a house that was called Bensusan. The two houses had the same yard, and there was quite a large garden that had a little pond with red fish. They also had artesian water that was very good; it came from the Chortiatis mountain [mountain close to Thessaloniki]. In fact many from the neighborhood would go there and fetch some water, because they said it was good for digestion.

He later moved from this house. It was a very large house as he lived there with his three daughters and his son. His son got married first and later his daughters one by one, and that's when he moved to the old building that used to be an orphanage called 'Melissa' [15](#) on Vassilisis Olgas Street. He rented a place from a Greek doctor called Mr. Vassilakos.

Grandfather Daniel went to the cinema only with his grandchildren. He wouldn't take his wife and go to watch a film, no! Four or five friends would gather at the Almosnino [café-pâtisserie] and chat. They would joke around and play. They used to tease the women that were passing by. And they would eat a dessert. Daniel used to go there after he closed the shop. Because they were finishing early, they would meet up around five or five thirty at the Almosnino. They would sit

outside in the summer and inside in the winter.

Daniel's friends were mostly Jewish. Where he lived, there were Christians on the ground floor. And he had great relations with them. They would go up to his house and have coffee, or they would go down and visit. They were called Hatzi, and the father was a tobacco merchant. During the religious holidays they wouldn't go around each other's houses. But if it was the name-day of one of them, they would go and congratulate them.

Daniel wasn't so religious but he kept the traditions. I remember that every day after he got up, he'd first have to read for half an hour. I don't know what he read, but it was before he had his coffee. And then he would get ready, drink his coffee and go to work. He bought kosher meat, that's for sure.

I don't know if he kept the kashrut, maybe he did at the beginning but later on, not as much. I don't remember them having separate dishes for meat and dairy products. But he definitely bought kosher meat. He never made a habit of going to the synagogue every Saturday. When it was a religious holiday he would go. He went to the Beit Saoul synagogue [16](#) because it was close to his house.

Grandfather gave money for the house, but he didn't give easily, he was strict and would check how it was spent, he wouldn't just give away money. He didn't participate in Community affairs. He was only at the B'nai B'rith. When they would organize some gatherings, he would also go. When such a gathering was organized a personal invitation would be sent to him, and it said 'Personal' on it, so no one else was allowed to open it. That impressed me, because I was thinking, 'Why is it personal, why?'

"Ah," he would say to me, 'this is from the committee, it's for a B'nai B'rith meeting.' You see, not everyone could join the B'nai B'rith. It was very strict. You had to be somebody in society. It didn't have to do with politics. It was rather an organization like the Freemasons.

I think that Grandfather Daniel voted in the Community's elections. He voted not the leftists, not the Zionists, but the liberals that were in favor of assimilation. I'm not absolutely certain, but I'm pretty sure that he supported them. At the national elections they would always vote for Tsaldaris [17](#), the Laikoi [Populists].

He read the French newspapers and he also bought the Aksion. He would either buy the Aksion or Indépendant [18](#), or Le Progrès [19](#), but he would always buy one newspaper. They were friends with a journalist who wrote for the Indépendant and signed with the initials I.N. He had a great sense of humor, and he wrote well.

In the house they never talked about politics. They would talk about their business affairs, and the Community. They would talk about Palestine. But I could see that my father was not in favor of going to Palestine.

Daniel had many brothers and sisters. I remember two or three. Because sometimes when I was young, he would take me out for a walk to visit them. They were all older than him, and we would always find them sleeping on a chair, or with their glasses on the side sitting in an armchair. Two of his brothers, Mentesh and Sabethai Saltiel, were also involved in the window- glass business. In fact, all the merchants that were involved in the iron business were their customers, too. We had

customers in common. In fact, after the war, they had a shop, Afoi Saltiel [Saltiel Bros], on Vassileos Heracliou Street. But later they left for Palestine.

Daniel had two sisters. I remember one of them, who was younger than him. She was called Flor Saltiel. She was Dario's mother who married my mother's sister Lily. They were first degree cousins. The father of Lily and the mother of Dario were brother and sister.

They were very close to each other, but less with their siblings because they had children and grandchildren and there wasn't much time left for the others. When there was a religious holiday, especially on Easter, the whole family would go and visit the brothers, the aunts, and the cousins.

They were giving these haminados eggs [hard-boiled eggs with dried onion peels, salt and pepper] then. It was when they would really spend time together. Some would rent a carriage to go there, three or four of them together, in order to have more time to spend with the family.

Beniko Saltiel was the son of Grandfather Daniel's elder brother. Beniko was the first timber merchant of Thessaloniki, the richest and most successful one. He was in the fifty-member council of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Thessaloniki. He knew my father very well. They had a good relationship. They had built a house together at the Androutsou bus stop, and when he stopped living there, it became the Yugoslavian Consulate.

My father didn't do business with any of his relatives. He had a different job than anyone else. All of them were in the lumber business. But this was a great business then because after the Great Fire, the whole of Thessaloniki was being rebuilt, so they needed thousands of acres of wood. And there weren't that many traders. At the new timber area there were about four or five timber shops.

With his first wife Rosa, Grandfather Daniel had a son, Sento, and later my mother, Adina. Then there was another daughter, Lily, who got married to Dario Modiano, as I mentioned earlier. It was very common then for first degree cousins to get married. This was really bad. Their third daughter was Ida. And his second wife had a daughter from her first marriage, Daisy, who is still alive.

At some point Grandfather took his son Sento to work with him. First, Sento worked with his father-in-law, Gattegno, who had a jewelry shop at the corner of Tsimiski and Venizelou Street. After he worked there for many years, my father took him to work for him. I suppose that was after 1930.

He was a good merchant. He became very good especially after Daniel Saltiel had a problem with his eyesight. You see, when my grandfather was very young I don't know how, but he fell and he lost one eye. And he didn't have this eye taken out and put a glass one in, but he left it and this somehow infected his other eye, too. He had to go about ten times to Vienna for operations because he was slowly losing his eyesight. One of the times that he went, my grandmother went with him and they stayed there for over two months.

My grandmother's sister Mathilde was the same age as my father. My father was born in 1889, she must have been born either in 1890 or in 1888, sometime around then. There was a big age difference with Daniel. Mathilde had a daughter from another marriage.

Grandfather was widowed, she too, and so they got married. It was then a custom to marry the sister of your wife, if both of you were left widowed. And even the Jewish religion suggests doing so. The religion says that if your brother dies and his wife becomes a widow, someone from the

family should marry her in order to maintain her.

Mathilde Gattegno spoke Ladino really well and French fluently. She also spoke Greek, but not as well. She couldn't write in Greek, but she spoke it, especially because most of her maids were Greek. She didn't speak any Turkish. She went to school at the Alliance where she learned French.

Before she got married, during World War I, when the allies were here, she opened, or rather the family opened, a shop for her in which she sold souvenirs for the soldiers. And it did really well. She was pretty and she spoke French, which was something that the soldiers couldn't find everywhere.

At the time of World War I, many women started working out of necessity. They would sell things like that; they would do the easy work. After she became a widow, and maybe also before she got married, she worked at her brother's school, the Gattegno.

Mathilde used to speak about World War I while my mother didn't. I remember that they had in their house all sorts of flags, because once the English would come around, then the French, then the Italians, and then the Romanians.

She got married to Grandfather Daniel after the Great Fire. They were already married when I was born, because I remember they left me with them when I was one year old, and that they got married before my uncle and before my father. I think that my father was already married in 1920.

I don't think that her relationship with Daniel was very good, because he was a bit indifferent. Their relationship was more based on duty. It seems that Grandfather was very much in love with his first wife. His second wife was also very pretty and educated, but still he simply didn't love her as much as his first.

Grandfather Daniel wouldn't treat Mathilde the same way he treated his first wife. It was a different thing for him, and he also didn't take care of his daughter with her in the same way he did with the other children. That was Grandmother's complaint and her daughter Daisy's.

Mathilde would either eat alone at noon or with her daughter when she was around. In the evening, someone would come and visit or she would go and visit somebody. Grandfather would get home around seven or seven thirty and they would have dinner together. They had a nice courtyard that overlooked the sea. In the summer they would sit and eat outside and in the winter inside.

Mathilde read a great deal. She read those French magazines as well. I don't think that she read the newspaper. Maybe she would have a look at it. She also read literature, everything in French. She didn't buy books; they used to borrow them from lending libraries.

B'nai B'rith. There seems to have been a lending library where the B'nai B'rith was or the Alumni Association of the Lycée School. She would go out to get the books, or her daughter would go. She was a very educated woman. I had a great relationship with my grandmother. Many times, when the two of us were chatting, she would tell me about her worries and complaints. I loved her very much. She brought me up.

Mathilde didn't keep track of political or Community events. She only followed international news. Then she also had a radio. She didn't know Greek so she would listen to the French programs. She would listen to whatever they were broadcasting.

They got the radio very early on. Grandfather Daniel was the first one to put a telephone in the house in order to communicate when he was at the shop. He had a phone, because he was away from the house from early in the morning until late in the evening.

Grandmother Mathilde was involved in a couple of charity associations. I remember them coming around the house to collect the contributions.

She only went to the synagogue on special occasions or if there was a bar mitzvah. The men used to go more often to the synagogue, like grandfather did sometimes. Women went too, but in our family they didn't. I don't remember her reading a prayer in the house. In comparison with grandfather, I think that she was less religious than him, as she was also younger than him. She kept the kashrut, she would buy kosher meat but they would mix the pots and they didn't have separate plates.

There were these candles in the house which we light when there is a religious holiday. She would keep this tradition and light them. We always had a mezuzah. It has a small piece of parchment inside with a prayer written or the name of God, I don't know for sure. You have this in the house, every house has one. They had one on the front door, but they also had one in every bedroom.

She would go to the market to do her shopping and take the tram. She would go downtown alone, or she would take along one of her daughters. Usually, when she went shopping she would take along either one of the girls.. They were buying fabrics and they would make dresses out of them, at home.

Mathilde dressed in the European style. She wouldn't buy very expensive things, mostly plain clothes. She also went out. She went out much more than her sister. She never went to sit in a patisserie. That never happened. She would visit friends or relatives at home.

She also had her second or third degree relatives that she used to visit as well. The families were much larger then and had many members. She would go out once in a while to the cinema with her daughter. Mother or Aunt Lily would also take her out.

We didn't meet very often with my father's family. We met mostly with my mother's family. That happened because Grandfather Daniel would gather the girls very often on Sundays. He wanted all of us to eat lunch there. Later on, instead of eating together at lunch time, we would go around five and have ouzo and 'meze' [snacks] etc.

Haim and Rachel Alvo and Daniel and Mathilde Saltiel didn't socialize. Maybe on Easter they would go and pay each other a visit. My maternal grandmother didn't have any relations with my paternal grandmother. They couldn't, they didn't have any spare time, and everything used to happen inside the house.

I used to spend a lot of time at my Saltiel grandparents' house because my parents would leave me with them from the age of one when they traveled. So, from a very young age they left me with my grandmother Mathilde. They used to go to Europe, to Paris and Vienna.

So I had a very good relationship with my maternal grandparents. In fact, Grandmother was a teacher for a while when she was young, so she taught me how to count and how to read before I started going to school.

My mother had four siblings. One of them was Daisy, who was neither from the same mother nor father. She was Mathilde's daughter from her first marriage. The rest of the children were Rosa's: Sento, Lily, Adina and Ida.

Unfortunately, as I told you before, Grandfather treated Daisy differently and that really upset Mathilde. He never saw Daisy like the rest of his daughters. He didn't feel the same way about her. And the bad thing was that he also showed it. One may feel it, but shouldn't really show it. We would talk about it. While my parents loved Daisy like their sister, Grandfather made a difference.

Daisy was born in 1913. She now lives in Switzerland. She has quite a story. She was married to a Christian before the war and that's how she survived. You should have seen the trouble they caused by getting married. They got married when I had my bar mitzvah, around 1935.

His name was Demis, Demitris Komninos. His family was regarded as very aristocratic here. His elder sister had married Hatzigiannakis who was a deputy for Venizelos [20](#). Hatzigiannakis had the flour-mills and was a refugee [21](#). I think the Komninos family originated from Eastern Thrace and not from Asia Minor.

Daisy was very sharp. She was petite, pretty and very smart. She would go to various clubs. Komninos went frequently to the lawn tennis club. That was at Vasilissis Olgas and 25th Martiou and all the wealthy people of Thessaloniki used to go there.

I don't know how or why, but my aunt went there and that's where they met. They started meeting up to go for walks. The couples then would go to Nea Elvetia [area in eastern Thessaloniki], outside the city, and to Meteora. They loved each other, and got married. Daisy and Demis ran away together and got married at the Vlatadon Monastery. A priest married them there. She was baptized and converted, and until today she is a Christian.

This was probably one of the first mixed marriages. The papers wrote about it then. 'Makedonia' newspaper [22](#) wrote an article against the Jews. Daisy and Demis argued with the family and Grandfather disinherited her. He told her that he didn't want her again in the house, and that she should never come back again, which was a really bad thing, as things like that usually didn't happen. They were a well known family here, and people would say, 'What? The daughter of Saltiel went with the others?'

At the beginning the mother of Demis didn't want her either. But Daisy could manage anything. Very quickly, only six months after, she was the most beloved. And slowly, first my aunt Lily brought her back to the family, and then my mother and Ida started seeing her again. In the end I remember that when they brought her back to the family, she kneeled in front of Grandfather and apologized to him. She got back in touch with the family around two or three years after her wedding.

Demis worked at the Hatzigiannakis mills. Because his brother-in-law was the owner he had given him a job to work there. He was a good man, and had good manners. But he was a bit of a spender, quite a spender in fact. He had this idea that he came from a great family.

Sento was born around 1898. He went to Alliance as well. He finished high school in Alliance. He knew French very well; he also knew Greek and Ladino. I think he also attended German classes. Many of the Jews here spoke German at the time.

Sento got married when my father got married, around 1920. His wife's name was Mathilde Gattegno. The name of her father, his father-in-law, was Moshe Gattegno. The father of Mathilde, Moshe Gattegno, was the brother of my grandmother Rosa. So Sento and Mathilde were first degree cousins. The mother of Mathilde was from the Sadok family who were a very well known aristocratic family.

It was quite common to have marriages among relatives at the time. The other daughter, Lily, got married to another cousin, Modiano. And in fact they used to say that they will get them married since we were very young.

This way they used to influence one a great deal. There were financial issues as well. They were saying this in order to keep the money within the family. Not to let it go into other hands. Because they would give dowries then, they would have marriage agreements, which were taxed by the Community. I remember Grandfather Daniel gave 1,500 sovereigns for each of his daughters as a dowry. For the youngest one, Ida, he even gave more. He gave her 2,000 because she was the youngest, and his favorite. His sons-in-law would tease him and say to him that he cheated on them and gave them less money.

Sento and Mathilde had two children. One was Rosa who is exactly the same age as I and Flora who is five or six years younger. Rosa got married to a certain Nadjari. After the war they left for America. Her husband died and she came back to Greece. She got married again in Athens. The other one, Flora, got married to a Modiano. She is a painter.

Sento died after the war. After the war he started the lumber trade again. He became partners with Bilimatsis and they did really well. When they grew older, they both got their pensions and Sento went to live in Athens. His wife Mathilde died before him.

Lily was born around three or four years after my mother. She went to school at the Alliance or the Lycée, I'm not sure. Lily spoke Italian really well and Greek, too. Lily got married to an Italian Jew. His name was Dario Modiano and he was an Italian citizen. When I was born Lily and Dario were already married. Lily didn't work. She had two children: Toris, whose full name was Salvador, and a daughter, Rosa, who now lives in America. Lily had a maid, Katina, for 15 years who came from a village in Chalkidiki. Katina was protecting Rosa and was scolding Toris. Whenever they would argue, she would protect Rosa.

Dario Modiano worked for a German who was an agent of Deutsche Debarque line. He was an employee, but he was getting paid quite a lot of money. They sacked him because he was a Jew, and he left for Athens. There he opened a shop with his brother. The bad thing was that he gambled; he played cards. He used to go to the Club of Thessaloniki [23](#) then. He lost a lot of money. The fact that he was gambling always caused problems. My aunt would cry and get very upset. He would go to the Loutraki Casino [Loutraki: city in north Peloponnesus, 600 km from Thessaloniki]. He was supposedly going to the hot springs, but instead he would go to the casino. He never took his wife with him. She would sit with the children at home and he would go and have baths at the hot springs, drink fresh water and then go to the casino to gamble.

I used to hear these things from the elder ones when they talked about it. They were talking about this in front of us, in order to protect us. During the war Modiano served in the army as a pilot of the Italian air force. We had a picture that his daughter still has; with the pilot's uniform on, but

what a pilot! He ruined an airplane once. How he managed to ruin a plane due to an emergency landing without getting himself killed, is a mystery.

Lily was contributing to charities. They fell out because he went to the Casino. She had many contacts. She would go with my mother to Shaiber's for gymnastics. Shaiber had a gym studio then. It was on the ground floor of his house on our street. Many Greeks would go to his gym. So they had met many people from the neighborhood. She was a very lively person and very pretty, she was full of life. Since there was only an age difference of three years between them, when my mother gave birth and didn't have a lot of milk, Lily would feed both children together. She would put one on each nipple. And she would be with my mother all the time. I'm certain that they saw each other every single day. They would speak about the happy and sad things that had happened to each other. She loved her sister. And Adina had a close relationship with Lily. As far as religion or tradition was concerned, their position was exactly the same.

Between Ida and my mother there must have been at least an age difference of ten years. She was my grandfather's favorite because she was the 'Benjamin' - the youngest one - of the family. She was so nice, so sweet, she didn't have any malice in her at all. She got married to Elie Molho. He was the general manager of the Bank of Thessaloniki [24](#). First he was the director but later he became the general manager and was sent to Athens. Molho was married for two years and lived with his in-laws at the time.

When we went to Grandmother's, and we used to go often, they had their room there. Ida got married around 1930, maybe even earlier. They used to get married when they were in their twenties back then. If you weren't married by the age of 22 or 23, they would say that one was to be left on the shelf. Ida and Elie had a son, Jack.

When they moved from her parents' house they got a place on 25th Martiou Street, just next to my uncle Daniel's house. They were next-door neighbors. She had her mother-in-law there who was very nice, and they had a very good relationship. They didn't moan at all. They were getting along very well, the mother-in-law with her daughter-in-law. Ida died during the occupation, and they took away their son.

One uncle of mine was a senator. He was the president of the Jewish Community. He was my mother's uncle, the brother of Grandmother Rosa. He was the eldest in the family. Leon Gattegno had a school here in Thessaloniki, a French school that was called Gattegno.

From my maternal side, my uncles were distinguished people. There were Leon Gattegno and Moshe Gattegno, and there was also another brother of theirs Isaac, who immigrated to Paris. Uncle Isaac and his wife left for Paris long before the war. They suddenly left in 1925. They opened a printing house there. And since my father used to go to Paris very often for business, he would always visit them and they would have a good relationship.

The social and financial state of my mother's brothers and their families was the same as ours. It was only later that my father opened the factory and the business started to grow. Elie used to be an employee of his, but later he became the general manager of a bank with a very good salary. In fact, Grandfather was very fond of him, and that was the reason why he used to say that he gave him a bigger dowry, so he would have a general manager of a bank as his son-in-law.

Dario was also an employee. Sento was doing well in his own business. And later Grandfather gave his business to Sento. I'm not aware whether one of the sons-in-law was more active than the other in social clubs and such things. Some of them were at the B'nai B'rith. Sento was definitely a member. His father must have recommended him, and I think that Elie was a member, too.

They weren't very interested in politics. They were probably a bit more concerned about the city's affairs. All the Jews voted for Manos, Nikolaos Manos. Most of our own voted for Manos. I imagine that my father and my mother's sons-in-law, voted for him, too. But, before Manos, they voted for Aggelakis. They voted for Aggelakis because he was very well known. Aggelakis was great; he lived very near our house, at the same tram stop. He was a doctor. Aggelakis was with Venizelos, but they never really cared if he was in Venizelos's party. They voted for him as an individual. He originated from an old family from Thessaloniki, very well known, he was from Thessaloniki's aristocracy. With Manos, it wasn't the same.

• Growing up

My father co-operated with one of his relatives, the one at the bank. I mean he worked with the Bank of Thessaloniki. He had all his accounts there. Before 1930 all imports of goods would be handled through a bank.

My father's name was Simon. He was born in 1889 in Thessaloniki. He went to the Turkish school first; he knew Turkish very well. He also went to the Jewish school. Later he went to the Alliance school. He learned many things there.

He had the chance to study in the Alliance and that's where his later success was based upon. In fact, one of his teachers was Mr. Nehama. That's where he learned his French. The Alliance gave a great boost on the education of the Jews in Thessaloniki.

Very few of the Turks or the Greeks spoke French at the time. French was then the language of diplomacy and trade. All the trade correspondence was conducted in French. My father also spoke Greek, but not as well as French.

He finished the Alliance school and went straight to work. Our father's business was founded in 1913, a year after Thessaloniki was liberated from the Turks. It was called 'Afoi Alvo' - Alvo Brothers. He started the business when he was 18, and he was already in debt, because his father had sold things to someone on credit and had lent him money, and this person had cheated him. So my father went after him to get the money back. I don't know whether he managed to get it back, but when he started the business he was in debt.

It was difficult for him to create a business but the circumstances helped him. The war and the Great Fire helped him a lot. People were left in great need and there was no production in Greece. Everything came from abroad.

He knew many languages and this was his advantage, because he could communicate when he went abroad. He would go to Germany, to Czechoslovakia, to the Netherlands. He represented many trading agencies, and this helped him to work well. He brought goods from all over Europe, even from Latvia and from Lithuania, I remember, because I used to collect stamps at the time and he would bring me stamps from wherever he went. I had stamps from all the European countries.

This was what upset Mother mostly. He would leave at least four or five times a year to travel for business. He didn't go for a very long time, just for ten or fifteen days. He would make a deal there and then. Not through correspondence. He had a lot of correspondence anyway. I remember that on Sundays he would go down to the post office where he had a box, to take the letters that had come on Saturday. That was his chore on Sundays.

At the beginning they had a shop on Frangon Street. After the Great Fire, the Greek government started giving landed property to everyone as compensation. And on Ionos Dragoumi Street, which was then called Alexander the Great Street, at number 22, where the Eurobank stands today, is where they built the shop in 1922. It was a multi-story building with four or five floors.

Jacques Moshe was the engineer, he is the one who built Plateia Aristotelous [Aristotelous square] [25](#). He had graduated from the Ecole Centrale in Paris, and because it was one of his first buildings and he didn't know well yet the resistance of the concrete, he put double the quantity of iron that was recommended in the books. That's why during the big earthquake of 1978 the shop remained intact.

This shop was in the style of Galeries Lafayette [famous department store in Paris, founded in 1893], because my father had visited Paris many times and he had liked the Galeries Lafayette. The ground floor and the other four floors were open in the middle and no matter how warm it would get, as soon as the entrance door opened all the heat would go away. They were never warm.

The shop had around fifteen employees. We also had Christians. There were around two or three Christians and the rest were Jewish, and they were all men. No one had women working then. The only women that were working then were secretaries and typists, that was it.

My father later built a factory to produce barbed wire, chains, hinges, nails, but mainly barbed wire. He started the factory around 1932 to 1933. He was an honest man of trade. The first thing was to keep one's promise.

Most of the deals were closed without papers or written agreements or anything like that; it was one's word of honor which counted. For example, say you sold your land and you would name a price and agree.

Now, if somebody else would come and offer you double the amount of money, it would be a big shame if you didn't keep your promise. They used to say that your promise is the contract. So trade was a fair deal then. And they didn't have any promissory notes either. The custom was to go and collect all the money every Friday.

These are the stories that my grandfather and father used to tell me. After the war, in the Old Greece, everyone used to say that there was no better trade than in Thessaloniki, which was a hundred times better than any other city, and that you didn't have to be afraid of a trader from Thessaloniki. In addition to the Jews, the Christians and the Armenians had to keep their promises, too. The Turks didn't conduct trade.

My father learned German by ear, because he traveled to Germany very often. The trade was then conducted by 'clearing' [26](#). Given that Germany bought tobacco from Greece, the traders here also had to buy things from Germany.

My father very often went to Germany on business trips. He would visit small cities, mainly Ruhr, Cologne, Hessen, these places. All the goods that we imported were concentrated there. He had many German friends that were his suppliers, and he had close relations with them. That's why when the Nazis came to power in Germany he said that he couldn't believe that it was possible that the Germans were doing things like that. He didn't have any Jewish suppliers in Germany.

Around 1934 to 1935 Father was the first one to bring electric cookers to Thessaloniki. Until then coal was used for cooking. We would get up in the morning and light the fire with the firebrand and the coal. And when we first started using an electric cooker, I remember Mother saying how much easier it was to have this, an electric cooker!

My father was very careful with his work. He didn't take many risks. I think that the factory he built was a risk at the time that he built it, because it was quite a big business. The factory was at the lumber market in the Baron Hirsch area [27](#). He started with 35 workers only.

In the beginning he would produce only barbed wire. He then built another unit right next to it. I remember he had difficulties buying the land, because the man selling it was a lumber merchant. He had to give him a fair amount of money in order to get the space right next to the factory so he could join the two factories. In this way he expanded and started making chains and nails and hinges and other things like that. The name of the factory was 'Alvo Brothers.' It became an SA [Société Anonyme] company afterwards while in the beginning it was an ordinary partnership.

The main characteristic of our company, which I really tried hard to keep, was the good name of the business. We had a very good name in the market and were considered as very consistent and fair merchants. We were very consistent in the quality of our goods. They were always class A, very good quality at reasonable prices. And everyone used to say, 'Let's go to Alvo's to shop. We might pay a little more, but we will get top quality.'

This was the reputation of our name in the market. We also had a very good name with the banks. My father did business with the Bank of Thessaloniki because my uncle Elie Molho was the manager. But he also did business with the Italian bank and with Mosseri the Union Bank, which was owned by a professor of his. He also did business with the National Bank of Greece. He had really good relations with the manager of the National Bank, Varlamides. Whenever he would go to Varlamides's office, he would tell him to 'sit down and have a coffee, let's have a chat.' This was their relationship.

My father didn't think that after the liberation of Thessaloniki in 1912 things had changed, that they had become worse for the Jews, because he only started his professional career after 1912, so he actually benefited from that.

In the 1920s, relations between Jews and Christians were very difficult. It was very hard for the Jewish Community to find its place among the Greeks, because they didn't share a common background. But my father didn't find it difficult from his point of view, because he already had great relations anyway. And they really appreciated him, both Jews and Christians. Not all of them but mainly his customers.

We had great relations with our customers from the outer districts, because here there were more competitors. In Eastern Greece he had business relations with both the customers and the

suppliers. His customer network covered an area all the way down to Crete. We had customers in Larissa [the main city in the region of Thessaly, 186 km south of Thessaloniki], Volos, and in the entire mainland. At Yiannina we had many good customers. The customers were developing gradually. As our business grew, the smaller businesses grew with it. Because then the whole of Greece was being rebuilt. The state was being rebuilt.

There were business relations between Christians and Jewish traders. Not many, but there were some. Very good friends of ours were 'Leon & Yiakos.' It was a big firm. They had an oil mill and a soap factory. The Leon family was a big family: they were eight or nine brothers and sisters. And Yiakos was from the Yiakos family. I remember their children. There was Manolis Yiakos with whom we were very good friends and about the same age, one or two years difference. We went to gymnastics together. Leon was Jewish. Yiakos was a Christian.

Companies as such wouldn't be any different than the Jewish and Christian traders. They co-operated really well. But they all used to be what I call 'old Thessalonikans' - original residents of Thessaloniki. People that were born in Thessaloniki, not people that came from other towns, those ones that Jews had lived together with for many years and had great relations with.

The younger brother, Daniel, was doing the accounting for the shop. I think he worked for some years at the Amar Bank, and he learned accounting there so he could write everything in Greek like they had to. We had hired another cashier and accountant that knew Greek very well, so we didn't have a problem from that point of view. He would write the bills in Greek.

As far as the Sunday rest [28](#) is concerned my father took it up. I don't remember it being an issue. Maybe it was earlier. I must have been very young when that happened but I don't think that he was very bothered about it, because he wasn't very religious anyway. In the beginning some shops were shut on both Saturdays and Sundays. My father didn't do that because he didn't have a religious education.

In terms of his business I remember that he was very annoyed when the revenue officers would come to check his books. Only the fact that they were asking for one thing, then for another, and I don't know what else, tired him. We had a very good lawyer, Mr. Nakopoulos, who would arrange everything.

Inside the business there was no difference in hierarchy between the one brother and the other. For example, with the employees they had the same relationship. The employees knew that my father was a bit softer than his brother. When they asked for something like a raise or a day off and Joseph wouldn't give it to them; they would go and ask my father, who they knew was more indulgent. They were family friends with some employees.

My father also had great relations with the workers. We had about three or four workers that were Christian, who were skilled workers because they did a kind of job that was more difficult than the others and they would get higher wages. Most of them were Jewish workers because we also regarded it as a duty to have Jewish workers. They would call from the Community and say, 'Look he has three children and he really needs a job, take him.' So we would take him. Sometimes he would turn out to be good and sometimes not. If he wasn't good we would have to fire him.

There were many communists and leftists then, mainly between the workers. And there were also others in the workers' union, the work inspectors, all of them. There were many problems like that before the war. Some years before the war, relations between workmen and employers were very fragile in Thessaloniki. I don't remember my father commenting about the communists or the leftists; I remember that he had some problems with some workmen.

There were many strikes. In fact when the events took place in Thessaloniki in 1936 [29](#), they threw a stone and broke the sign of our shop, because my father was regarded as a rich man. My father helped his workmen with his personal money not even money from the business. He helped not only the workers, but he helped generally. For example, someone would come and say, 'My wife is sick,' or 'I really need this,' and he would take money out of his own pocket to give to them, so he wouldn't have any trouble with the others in the business. He also made to charity donations.

My father was a member of the 50-member Council of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Thessaloniki. I don't know when this was. It must have been until the war. Later on the Germans gave an order for all the Jews to leave. He was one of the fifty members of the Council because his was regarded as one of the most developed businesses in Thessaloniki. But I don't know why he wanted to be a member of the Chamber. Not that he needed them for any reason. He just wanted to get in. My father was chosen as a trader at the Chamber. Trade was considered more important than industry.

My father started from the trade. But the factory was his great love, so to speak, because he built the factory completely by himself without the help of his brother. At the time, his brother had already left for Palestine.

Our house was at the corner of Kritis and Papakyriazi Street [streets in eastern Thessaloniki]. My father built it together with his brother in 1922, before he got married. When he bought the land there, it was regarded as countryside, it was a countryside area. There were very few houses there then. When he built his house, there was only one more house on the same street. The land was 900 square meters of which the house occupied 200. It was on the corner of the two streets and the rest of the plot was a garden.

My father had an ardent passion for flowers. He had a gardener from the time before he got engaged, who remained with him after the war. He was a Christian from Asvestohori and his name was Charitos. The house had two floors. His brother lived on the top floor and he lived on the ground floor so he would be closer to the garden.

When he first built it, Grandmother and Grandfather lived on his floor. Later on, when he got married, because he didn't want to tell his parents to 'leave the house,' he rented a place for himself. Neither I nor my brother were born in the house that my father built. We were born in another house, again on Koromila Street. A couple of years later he said, 'Now that I have children I want to live in my own house. He then rented his parents a house, also on Koromila Street, where they lived with their daughter.

My father and his elder brother were very close to each other. Even though there was an age difference between them, they always went to school together and they were always together. They lived in the same house and the families were very close. The women, my mother and my aunt, were very close, too. We played with the kids, our cousins. And there were never any

financial issues between them. They had those kinds of issues with the others, the younger ones. But they didn't have any issues in any business that they did together.

My father always left the house early in the morning. He would get up at 6 in the morning. He had to shave and have his shower. He almost had a mania about cleanliness. He would leave the house around 7.30am. He would take the tram and go down to the city center.

In the afternoon he would get a taxi and come home to eat lunch. The four of them would get one taxi together, and each one would be dropped where he lived. We ate around 1.30, because the shop shut at one, so they had half an hour to come back from the market; Father would be back around 1.30. After lunch he would always sit, drink his coffee, talk with his wife and leave again at around three, because at 3.30pm they would open the shop again until 8pm.

He would come and go twice a day on the tram, so he would take the tram four times a day. The tram was a great convenience for him at the time. He knew all the conductors so well that sometimes, if he didn't have change, they would say to him, 'It's ok, you can give it to me next time I see you.'

For dinner, at around 8.30, we would eat something light, usually a soup or a 'sfougato,' as we used to call it. We all ate together every night. My father was very fond of his parents, more so than his brother. He would go and visit them every Sunday. He would also pass by their place sometimes on the way back from work and say hello, and come back home after. I remember that very well. Especially when Grandfather, or his wife were ill, he would go around their house every day, to say hello, and he would come home later.

First and foremost, he had great respect for him, but he also loved him dearly. He spoke to him in the singular form and he would call him Dad, and he would call Grandmother Mom. When we had a religious holiday he would go around their house three or four times a week to see them. He was very caring, mostly with his mother.

My father loved literature and flowers. He imported flowers from Belgium and the Netherlands. He would bring bulbs from the Netherlands and rose bushes and dahlias from Belgium.

He read all kinds of literature. He read quite a lot, always in French. He would buy magazines like 'L'Illustration,' which was a great magazine with really nice pictures. He would buy 'Candide,' which was probably right-wing. He wasn't buying it because it was rightist, but for the information, to keep up to date. With regards to newspapers he used to buy 'Le Progrès' that was Modiano's. He would either buy 'Le Progrès' or 'L'Indépendant.' They read the papers mainly on the tram. His journey from the house to the city center would last an hour each way. He didn't buy any Judeo-Spanish newspapers. He knew some of the reporters.

My father was a member of the graduate association of Alliance, the Association des Anciens Elèves de l' Alliance Israélite [30](#). They had rented a place where they would all meet up. They had rented an apartment, which they used as their club. He was also member of the B'nai B'rith.

B'nai B'rith was a Jewish organization like the Freemasons. The members helped each other very much. They had invented some signals so they could recognize each other: they would put some sign in their signature and they would wave to each other in a certain way. When someone was a member of B'nai B'rith and would make a transaction with somebody else, they would instantly

understand that they were both members.

They also used to organize meetings where they would talk about everything: life, society, and politics. At the end of each session, someone would go around with his hat and collect money from everyone, whatever each one could contribute to help. In fact, they also had the right if someone was in need, to take money from the hat to give him. That's what my father used to say. They would also help if, for example, someone in the market was about to go bankrupt. They always tried to avoid bankruptcy, as it was regarded as the biggest sin. I remember some that went bankrupt who killed themselves. Honor in the trade market was really important. And it was widely known that Thessaloniki was the 'cleanest' market.

My father was never involved in the Community. Only during the occupation they had him get a bit involved, because things were very difficult then. At that time great attention was needed and many connections. He wasn't involved with the Community because he didn't have an interest in it and, also, because he didn't have the time. He would travel all the time.

He would vote in the Community's elections. I don't know if he was with the Zionists or with the assimilationists. I don't know this because he never spoke about politics at home. I don't think that he would have been with the Zionists; he was probably with the ones in favor of assimilation.

Of course, at the time there was Keren Kayemet [31](#). They had these blue money-boxes. We had one in the house. I remember well that they would come around the house to empty the money-box.

On Rosh Hashanah, or on [Yom] Kippur my father would go to the Beit Saoul synagogue, which was a very large synagogue. That was it. He would never go on Saturdays. My father was very fond of tradition. It was a matter of tradition, the fact that he was a Jew and not a Christian like everybody else. He was a bit different from the others. So he kept that, the tradition. But to get into the logic that he shouldn't eat pork meat or that he shouldn't write on Saturday, he wouldn't do that. My father used to say that when you do something you should always trust your conscience, to know whether your consciousness approves of it or not. Not because God would punish you, but whatever your conscience dictated.

My father didn't have many friends, but he had some very good friends. He had Mr. Nehama, who was a professor of his. He was also friends with the brother of Mr. Nehama. He was a manager in a bank and he later married a Christian. He had some other friends that were called Hassid. They were family friends.

Because there were many brothers and sisters, they would meet up every Sunday in one house or the other. They didn't have any time during the week. They only went to the cinema, as they loved the cinema. At the time, the cinema was considered the best entertainment. My grandfather and grandmother didn't go, but Mother and Father would go at least once a week. There were four or five cinemas in Thessaloniki then. They used to say that the Dionysia was the best cinema and that it showed the best films.

Good films were being produced at the time. There were German films, too, which were quite good but Mother and Father preferred the French ones, as they could understand those better and didn't have to read the subtitles. They didn't bring any American cinematography to Thessaloniki at the

time. We had French and German films and that was all. The most famous film was 'Imperio Argentina.' This film was not known only by the Jews, but all of Thessaloniki loved it. Of course, another big hit was Eduardo Bianco; he was the one that played the tango. Thessaloniki went crazy over his performance.

In the summer, my parents would go out to the 'Luxemburg' after dinner. It was on the sea side, close to the shipyards. They would go there, listen to music and dance. Sometimes they would also go to Flocas. Flocas was regarded as luxury restaurant. They would go to the White Tower when there was something playing at the theater. Some good plays used to be performed.

They would also go out and eat at the 'Olympos-Naoussa' and at 'Soutzoukakia.' When the 'Soutzoukakia' first opened, I remember, they took us there, too. They told us, 'You will see, we will go to a place that you will like very much.' And then they took us to the Soutzoukakia of Rogoti. And indeed we went and we liked it very much. They didn't take us, the children, out much; it would be the two of them going out mostly. They would leave us at home. They mostly went out on Saturdays, Fridays almost never, because my father opened the shop on Saturdays.

The families that we regarded to be on a higher social scale than us were the Mordoh, Fernandes, Morpurgo, and the Modiano family. And the Torres family that had ran the jute factory. We knew that they were richer, but this didn't really impress us. If my father spoke to Morpurgo or Fernandes, he would feel a little flattered, as those were more aristocratic families.

My father was of very low profile. He didn't like to stand out so much. He had a hearing problem. He lost his hearing when he was quite young. From around the age of 40 he couldn't hear well, so he didn't enjoy socializing much. He was too proud and he didn't want the others to know that he had a hearing problem. This was one of the reasons that he wasn't very sociable and wouldn't go out much.

As a character, I cannot say that he was very humorous. He was very rigid, you could do this but you couldn't do the other. For example, not to respect one's parents, or to treat somebody else badly, or to speak badly to someone who is helping you.

Mother was the same. Although we had two maids in the house, because the house was very big, things were not as easy as one would assume. She wouldn't let us tell the maids, do this or do the other; she would tell us, 'Do it yourself.' At night, when we would go to undress, she'd tell us: 'You will fold your clothes nicely on a chair. In the morning when you leave, your desk will be empty, clean; everything will be in the drawers and you will fold your pajamas and put your slippers under the bed.' And all that despite the fact that we had two maids! This helped me very much later. I went to the camp and everything seemed easy. I went to serve in the army and didn't have a problem.

In the 1920s and 1930s, I didn't hear any comments about immigrants. On the contrary, many were commenting on how much they were suffering. They came barefoot, they had lost everything. My mother and father spoke about them only when they were mentioning how much they were suffering.

There were refugees in the social circle of my family. All the family of Komninos and Hatzigiannakis were refugees. Komninos used to be an immigrant and minister with the liberals. My father was

also a friend of Massimo Arigoni, who was married to the sister of Komninos. They had good relations because Arigoni was also in trade and he was an importer, too.

What the Greeks really didn't like at the time was that the Jews would speak Spanish and French to each other. And they used to say, 'But you are Greeks, why do you speak in another language?' And they couldn't understand that this is how they were brought up. They weren't Greeks; they suddenly became Greeks. They lived in Greece but Thessaloniki was then Turkish, it wasn't Greek, which the others couldn't understand. And the truth is that the Jews didn't know Greek. Since they hadn't been taught the language, how could they have known it? This brought some friction between them at the beginning.

Until 1940 relations between Christians and Jews were a bit tense. Not between the children, because the children that were going to school then started learning Greek anyway. The teachers were proud that the Jews were learning Greek. Then they started getting jealous because they would learn Greek better than the Christians. However, most of the tension was created by the generation of my parents. I could feel it. Many times on the tram I could hear two men speaking to each other in French and someone saying to them, 'Why are you speaking in French? Aren't you Greek?

You couldn't make them understand that when they grew up this wasn't Greece. My father spoke about incidents like that with my mother. There was a time when anti-Semitism grew, especially here in Thessaloniki. Not so much in other places in Greece, but mostly here in Thessaloniki. When the events took place. When Metaxas [32](#) came, everything stopped.

After the Campbell events [33](#) the only feeling left was fear. There were the Tria Epsilon - 3E [34](#). But we didn't connect the 3E with the immigrants. We knew that they were a right wing nationalistic group. The articles in the paper 'Makedonia' also made a very bad impression. They would often publish in their main article something against the Jews. But the issue was political. All the refugees were supporting Venizelos. They knew that 80 percent of the Jews were voting for Tsaldaris, so 'Makedonia' had political reasons why they were turning against the Jews.

In fact, there was a journalist, N. Fardis [35](#), who wrote: 'Why do we let the Jews govern us?' Because you see there were many of us, and we all voted the same. There were also some who were voting for Venizelos, for example Mari's grandfather, Abram Benveniste, strongly believed in Venizelos, and he had a picture of him in the house. But they were only a few. After the war there was a different movement and many went towards the liberals. I was among them.

In our family they would speak about the articles that the paper 'Makedonia' published. And they would get upset. The newspapers that my father used to buy, 'Le Progrès' and 'Indépendent' would comment on it. And when he would read it, we would chat about it. I would buy an issue of 'Makedonia' on purpose, to read what they had written in it. We would talk about it during lunch in the afternoon, because we mainly met our parents at the table. They would say that they had written this and that and they said wasn't correct, because of this and this reason. And we would listen. We mostly listened, we didn't speak much.

However, they would ask us, things like: 'How was school, what did you do today? They knew our friends. Not only did they know our friends, they also knew their families. We never spoke about politics with our friends. We had so much to say about school life. Because with the system that the

Lycée had, with the two programs, one in French and one in Greek, we didn't have much time to talk about other things.

There was a time when many of the Jews left Greece to go to Palestine. That was around 1933 to 1934. Especially after the Campbell events took place, many left not only for Palestine but also for France: Paris, Marseilles. Many of the people we knew left. My mother's uncle immigrated to Paris with his whole family. He checked out things there, if he could find a job, and later he did very well indeed.

I don't remember whether they had political conversations with the rest of the family. Politics didn't really interest them at the time. My father used to talk about Palestine. His brother was planning to leave and immigrate there. I don't know if he would have talked about it, if his brother wasn't going to leave. My father didn't want him to leave and he told him so. Thankfully, he didn't come back. My father used to ask him, 'Aren't we fine here?' He loved Thessaloniki. He liked going for walks in Thessaloniki on foot, around our area, which used to be the countryside then, on Kritis Street and the cafés in Nea Elvetia. They would walk around the area where the Allatini brick factory was.

My mother was born in 1901 in Thessaloniki. She went to the Gattegno school, I think, or to the Alliance, or both. Maybe she went first to the Alliance and later to the Gattegno. She went to elementary and secondary school for twelve years. Maybe high school was fewer years back then - I don't know if it was six years then or three. She knew Ladino, French and Greek very well. She spoke French very well. She learned Greek by practicing it. Maybe they did learn some Greek at school.

I remember that we always had Greek maids. I think that their fathers trusted the Jewish housewives very much, more so than the Christian ones, for their girls to become maids. They trusted them in the sense that they wouldn't let them take the wrong direction, as we had very strict principles and they were treated fairly.

Mari says that Adina was her Jewish name; I thought that Adina was more of an Italian name. Anyway, there were many called 'Adina' in the family, because an aunt called Adina had died. The first brother of my maternal grandmother, Gattegno, had lost his first wife, whose name was Adina, and since then three or four girls that were born were named after her.

My maternal grandfather Saltiel was a Spanish citizen. My mother was Greek, but she had Spanish citizenship. When she got married to my father, because my father had Greek citizenship, she also became Greek.

My father Simon and my mother Adina got married around 1921 or 1922. A mutual friend had introduced them - he was a Jew and he wasn't from Thessaloniki. He was a refugee from Austria or Poland, I think. He was a German teacher in a school. And when he introduced them, a great love developed. They wrote letters to each other for a whole year. Despite the fact that they were living in the same city. I remember Mother having a big bunch of letters wrapped up with a nice ribbon that she would guard at all times, and these were the letters that my father had written to her before they got engaged.

They got engaged and a few months later they got married. At the time my father had built our house on Papakyriazi Street. He let his parents live there for a few years and later, when he had

children, he told them that he wanted the house for himself to live in, and rented them a nice house.

My mother never worked apart from doing the housework. But at the beginning, because her mother had died, and before my grandfather got married again, she took care of her two sisters, who were younger than her. She brought them up. My mother loved her husband very much. I think that she loved her husband first and her kids after. Our sister Rosa, who was the youngest one in the family, was her weakness and this is why she didn't want her to leave with me when I left.

My mother had psychological problems and that's why a couple of times she got depressed. One time they left us at Grandmother's house and Father took her to a sanatorium in Switzerland. They stayed there for about twenty days, so she would recover a little bit.

From what I have heard, she was a very beautiful woman. I remember her, but I also remember what they used to say in the neighborhood. She was very shy. She wasn't a snob, she didn't show off, or move about. My mother was very modest. Modesty is the perfect word to describe her, and she was also a very good soul. She was very hospitable. She helped all the girls that were working in the house. We had two girls in the house. They regarded her as their own mother. She wouldn't let us ask them even for a glass of water. We had to do everything by ourselves.

The girls would do everything in the house, but they never cooked. My mother cooked. I don't know why, she didn't trust others with the cooking. The house was always tidy. Everything was in place and clean. And they didn't have any machines then for washing, everything was done by hand. When we had only one maid, when we grew up, a woman would come and help her with the laundry, and they would hang all the clean laundry in the garden.

Mainly Christians lived in the neighborhood. We didn't have Jewish neighbors. It was a wealthy area. It was full of detached houses of one or two stories, with very nice gardens, and they would be very competitive about who had the prettiest flowers. Three or four houses would have the same gardener, Charito.

We had really good relationships with the neighbors, with all the Greeks of the neighborhood. Their financial situation was about the same as ours, maybe slightly lower. We had really good relations with the family of Germanos, who also spoke French. It was an Athenian family, very aristocratic. Nikolaos Germanos was the one who founded the Thessaloniki International Trade Fair [36](#). I remember the first time that the Fair opened, the manager, Nikolaos Germanos, took along Mother and Father in the taxi. He went to the inauguration of the Fair in a taxi! His younger daughter, Alexandra, loved my mother very much and she would come around the house very often.

My father used to get up at 6 in the morning. I remember he would wake up and go around the maids' rooms and knock on the door and wake them up. My father was very careful with his personal hygiene. He would take a shower every morning. In most of the houses, the tradition was to have a good wash every Friday. On Fridays they would shower, and then, with the couples being clean, they would make love.

In the bathroom we had a water heater that worked with wood. The good thing was that when the water would get warm, the whole room would get warm, too. The maid would prepare the wood for

the water heater the night before. When my father got up, he would light a match and light the spills. We would take many spills from the shop, because all the goods would come in wooden boxes and we used to distribute the spills to several people. We all used to take our bath. We would finish our homework and we would have a shower. But we would change underwear only once a week, on Fridays. The laundry woman came once a month, and by then there was a lot of washing piled up.

My father would have his shower and shave every morning and he would later leave the house. My mother would get up around six thirty or seven and they would have coffee together. They would always have coffee together and specifically café au lait. My father used to drink his coffee, eat a toast with it, and leave for work.

Mother stayed at home and first thing she would take care of us because we had to leave for school. Later she would cook and do the household chores. She would cook things that we eat today, like spaghetti or bean soup. But the food used to be heavier than it is today. For example the bean soup was not like it is served today. It was a thick stew with sausages. It was a custom to eat bean soup every Friday and a pie. You can imagine how our stomach would react to that.

My mother was a great cook and everyone in the family would say, 'Come to eat at Adina's, the food will be great.' Adina used to cook a lot of Sephardic dishes, just like Grandmother Mathilde and Grandmother Rachel did. They used to cook the way that they had learned from their mothers. She also tried new recipes. She had a book to learn new dishes, a so-called 'Tselemente' - a cook book. And she also made many other things like marmalades, sweets and all the rest. She also made pickles. They would prepare the pickles in the house at the time; they would make tomato sauce, sweets, marmalades - all home-made. That's why I keep mentioning that there was so much to do in the house. I wonder how she could manage with all these chores!

In the afternoon, the whole family would eat together. In the evening Mother would sit with us, or a teacher would come and help us with our homework. And we would have a snack in the evening, because back then we used to go to school in the morning and the evening. At elementary school we had classes only in the morning, but in high school we had classes both in the morning and in the evening. We would go around 8 in the morning until around 12 or 1, and would return around 3 or 4 o'clock and finish at 5pm. We didn't have much time left for our homework. Sometimes we would stay up till really late.

My mother read in the evening. It was the only time that she could read. Or a friend of hers would come and visit. There was the Germanos family and there were also the relatives. She would go and visit them and they would come and visit us, too. And our sister Lily, who also lived nearby, she would come very often. In fact, two months after my sister was born, Lily gave birth to her daughter. And they were both named Rosa. And because my mother didn't have a lot of milk and she did, I remember my aunt breast-feeding both babies. One baby was hers and the other one was our sister.

I don't know whether she had friends from school, maybe she did. She would see them every so often. We were then using the phone only if there was an emergency or something really important, we never used to pick up the phone to have a conversation, never. She had some close friends. One was Mrs. Hassid and she had a sister, who was called Covo. They were friends since school. They lived quite close to our house. The other one had children. Sometimes the couples

would go out together. They would go to the countryside then. After Martiou Street it was all fields. They would go all the way to Elvetia.

My mother was a member of the children's asylum [37](#). She was also a member of Merimna [38](#) and 'Melissa.' They would come often to collect the subscriptions. They would also come from the Christian old men's home, the Hariseio [39](#). An old guy would come by, with a metal box, and we would put the money straight in the box. He would come every now and again.

We also contributed to the Matanot [40](#), which gave meals to the poor. She would go to the distribution very often. The distributions would take place at Fleming Street, where the Jewish school is today. But there were also distributions further away at the '151' neighborhood [41](#). She never went to the one that was at the Baron Hirsch, because it was very far away from the house. She helped with the serving of the food and the cooking. But that was after we had grown up a bit, after 1936. When we were younger she didn't have any free time left for this.

In fact, during the occupation, my mother used to cook and give meals to the children. At the Matanot she was taking part for reasons of charity, not from a religious point of view. And Matanot wasn't a religious organization anyway. It belonged to the Community and its main objective was to help the poor. She felt that she ought to offer her help. And she would also help many around the neighborhood, without saying anything about it. Not only Jewish people, for most of our neighbors weren't Jews anyway.

She would mention the children that were poor. She used to say, 'What, you don't eat your food?! You should go out and see how many children are starving. It's a shame to leave your food.' It was a rule, not to leave anything on the plate. If we would leave something on the plate that we didn't like, she would bring it out again in the evening, so we would eat it then. In other words, she didn't want to bring us up as spoiled children. My father was very modest, although he was very rich at the time. But he also didn't want us to behave as if we were wealthy or to believe that we were rich.

My mother went and had her dresses made at the best dressmakers in the city. She looked modest but had great taste. She looked after herself. She was very neat and very clean, and never, even early in the morning, would she get up with the 'penoire' [nightie] and such things. She had to be well dressed and well combed. She would make sure to put on only a bit of make-up. Sometimes she would criticize other women from the neighborhood that were a bit, well, let's say crazier.

If Father would bring the newspaper, my mother would have a look at it. 'Illustration' had some columns for women, she would read those. She would buy 'Marie Claire.' At that time 'Marie Claire' was being published only in French. And she would also buy another magazine that was called 'La Mode Pratique.' This magazine showed you how to sew and had ready patterns to use in it. My mother used to sew a lot and made things on her own. Mostly she knitted, and didn't sew, and she also made embroideries. She would knit us whole jumpers. After dinner in the evening, she would sit with my father and chat with him while she was knitting. They went to bed around -10.30 or 11 o'clock at the latest.

We were among the first houses to get a radio and we listened to it a lot. It's a bit like with television today, we couldn't help listening to the radio. We would switch to all the different frequencies and listen to various stations, because we knew both French and English. After dinner

we would sit and listen to the radio and to music.

My parents really liked to listen to music; we also had a gramophone. We had a gramophone that was a piece of furniture, not like the ones that have a loud hailer. They listened to classical music. My father really liked the Greek songs, too. All these songs like 'Two seductive eyes' and 'Yaf youf, I don't want you anymore.' But they also liked classical music. Sometimes they would go to a concert. When there was a good one, they would go. At the time there was Loris Margaritis [Greek violinist, who had studied abroad, and was one of the most prominent musicians in Thessaloniki in the interwar period.], the Margaritis couple. He was married to a Jewish girl from Vienna, Mrs. Margariti. They used to give good concerts.

My mother played the piano. But she played very rarely. Aunt Lily knew how to play, too. The girls of well-to-do families, at the time, had to learn the piano. And Grandfather had all three daughters learn how to play the piano, so they would be regarded as good future brides. There were middlemen then, who were called 'middlemen for brides,' who would arrange to get a percentage of the dowry, in order to arrange the wedding. They would come to the father and say, 'I have a good guy.' They would go to the other father and say, 'I have a good girl, she went to school there and there and she knows how to play the piano.' Or: 'She knows how to play the violin.' Daisy played the violin; she studied for many years with a private teacher who taught her at home.

My mother was taking piano classes before she got married to my father. Afterwards she would play every now and again. But I don't think that she continued to take lessons afterwards. She used to have a piano teacher who was Italian, her name was Beatrice. She lived in some hut on Vasilissis Olgas Street, right opposite Alexander the Great, there were some grounds there where they had put up these huts. The Community had probably put them there. She was an old maid. It struck me that she had a beard. With Beatrice they remained friends and they would invite her over to the house and have her join us for dinner.

The customs and the mores were completely different then. There was a lot of compassion. The whole neighborhood knew each other. We knew everyone that lived in the neighborhood. When one left the house to go wherever, to work or to school, he would say hello to so many people. Even the conductors on the tram knew us; they would see us four times a day.

We didn't have any religious objects in the house, and we didn't say any prayers. Only on religious holidays we would go to the synagogue. My mother never went to the synagogue. She would fast, but she wouldn't go to the synagogue. She bought kosher meat, but we didn't have separate plates etc. They were brought up in the French manner, which suggested that religion is a matter of conscience; they had very good principles.

My mother used to tell us stories about the Great Fire. How it happened, what happened after and how they all gathered. They went through two or three very difficult years, because there weren't enough habitable houses. We spoke about the Great Fire with Grandmother Saltiel, too. She was telling us how they lived, all gathered in one house. The Great Fire was something to talk about because it was a big thing.

Something that never happened in our family was to talk openly about sex, as if it didn't exist at all. I had a complaint about that because we grew up without knowing anything. About the condoms, that we ought to be careful, etc.; they didn't tell us one thing. I don't think that there

were other families that spoke about things like that either, it was a big taboo. And that kind of harmed us because later, when we grew up, we still didn't know how these things worked. When I went to South Africa and saw the freedom that they had there, I couldn't believe it.

My mother didn't speak much about the Community. They talked about Nazism, when it started; they talked a lot about it.

I remember when the Campbell events took place. I still remember watching the flames from my house, even though they were so far away. We had a neighbor who was a policeman, and his name was Kalohristianakis. He was an acquaintance and he had told us not to worry, and he had given us some whistles and said, in case anything happened we should blow them and the gendarme guarding the neighborhood would come.

After the Campbell events my parents were wondering about the facts. I cannot say that we restricted ourselves in any way, because the government took measurements straight away then. Then Metaxas came and everything stopped, because no one dared joke with Metaxas. We used to say that Metaxas was the ice bucket; he had put things on ice.

My younger sister was called Rosa. My first grandmother, who was called Rosa, had died and since then all the girls were named after her. My sister was born in 1929. Because she was the youngest one in the family, my brother and I had her under our protection. I was seven years older than her. After she was born, she first slept in our parents' room. Our parents also had some weakness for her, just like the youngest in a family are always treated. She was a very nice, very kind girl. A neighbor of ours, Tahiaos, who lived close to us and saw her at school, was somewhat in love with her. Whenever he sees me now, he says, 'Oh this Rosa, your sister, oh this Rosa, your sister.' He always says that.

She knew French very well, and a little of Judeo-Spanish. She knew perfect Greek, for one, because she had Christian friends, and for the other, because she also learned it at school. She was very good at writing essays. We, the children, would speak in both French and Greek with each other. We would start talking in French, continue in Greek and in the end we would finish up with Spanish. We spoke less Spanish, but we did speak it with our grandfathers. Our mother tongue was both French and Greek. We learned both languages at the same time. We would never start a conversation and speak only in one language. It was the same with our friends.

Rosa went to elementary and secondary school at Schina's. She didn't go to the Mission Laique. I don't see any reason why she should have changed school. It was near the house, and she had learned French already at home. Anyway by that time, in 1942, France had fallen and the Mission Laique didn't exist. There were only Greek schools around. Rosa's friends were from her school. She had Jewish and Christian friends. At Schina's there were many Jewish students because it was a Jewish neighborhood.

Rosa had her own room in the house. I shared one with my brother. My parents had one room, and the maids had the other one. The houses used to be built like this: the lounge in the middle and the bedrooms around, dinning room and kitchen separate. The cookers used to work with coal. There was no electricity, we cooked with charcoal.

Rosa used to go to the movies with my parents or with her friends. Or she would go with the maid. If there was a children's film on, the maid would take her to watch it. She was such a coquette when she was little. She liked being dressed nicely. My mother was strict in that regard. One time when she went to the movies she wore a nice dress and my mother got very angry and told her to take it off and wear something simpler. She would say, 'You should be ashamed, just because you will go to the cinema today, you want to dress up?!' This happened when she was still very young, around six or seven years old. Everyone wanted things to be simple, not pretend that you are someone special. And both my father and mother were very low profile.

Mother used to take Rosa with her to do the shopping. She would give her a hand with carrying the groceries. Before the occupation the grocery boy would come by the house and ask you what you wanted, and he would deliver what you had ordered. Sometimes they used to go shopping downtown to get some shoes or a dress. They would go to the market on the tram. Rosa had dolls she played with, books she read, she also painted or would go around to the neighbors. She didn't learn any musical instrument. Apart from the fact that we no longer had a piano, because the Germans had taken it, when she was little, they had tried a couple of times and she didn't really like it. She wasn't a music lover.

I was born at home. Even my sister, who was born seven years later, she too was born at home. We had the sister of an uncle of mine who was a midwife and she would help in every birth to deliver the baby. That was her job, she was a midwife. Her name was Karolina. She was well known in the Jewish Community because she could help to deliver the baby in the house. They used to boil a lot of water and have clean sheets and deliver the new born. They usually didn't have any complications, or very rarely.

At the birth only women would be in the room, the men were never in there. The close relatives would be in the room, her mother, her sister or her aunt, three or four ready to help at any time. That's what Grandmother Mathilde used to tell me. I remember when my sister Rosa was born. My brother and I were downstairs and we could hear them going up and down to the kitchen to get pots of boiling water. They used to say that for the next forty days the mother and baby shouldn't leave the house but this wasn't always kept. Some people kept it and some didn't.

They were breastfeeding. My mother did. They would breastfeed the baby from the beginning until they ran out of milk. It was a widespread custom, when the milk would finish, they would hire a woman to breastfeed the baby. It didn't matter if she was Christian or Jewish, a friend or an acquaintance.

I know that many Christians were hiring Jewish women to breastfeed their babies. Even at the Agios Stylianos Foundling Hospital [42](#) they had Jewish girls that went and breastfed the babies who needed it. They were poor and as any other service they would do this, too. They had started to add concentrated milk for babies, like Nounou. And they also had fruit cream, Farin Lacte, which was a kind of flour, enriched with vitamins and milk and they would add water to it, they would warm it up, and give it to the baby with a dummy.

The boys would have their circumcision within the first week of birth. And the doctors had to check and make sure that the boy is strong and can go through the procedure. The surgeon was Jewish; he was like a special doctor, specialized in circumcisions, and he was the one that also slaughtered the animals, so that the meat would be kosher.

So a specialist would perform the circumcision. He wasn't a rabbi, but he was probably of the clergy, because he was learning things. Sometimes it would be the rabbi himself, and he had the special tool, it was a small and very sharp knife.

After the circumcision, a big celebration would follow. The circumcision I watched was my cousin Tori's, my aunt Lily's son. It seemed to me very strange: a baby there screaming and shouting. The circumcision was a very festive celebration.

Some of the rich would even hire bands to play music in the house, to play the violin. The mother would sit on the bed and the relatives would come by to congratulate her. And after the circumcision they would take the baby back to his mother. During the circumcision someone was holding the baby; it was usually the grandfather or the father. In Spanish he was called 'kitador.' That means: he who takes out the baby.

The procedure would be done really well and really quickly. In the beginning they would get the baby dizzy with a bit of wine, but of course when they cut, he would scream. The whole ceremony would last a whole morning, about three or four hours. Friends and relatives would come around and congratulate the family. It was a very joyous event.

Until I went to school my mother took care of me at home. At home we used to have a woman who was like a teacher, a governess, as we used to call her. She used to come at around ten in the morning and leave at night. We had one for two years; others had one for more years than we did.

I remember, for a couple of years we had a maid who was very poor. Her name was Smeralda. She knew only Spanish. That was when we were a bit older, seven or eight years old, in the first grades of elementary school. She used to take us out for walks, to her fiancé's workshop that had a loom.

That really impressed me. She never played with us. I would play with my brother and she would keep an eye on us. Later on, when we grew up, he was coming around the house and told her, 'Take the kids and go to the school that is nearby.'

We went to the Roi Georges school, where the High School at Kriezotou stands today, by the coast. It was an old building that was called Roi Georges because it served as the residency of King George when he came to Thessaloniki [after the First Balkan War].

We grew up learning three languages. Our maids were usually Greek, and they were the ones that we would speak Greek with. We spoke French to our parents and they spoke Spanish to each other. With Grandmother and Grandfather we spoke Spanish. With both the grandfathers, but Grandfather Daniel also knew French. Not well, but he spoke it. While my paternal grandfather Haim didn't know French at all. We mostly spoke in French. I started developing my Greek when I went to elementary school.

You cannot imagine how many Greeks, Christians, spoke Ladino better than me! They couldn't work in trade if they didn't. Even the high society spoke Ladino, not only the employees, but also the shop owners.

Our mother was strict. I used to fight with my brother when we were young, because we were jealous of each other. If Mother came out, she wouldn't ask whose fault it was, she would give us both a couple of slaps and that was it, we would sit down and be calm.

She was very tender when we were younger. And we felt great love for both our father and our mother. Our father used to take us on his lap and play with us. Even though he came back so late from work, he would play with us for a little while. We didn't see Father a lot.

He would leave at 7.30am, come back at 1pm, leave at 3pm and come back around 8.30pm. We weren't so much in contact with him. With Mother we were closer. But also Mother would go out in the evening quite often and leave us with our teacher.

I used to treat my mother and father exactly the same way. My father was a bit softer with us because he spent less time with us. Mother was stricter. At the time we had a room in the house where we would spend most of the day, and the lounge where one would receive people.

I shared a room with my brother. We played in our room. Our room faced the north side and it was quite cold. When we were in bed at night and the Vardaris [northern wind stemming from the river Axios or Vardaris] would blow, we could hear the wind whistling and would hide under our blankets.

When my mother had things to do in the kitchen, we would play in our room. We didn't have many toys then. We had some books and we had started to read. But we didn't have many toys. Later, when we grew up we had a Meccano set, which was a very interesting toy.

We would go and spend time in the garden with our cousins. When we were around ten years old, our life was happening in the garden. There was a basement in the garden, quite big, where the gardener used to store his tools and the pots that he didn't want to leave outside during the winter. We kind of took over this place and turned it into our own spot, like our room, and we put boxes there with newspapers and pillows on top of them. And mother was shouting at us, because we had taken the pillows and we had transformed the basement to a small house. My cousin Renée used to come down, from the first floor and we would take the gardener's trolley and play.

• School years

I went to school when I was seven years old. But when I went, I already knew how to read. I knew the Latin alphabet and the numbers; my grandmother had taught me. I don't remember my mother ever sitting down to teach me.

At the French school my parents were paying fees both for our elementary and secondary schooling. When we had Smeralda she used to take us to school. Or my mother would take us. It was very close to the house, at the same bus stop.

We would just walk down Papakyriazi Street, cross the road, and the garden of the school would be right opposite. I went to school with my brother. We started going to school together; I don't remember ever going on my own. I went to the first class and he went to the nursery.

The school was a 'préparatoire,' which means preparatory and which is what we now call elementary school. I went there until the third grade. We had small tables with small chairs where we would all sit. We had a French teacher who was specialized in small children. I remember her, her name was Madame Doze. She was very competent with young children. How she managed to hold our interest and teach us things in there for so many hours, I don't know.

All the lessons were being held in French. There were about twenty of us in a class, boys and girls, and we had the same teacher for all the different subjects. In the beginning when we were all little and until the third grade, we would have classes from 9 in the morning until 12 or 1 in the afternoon, or something like that, I don't remember the exact time schedule.

We would have classes on many different subjects, as they do in elementary schools. To learn the language, the letters and the alphabet, they would ask us to write whole pages with 'a' or 'b', or numbers. They didn't teach us Judeo-Spanish at all.

The French school wasn't a religious one. There was no Hebrew or religion being taught. We didn't have a morning prayer; the first time that we had a morning prayer was when I went to Schina's School. Most of my classmates were Jews. Out of the twenty students, only four or five were not Jews.

We didn't celebrate any national holidays except 14th July, which was a French national holiday and we didn't have classes then. [Bastille Day, the French national holiday, commemorates the storming of the Bastille, which took place on 14 July 1789 and marked the beginning of the French Revolution.]

I remember we also celebrated the day of the end of the war, which was on 11th November, I think. [The armistice treaty between the Allies and Germany was signed on 11th November 1918, and marked the end of World War I on the Western Front.] We celebrated that at school. They would gather us all together, and some children would have poems to deliver.

I really disliked poems, because I couldn't remember them. We celebrated 25th March [both a Greek national (revolution against the Turks) and religious holiday (Annunciation)], and we would put up flags. I don't remember celebrating Saint Demetrios Day [the patron saint of Thessaloniki, celebrated on 26th October].

When I finished the third grade, this law came out, that all children had to have an elementary school certificate from a Greek School. Only children of foreign citizens were able to go to a school that wasn't Greek. So in the fourth grade I changed schools and went to Schina's, which was very near my house. And my brother and I went to school on our own because we no longer had to cross the main road, and we went through the small streets to get there.

There were many Jews there, too. Mrs. Schina had many students that were Jewish, girls and boys. Because we were weaker than the rest of the students, our teacher would come home in the evening and give us private lessons in order to reach the level of the rest of the class. Throughout the fourth grade, we had help from Mrs. Mary.

Her father was one of the partners that owned the Olympos-Naoussa restaurant. Her house was on Romanou Street, close to the White Tower, I remember on her name-day we went around to congratulate her.

In elementary school we wore uniforms. We all wore a blue apron with a white collar that had the initials P.P. written on it, which stood for 'Protypon Parthenagogeion' [model girl's school]. Even though there were boys, too. The building had two floors, and each class had a name like 'the little sparrows,' 'the little swallows,' etc.

In our class we were about thirty or thirty-five students, boys and girls mixed, and we would sit at the desks two or three together, mixed. Our desks had either two or three seats. Most of the students were Christians. I didn't make any friends in this elementary school. Later on, in high school, I made some friends. In the fifth grade they elected me as chief of the class.

After Mrs. Mary, in the fifth and sixth grade, we had Mr. Dourgouti and Mrs. Evridiki. We had two teachers because we were taught more subjects by then. I remember that Mrs. Evridiki was a spinster and she was very strict. She used to beat us with a ruler.

Mr. Dourgoutis was someone that I will never forget. He was an amazing teacher and he had great communicative skills. When he gave the lesson, he would speak and we would all listen. He would write a couple of things on the blackboard that we copied in our notebooks. Based on that, we would read at home, and the next day we would go to the class and he would ask us questions.

He was teaching us many different subjects, but mostly mathematics, physics and chemistry. He also taught the class of gymnastics. He taught gymnastics to all grades. When we would go to a parade, he would be the leader of the parade, the one that gives the signs. I think that he was the only male teacher in this elementary school, the rest of them were women.

We would get tired having his class. He would tire us because we paid so much attention. And he would make us write and write. I learned very good spelling then. When I finished elementary school I could spell very well. I learned spelling from Mr. Dourgoutis and I cannot stand reading texts that have spelling mistakes. All the kids respected him and no-one dared to say a word.

He had taken part in the Smyrna Campaign [43](#), he was an old officer. And many times he would narrate stories from the expedition in class, without wasting too much time from the lesson, just as a small break. Since he was the one that was narrating, we would be upset that Greece lost. But he never spoke about retreat; he only spoke about forward march.

Many years later, when I was an adult, completely out of chance, he came and rented a house opposite ours on Kritis Street, and he would see me. In fact he had found out that there was a Jewish old people's home and he used to tell me, 'Mico, would it be possible to put me in the Jewish old people's home, too? After all, I raised so many Jews.'

We would get to school around 8.30 or 9 o'clock in the morning. First we had the morning prayer. We listened, and sometimes we said the prayer, too. But we never crossed ourselves. None of the children had a problem with that. I remember the Lord's Prayer and other prayers. That really didn't upset me at all. We had one break, every hour. We would go down to the school yard and play 'aiyuto, tchilica chomaca, quinacka,' we would exchange, 'you take the red and I'll take the blue.' We played football with stones but also with a ball. The boys and the girls used to play separately.

At Schina's school, when we were a bit older, the teacher would hit us. Dourgoutis was the one that would punish one of us for everyone: 'hold out your hand.' We were very naughty, and if you bothered others in the class, he would tell you, 'Get out of the class!'

And the worst thing ever was to take you to the principal's office, to Mrs. Schina. 'Let's go to the head office.' That was it... Thankfully, it never happened to me. My brother and I were quieter; we didn't have to go through things like that.

At the Greek school, there was a class of Religion. I remember that we had that hour off in the first years. There were other classrooms that were empty and one could go there and read and write one's homework, but we weren't allowed to leave the school. They said that whoever wanted to stay in class and listen, could do so, and I did. Why not? I didn't do anything bad. We asked at home, should we sit and listen to the lesson? They told me, 'yes, why not?' Because there were many Jews in the school, Mrs. Schina later got us a Hebrew teacher. The teacher was Jewish. She would teach us Hebrew letters but not religion and the lesson was in Greek. This happened when I was nearly finishing school.

I liked mathematics and physics the most. We also had Greek history. I liked history. We started from mythology and went through many different periods of history. In the third and fourth grade we had mythology. Then we did the Byzantium and later the Greek Revolution. What I didn't like so much was Byzantium. All these stories about Vassileios II. and the rest of it. [Editor's note: The interviewee is referring to Basil II, a Byzantine emperor from the Macedonian dynasty who reigned from 10 976 to 1025 and was also known as the Bulgar-slayer.]

The Revolution really impressed me. The fact that they wanted to be liberated was really very interesting. I imagined the Turks like killers, all of them, especially when they were telling the stories of Karaiskakis [44](#) and Rigas Feraios [45](#). I never thought of learning the history of the Jews in Greece, because for us it was something taken for granted. The Jews had been there for over 500 years.

We would celebrate all the national holidays. In elementary school we didn't go to the parades, but we still celebrated. In the evening they would gather us and someone would speak about the Revolution and the Liberation of Thessaloniki. And we read poems. We all took part in the celebrations. The most important thing for us at the time was that we didn't have school that day. That's what we liked most.

A parade would take place in the city. There would be both a student and a military parade. I remember going a couple of times. We had some relatives that lived on the road where the parade took place. We would go to their house and carry flags. I think it was on Tsimiski and Vasilissis Olgas Street [two of the main roads of the interwar period in Thessaloniki].

The parade didn't really impress me. The army was different then. I remember, for example, many times military units marching from our house on Kritis Street. After they were gone, the smell was very strong. One could tell that hygienic conditions in the army were really bad. When I went to the French High School I used to take the tram, and we paid less because we had a student card, but we could only go to the second wagon, not the first. You would get in the wagon and it stank. Our parents used to tell us to be careful, when we get in the wagon not to sit close to a soldier because we might catch flees. And we did catch them a few times.

We knew that in the downgraded areas of Thessaloniki like '151' or 'Reggie' there was great poverty. For example, we had a woman that would come when we had to do the laundry. She would come on foot from Vardari to our house, which was four stops. She would start walking around 6 o'clock in order to be at our house at 7.30. She would work all day and walk back home again, so she wouldn't have to pay for the tram. And that was common.

To the settlement No. '6' [46](#), which was near our house, I used to go sometimes because we knew maids that lived there. I could see how they lived there, four or five people in one room, in shanties. Those were shanties of the Allies. That's why it was called number six. The women would sit outside. Their sole entertainment was when they didn't have work to sit outside and chat with their neighbors.

My parents never used to tell us to be careful when we went there, or not to go there. It wasn't anything harmful. We never heard of anything happening there. On the contrary, they used to tell us, 'Wherever you can help, you should.' Many people would come around our house. They would say, 'I'm in great need, I don't have milk for my baby' And other such things.

The religious ceremonies were the bar mitzvahs and the weddings. The girls didn't have a bat mitzvah as they do today. I remember my bar mitzvah. I was thirteen years old. As soon as you are thirteen you can have your bar mitzvah. Some do it later. I remember I had a teacher from the time when I turned eleven and he would come to our house for two or three hours a week. He first taught me the Hebrew alphabet and later what I had to read. For every single week out of the 52 weeks of the year, there is a part in the Old Testament that you read. I can still read Hebrew, but I cannot understand it.

I never learned Ladino or the Rashi alphabet [47](#). Some others learned it. My father knew how to read in Rashi. I wasn't interested in learning it. No one in the family told me to do so. So why should I have done it? It was already out of date. It wasn't even Hebrew. Rashi was being read here in Greece, Bulgaria, and Turkey, where the Sephardic Jews were. The language quickly disappeared, but in the book those that went to the synagogue had to read many parts that were in Rashi, so they read them in Spanish.

I had my bar mitzvah in the Beit Saoul synagogue. The ceremony was like this: you go to the synagogue and read. You read and then you give a small speech. You say: From now on I am an adult Jew. I can participate in the ceremonies and I can be one of the ten men that are needed for a minyan.

You would read, and all the time someone would get up and sit next to you. He would pretend to check whether you were reading correctly and when he would go down, he would give his donation, to honor the family. There would be friends and relatives getting up. First it would be the grandfather, then the father and after them all the rest.

They were donating money to the institutes. The Jewish Community had many different institutes. Usually they would firstly donate money to the synagogue and the rabbi and after that to other organizations of the Community.

The bar mitzvah ceremony took place early in the morning, at the time that the daily ceremony starts. It usually starts just after sunrise, let's say at about 8 o'clock. The bar mitzvah would start around 9. Its duration varied. If there were many people that wanted to get up on the stand, it would last longer.

When there weren't so many that wanted to get up and read, then the rabbi would read faster. But usually after your speech, the rabbi gives a speech and tells you that you should now be a decent human being, as you are now an adult, you should follow your religion, the rules etc. At around 11

or 11.30 the ceremony was over. In my case, it lasted about that long.

Then we went home where we had a meal that the closest relatives attended. And later people would come and visit, with many presents. I remember everyone that came had a present. I then got my first bicycle as a present from my father. I also remember a nice school bag that my uncle Joseph brought me. They used to bring quills. And they also used to bring sweets. They would send flowers to the synagogue or to our home. One of the best presents that I got was the big Meccano. I got the biggest one, number 7. It started from number 1 and it went up to number 7. The number 7 really was a full course of mechanical engineering and it interested me very much.

I also got a small electric motor, with a transformer so that it wouldn't be dangerous, with which you could create movement on anything you made. A common present was the Larousse encyclopedia, which was seven volumes and it was very expensive.

Two or three members from the family would put money together and give you a group present, because these presents were very expensive. My brother still has it. After the war, he found the encyclopedia which they had given him for his bar mitzvah, and he still has it. They would also buy you dictionaries, Greek-French or English-Greek.

And there were a lot of dinners. For two or three days, we would have guests and dinners. These dinners held after a bar mitzvah weren't anything special, anything different. They used to give you sugar plums like they do today at baptisms. My parents were pleased, especially my father.

His friends would come around and his customers. Christians would also come to ceremonies like this. Not many of course, but they would come, at least about ten of them. The ceremonies were completely open, and friends and customers would come to the synagogue, because they would be invited. 'On this day we will celebrate the coming of age - the adulthood - ...' You see, they didn't call it a son's bar mitzvah.

I went to a wedding, too. I remember when Aunt Ida got married. I was a bit older then. The wedding didn't take place at the synagogue; it was at the Matanot Laevionim. Matanot means 'presents' and Laevionim 'to the needy,' so presents for the poor.

There was a special room for ceremonies. You would pay and with the money they would maintain the establishment. After a wedding there would usually be a dance. The dance would be at the Matanot, and if the wedding was at the synagogue, the dance could still be at the Matanot. Because it was a very large hall and could accommodate many people. It had an orchestra with a piano and violin. They used to dance the waltz, tango, foxtrot, dances of the time.

The married couples would always go on a honeymoon trip. And many times, in the wagon the loss of virginity would take place. Many used to go to Constantinople [today Istanbul, Turkey] and Vienna and Paris. Those were the favorite destinations.

Uncle Daniel went to Paris after he got married. I remember his wedding, too, because we had a large house and my uncle used to live upstairs and we used to live on the ground floor, and the bride left from our house. She was from Volos and they had brought her to our house. And she left from our house to go to the synagogue where she was going to get married.

From my uncle's wedding I remember that we really liked the sister of our aunt. She was younger than her sister but she still seemed very old to us. She too was very beautiful. There wasn't any difference, like they say now, for example, that at a first class marriage all the lights of the synagogue will be turned on and the large chandeliers, and if it's a second class marriage there would be fewer lights lit. No.

There was only one way and the wedding lasted the same length of time. In the end the rabbi gave the newly-weds wine to drink, and the bride, I think, or the groom that steps on the glass, I cannot remember. It is a quick and very joyful ceremony, and there are many songs.

In order to have a rich wedding and to have a social event, one had to have more flowers. Also, there were many synagogues at the time and depending on the wedding it would take place in a certain synagogue. In other words, not everybody could get married in the Beit Saul synagogue, because it was more expensive. There were smaller synagogues where the ceremony was simpler. What they read was exactly the same, it would take less or more time, it would be identical.

The bride wore a wedding dress, of course. And it would be a great story, how the wedding dress was made. And Father would get a new suit or a tuxedo. The whole family would be restless, to make their dresses and the men's clothes and the rest of it. The bride had a very nice wedding dress and a great flower bouquet that the groom would give her. This wedding dress was white, similar to the Christian wedding dress. And they had small children holding the tail of the wedding dress.

We don't have best men, we have witnesses. They sign, too. They used to say that if the bride was a virgin, then the wedding ring had to be all gold. The rabbi used to show the ring to one of the witnesses and say 'gold ring' no matter if the bride was a virgin or not.

I remember my aunt Daisy's friend, who was very naughty, and would go to the doctor all the time so he would sew her up again, and at some point the doctor tells her, 'What will we do with you, put a zipper and stop.' If they had lost their virginity they had to sew it up, so that on their wedding nights they would appear to be virgins. So they would go to the gynecologist, who would do that. In fact, I can even remember on some occasions that the wedding would take place and the day after there would be a divorce because the bride was not a virgin. And that was a serious reason for a divorce. You can imagine the shame for the girl and her whole family.

I remember two or three occasions like that. The whole society would speak about it. We wouldn't hear of incidents like that in poorer families. But when it was people that we knew: 'Oh God,' the one would say, 'you know so and so that left for the wedding trip on the train? They got back in three days time because the groom said that the bride was not alright.'

The parents would speak between them and we would listen, they didn't hide things like that. Their position varied depending on how close our relationship with them was. If it was people that were close relatives, they would say, 'Oh no, bad and shame has come upon our family.' And depending on the relationship they had they would either take the groom's or the bride's side. They would say, 'He is crusty, so we don't believe him. Maybe this is his chance to say that he has regretted it, or maybe the dowry is not big enough for him.' And things like that.

Anyway, the divorce wasn't an easy thing. I remember one of our employees at the shop, who wanted to divorce his wife. My father got in the middle, took him to his office and talked to him and told him it wasn't right to leave your wife and children, and then took him to his home, and convinced him in the end not to divorce her. He was Jewish, too.

The funerals would be exactly the same as the Christian funerals used to be. At the time the coffin would be carried by horses. Four to six horses would be up the front and draw the coffin. They also used to dress the horses with something mournful on their heads. The people would follow on foot until the end. They would start the walk from their house and they would all go together. Right behind the hearse the closer family would follow and further back the friends. There were usually many people. I went to Grandfather Alvo's funeral. I went at the back. They wouldn't allow women to be at the burying ceremony. Sometimes women fainted only because of their sorrow.

After the war they would often start from the synagogue, especially in Athens. But here things are very different. As soon as death is certified you contact the funeral office, they come with the hearse, take the dead man and put him in a cooler. Two or three hours before the funeral, they take him out. Before they put him in a coffin, the cleaning of the dead takes place. There are some men and some women that do this job. The men wash the male corps, and the women the female corps. They wash them very well and they rub them with something and in the end they wrap them in a sheet. The dead man is wrapped in a white shroud and put in the coffin.

Then they take him to this venue in the cemetery. The venue is quite small and it doesn't fit many people. Only very close relatives go there, and the people that come to the funeral go and greet the relatives, and some close friends sit there, too. A ceremony is held during which the rabbi reads for not longer than twenty minutes. Then they leave the venue. They take the coffin on their shoulders and move it where the burial will take place, to the grave that has been opened in advance.

Then the burial takes place and the dead is taken out of the coffin. When they place him in the grave the head goes inside a hole and the rest of the body goes on the earth. Before the war, the same thing must have been taking place. I remember going to a funeral before the war, but I don't remember being at the burial.

The old cemetery used to have graves here and there. Now, in the new cemetery, it is not the same, it's completely different. You get the impression that you are in a military cemetery. All the graves are the same; one is not allowed to make a richer grave than others. Here in Thessaloniki, that is, because in Athens it's a different story. They make the graves as they like there. We say that at least in death, there should be no difference. At the old cemetery there were differences.

Death used to be regarded as a much more natural thing than it is today. Due to the fact that they didn't have so many medicines back then as we do today, or as many doctors, it was something much more normal. Deaths rarely would take place in hospitals; they were taking place almost always at home.

I remember members of the family going to the cemetery to visit the graves. There are certain days in our religion when one should go and visit. Until the time that they start to shear the sheep, one shouldn't go, from Passover until then.

I don't remember my father and mother visiting the cemetery. Grandfather Saltiel maybe went to visit his first wife. I didn't hear of anyone else going. Grandfather had moved the grave of his first wife who died very young. When the Germans destroyed the cemetery here, and later gave the land to the university, they assigned a place in Stavroupoli [neighborhood in eastern Thessaloniki], which is the cemetery where we bury the dead down to the present day.

Although a lot of time had passed since her death, my grandfather still loved his first wife very much. The Germans had given them a deadline to move the graves. And Grandfather went and moved her. He also kept a place next to her for his own burial. They were the first graves. It wasn't only Grandfather who did that, many people did. Many were buried in group graves, of three or four or five; they would put them together in one grave and say so on top of the grave.

Thessaloniki was the only place where the Germans destroyed the cemetery. It didn't happen anywhere else. That's why many people had whispered that it was arranged to take place. Because it is strange that it didn't happen anywhere else. They did what they did, but they were all the same afraid of graves and the dead.

I graduated from elementary school and then went to high school. The school was called Mission Laïque Française [48](#), or the Lycée, as they used to call it. They had two buildings. One building was on Stratou Avenue and Evzonon Street, in the corner. This was the mixed school. There was another building that was a girl's school only. They didn't do their 'Baccalaureate' there; they would go for the 'Brevet.' The 'brevet élémentaire' is a diploma that they used to give you when you finished the third grade of high school. I went to that school in the same building that is still there today, on Stratou Avenue and Evzonon Street.

My father preferred to send us to the Mission Laïque because we mostly spoke French at home. A French spirit was prevailing in the house. So it was no question where we would go. To the Lycée, of course. And obviously they regarded it as the best because we would get the Baccalaureate diploma. The second Baccalaureate was a ticket with much potential. Those who had the second Baccalaureate would get into university without taking exams.

I took the classical direction, but there was also a business direction that lasted less time. It was for three years and they would teach you business law and accounting, how to keep your books right and things like that. I didn't go to the business school because my father wanted me to go to university. With the business diploma you couldn't get into university. My father wanted to send me to university in order for me to become an engineer at the factory we owned.

At the Lycee schooling lasted six years. And then you would take the Baccalaureate diploma. Those who wanted to carry on would study for the second Baccalaureate. And at the end of each year, one would take exams in front of a committee.

The committee didn't have any teachers from school, it was completely neutral. All the teachers were foreign, they would either come from France, and they would call them examiners, or they would hire them. One of the ones that asked us the questions in the oral examination of mathematics, Mr. Teloglou, was a manager in an electric company. He would examine us in mathematics and physics. They did that so that you would acquire a diploma without any favoritism, fairly. That's why they hired people that had nothing to do with the school; you didn't know them at all.

The Lycée was a very good school. We studied all the French subjects and all the Greek ones. The others thought that it was a very good school. But it also had competition. The Frères [49](#) were regarded as a very good school, too. And especially in mathematics and in physics they were regarded as a great school. I don't think that the Alliance existed at the time; I don't remember hearing of it. But there were so many French schools; there was the Gattegno School and the Altcheh School. There were four or five schools that were Italian. There was the German school [50](#) and later the American school [51](#) opened, too. There were so many different schools that I don't know if Alliance would have had much of a chance to survive, especially because it was regarded as slightly more religious. All these schools were very good. The German school was very strong, and it had a lot of discipline.

We were about 25 to 30 children in a class, mostly Jews. Some would come from Albania. The children that came from Albania, lived on the school grounds, I remember. There were about 15 to 20 boarders.

The Lycée had mostly boys, as there was another building that was for girls only. It was something like 60 percent boys and 40 percent girls. Some of the girls were among the top students. I have to admit that I was always coming third or fourth and the first and second would be girls. My brother always came first. He was great.

All the children were middle class, children of traders, manufacturers, commercial representatives. I remember many classmates of mine. One I still have a close relationship with is Florentin, who now lives in Israel, in Tel Aviv. Another one is Charles Pessah. He was in Barcelona after the war and because he knew Spanish, they took him at the Greek consulate. Another classmate of mine was Vladi Saporta, who now lives in Athens.

We just started coupling with girls. Not anything serious, really, coupling with girls simply meant that we would leave school together and take the tram together, and maybe arrange to meet on a Saturday to go to the cinema. Maybe to hold hands, but nothing else; we were very modest. That's what our parents had taught us. And I think that this was a bad thing. They used to tell us that if you couple with a girl it is a sin and the rest of it; generally this was the spirit. No one would dare to go out on a date and do something, have sexual intercourse with the girl. The best case scenario would be to go to watch a film, sit in the back seats, and maybe touch her a little bit, nothing more than that.

We paid fees at school, pretty high ones. They did have many expenses though. They were also giving scholarships. My relationship with these children, who had scholarships, was not any different, we didn't even know that.

Apart from the teachers, there would also be the 'le surveillant general.' He would give us our student's pass for the tram for which we paid. They used to give us four tickets every day that were dated and were valid only for that day. The one that had one line on it was valid only for the return, not to get there. Two were for the morning and two for the afternoon.

We went to school six days a week and Sunday was a holiday. We had school on Saturdays, too. We didn't have classes on Wednesday and Saturday afternoon. The rest of the days we did. We would go to school at 8 o'clock in the morning. We would have classes until 12 or 1 depending on the schedule of the day. And in the evening we would go around 3 until about 5 or 6. At 6 we would

leave from Evzonon to get home and start studying until 9 or 10 at night. Sometimes when I would get dizzy and tired, I would take my bicycle and go for a ride before starting my evening reading.

We had both male and female teachers. In the first grade of high school we had Mme. Moissonier. In the second, we had Mme. Millet, but she didn't teach all the subjects, I think we had a different teacher in literature and mathematics. From the third grade onwards it was all separate.

There was one teacher for each subject. They also had a laboratory, 'the lab,' as they used to call it. The Lycee had a great lab for physics and chemistry. We also had a 'salle des cartes.' We had a classroom that had all the maps, and that's where we used to have our geography class.

Mathematics, physics, chemistry, we were being taught in French. We had French and Greek classes. For example, we studied French literature and Ancient Greek. What the law suggested. The same was the case with history and geography, we would study the geography of France that was of little interest to us, and we would study the geography of Greece, as the law suggested. We had a Greek teacher who taught us Greek and we also had a French teacher who taught us French. So, literature, history and geography we would have in both languages. For your Baccalaureate you had to take the exams in French, and it didn't matter whether you had studied in Thessaloniki or Dijon or in Marseilles. It was exactly the same everywhere and that's why it was so recognized everywhere.

My favorite subjects were always the same. I especially liked physics. I was really interested in electricity, sound, the radiation, the speed of sound. In fact, I had a book by Mr. Hondros, who was a professor at the university in Athens, a physicist. I read it with great interest.

I didn't like geometry. In algebra I was quite good, and I did alright in trigonometry but in geometry I couldn't manage. I didn't like subjects like literature and philology, but I was good at them. I was good at writing essays. We wrote essays in both French and Greek. One bad thing was that in this school we didn't take term exams. We would take an exam on two subjects every week. So apart from all the reading that we had to do daily, we also had to prepare for exams. They would tell us: 'next week you will have the history and mathematics exam and next week the geography.' And this happened in both French and Greek. You can imagine how difficult that was.

They would give us grades at the end of every semester. We had the 'carnet des notes,' where they wrote down all the subjects, in Greek and French. One page was for the French and the other for the Greek. And each teacher would give you a grade. In this little book that they used to give us they also wrote your absences and your conduct evaluation. Our parents would sign the book and we would return it to the school signed.

My parents never came to school. They were satisfied with the grades that I got so there was no reason to do so. My mother used to come to the elementary school. And she spoke with the teacher, but she never came to the high school. They weren't even interested. They trusted us because they saw the grades. I was usually the third or fourth best student in the class. My brother was always the best student. So why should our parents have come to school, really? To ask what?

In elementary school Daisy would come and help us with our reading in French. She mostly taught us grammar. For my Baccalaureate I had someone to help me with mathematics.

In high school I don't remember if we went to parades or not. I think we did. But to raise the flag? No, that didn't happen. Not even in Greek high schools would they raise the flag in the morning back then. The only thing that they had and we didn't, was the morning prayer. It wasn't compulsory to attend religion class. We didn't have this subject. But even the Christians didn't, because it wasn't compulsory in a public school. We had classmates that were Christians at the Lycee. Not many, around three or four. I remember we had a reservist officer that used to come to class. He was called 'auditeur,' listener. He would come to the classes and listen but he didn't take exams. He simply came out of interest.

We didn't have a uniform. Not even hats, which were compulsory in Greek high schools then. In Greek high school they would cut your hair and you had to wear a cap. We were dressed normally. It was the time that golf was very popular and we wore golf style trousers. I think that in the first and second grade we still wore shorts with a shirt and a jumper. I don't remember wearing a tie at school. The clothes that I wore at school were chosen by my mother.

We had two pairs of shoes, one for every day use and one for going out. Many times we couldn't find shoes that fitted well, we ordered them. And for some reason, they would always make them smaller and our feet would hurt.

The girls paid great attention to their dressing. We had two or three lovely girls at school. Everyone wanted to approach them. I didn't have any relationships at school. With girls I mean. They didn't really attract me, and the ones that did attract me were all taken anyway.

I had friends. I had some very close friends. We were a company of five. One was Maurice Errera, who was an orphan on the father's side. He lived close to Faliro, near the school. Then there was Alberto Kazes, who now lives in Paris. He was exactly my age, and a French citizen. His father was a physician, a general practitioner. He lived at the Georgiou stop. We lived up the road and he lived close to the coast, in Kriezotou. He was sickly, all the time. Even though his father was a doctor, most of the time he was ill. He went to the concentration camps and he survived, even though he was sickly.

Then there was Raul Abastado. His father was making jutes and sacks etc. With tobacco there was a great need for them. He imported them and sold them. He lived right next to the house where my grandmother and grandfather used to live, at the Costantinidi stop. The fourth one was Dick Hasson. His father had a flour factory.

This was the gang. We went everywhere together. We would get together during the breaks at school, in winter and summer. Some parties used to take place which were called 'après midi.' They started around 4 in the afternoon and they would finish at about 9 or 10, at the latest. We would gather there, dance a bit, eat something, drink a cup of tea, and things like that.

When you had your bar mitzvah you would invite the whole class and all your friends. The parents would celebrate separately and we would celebrate by having an 'après midi' party. They would come to your home and we would offer them sweets and snacks and we would dance a bit. We danced the tango, waltz etc. There was a clockwork gramophone. One would be in charge of setting it.

When we were in the third grade of high school, we bought a 'plava.' A plava is a boat with a flat hull. The five of us put a fifth of the money in each and bought a boat. There was a shipyard in Aretsou [one of the best known seaside locations in eastern Thessaloniki during the interwar and post war years.]. We went and sailed from there. I remember that the price for the boat was 3,000 drachmas and we bought it. They gave us 50 drachmas weekly, so we saved up and bought it. Then we started maintaining it. We put up a sail and a tent. We used to row to Perea. We were four so one of us at the time would row.

We told our parents, and they weren't excited that we had bought it. They were worried. But we all knew how to swim really well. Then we got a cutter. We had a great longing. I was crazy about sailing. In the summers we would spend a lot of our time at the Sailing Club. We maintained the boat on our own. The boats were made out of wood. You had to scrape it, put stucco, paint it and put it in the water again. And we did all that ourselves.

We used to go out to the cinema. We would go to any movie theater if we the film that was on. All the films were very modest. You didn't see any nude shots, ever. It had to be suitable for our age, otherwise we weren't allowed to go. We used to go early, either from 5pm to 7pm or from 7pm to 9pm, not later than that. And what we really enjoyed was to walk home afterwards. We really liked walking.

We would also go on Sunday walks in the evening, we would go up to Arsakli [village on the outskirts of Thessaloniki], or towards the road that led to the farm school [52](#), or towards Karabournaki [cape on the opening of the Thermaic Gulf] in Sofouli. We were all friends. If someone wanted to say something to somebody else, he would walk next to him and talk. We would occupy the whole pavement. We walked a bit clumsily.

We spoke mostly in French with each other. It was only after the war that the Greek language prevailed. When we were at the Sailing Club we would speak Greek. What I mean is that we spoke Greek to each other, depending on where we were. We would switch to the language because we didn't want others not to understand what we were talking about. We didn't have a preference or any difficulty with either language, really. It would be all the same to us.

One time, when I was on the tram, there was an incident. Someone said, 'Why don't you speak in Greek? Since you are in Greece, why don't you speak Greek?' We started being more careful after that. When we reached the third or fourth grade in high school, we spoke only Greek in public places.

I was going for gymnastics at Mavroskoufis, twice a week. I would leave the house late around 8pm or 9pm and I would go around Konstantinidis Street, around Raul's house, pick him up and we would go to the YMCA, that's where the gymnastics took place. It was a closed gym court, very nice and they had showers, so you could have a shower after the gym. We did some very good gymnastics with Mr. Mavroskoufis, who had studied in Switzerland. Three quarters of the hour we would do gymnastics, and afterwards we could play basketball.

We had some political conversations with my friends. We were influenced by the left, of course, socialism. We used to say, 'Equality, there shouldn't be differences, support the working class.' Sometimes we would read the newspaper. The newspaper that Father would buy, if we had some time, we would have a look at it. We had conversations with our teachers, many times.

We were lucky, when we were in the third grade, to have Pelopidas Papadopoulos to come to teach at school. He had just finished university, and we were the first class that he taught. They hired him at the Lycee for the class of Ancient Greek. He taught Ancient Greek and Greek literature to us. He was a bit older than us, four or five years older. We got along really well with him and sometimes we would go out on Sundays together. People from the whole class would come. Ten or fifteen of us would get together. He was a really good guy; we kept in touch with him after the war. We spoke a lot about politics with him. He was very liberal.

At the time, in 1936, many events took place in Thessaloniki. They killed workmen, they broke our shop glass sign: the workmen threw stones when they were passing by. All these events influenced us. Later Metaxas came, but Metaxas didn't take Jews from here at the EON [53](#). That was our complaint. We wanted to participate, too. He would take Jews from all the other places in Greece, except here.

The fact that I was a liberal had nothing to do with my father. We only spoke theoretically about it. What is right and what is not right. Without taking into account our personal interest. Why should there be so many class differences? For example, why should someone get 70 drachmas as a daily wage? We used to say that there shouldn't be differences like that.

However, we never got into communism. We would talk about communism, what it is etc, but we would call ourselves socialists and not communists. A communist would be someone who would let the government arrange everything. That one could no longer have his own property. Everything was to be shared. While the socialist would say, to be equal in all classes and depending on each person's work everyone will own their earnings. I don't remember where we learned what is communism and what is socialism.

We were very influenced by the history of the French Revolution, where they used to say, 'liberté, égalité, fraternité.' Our French teachers influenced us a lot, as they were influenced themselves, and they were trying to pass on to us the spirit of the French Revolution. Because they were saying that was the greatness of France. We didn't talk about politics at home. Especially Mother was really not interested. She was interested in the house, whether we were alright or not, and did our homework. We didn't buy books on these issues. Everything we knew was from our conversations, the four or five of us would gather and talk about it and each one would express his opinion.

We would also talk about the relationships between Christians and Jews. I remember when we went for walks in Kalamaria [settlement in eastern Thessaloniki]. Kalamaria was considered to be in the countryside. There were small houses with a garden at the front. Some would hear us speaking French and they would throw stones, especially there, because the area was full of refugees.

When the five of us would meet up, we would talk about everything. First of all we would talk about school, especially when we were close to the Baccalaureate diploma. This interested us very much, because it was very difficult to acquire it. The exams were difficult and there was quite a lot of material to study. We would talk about school, then about politics and then a bit about girls.

None of us was in Maccabi [54](#). I remember Maccabi took part in all the parades because of their music band; they always used to win some prize. They had the best orchestra out of all the scout organization. They were very organized. Our parents never even suggested to us to take part. They regarded it as waste of time, and that we should be more devoted to our studies instead.

It doesn't mean that whoever was in Maccabi was a Zionist. There was another organization that was called Betar [55](#), which was clearly Zionist and strongly Zionist in fact. It was a youth organization. Betar was the right wing of Zionism. They would gather at my grandmother's and grandfather's house. There was a mid-basement that had been rented out to them. That's where they would meet. They used to say that we should understand that we would go and build the state of Israel.

There were other organizations, too. There were the old graduates of the Alliance, the Association des Jeunes Juifs [56](#). It was a youth club, mostly to meet people, to dance, meet girls etc. We weren't signed in anywhere. We didn't really have the time anyway, because when we finished school the war started. The only union that I was signed in with was the YMCA, where we used to go for the summer camp and at the Sailing Club. I went to the YMCA summer camp in 1934 and 1935 in Ai Giannis [village in the region of Thessaly, 270 km south of Thessaloniki]. We didn't have a problem at all with the fact that the YMCA was a Christian camp, none at all.

My grandmother Alvo was either a cousin or an aunt of David Florentin, who was a Zionist. [Editor's note: David Florentin was a leading Zionist functionary in Thessaloniki. In the late 1920s he purchased land from Arabs and settled in Palestine.] The first people that left from here and went to Palestine, left with him. In fact there is an area in Tel Aviv that is called Florentin. We knew each other. He sometimes went to visit my grandmother. I would hear my parents talk about him in the house. But my father had a completely different opinion. The Community was then divided between the Zionists and the assimilationists. My father totally swore to assimilation. But he was never involved with the administration of the Community. He was well known, he used to help out - mainly financially - but he was never involved with the Community.

All the years that I was in high school they were giving me a weekly allowance, which I think was 50 drachmae a week. The cinema cost between 8 and 10 drachmae, and we would always buy something extra. I was fond of stamps and I used to buy them. I was a stamp collector and I used to spend some money on stamps too.

I didn't buy any magazines. We would have magazines in French like 'L'Illustration,' 'Grégoire,' 'Candide.' The 'Grégoire' and the 'Candide' were right wing. But that is not why my father bought them. Many times they would have articles against the Jews, especially the 'Grégoire.' My father used to buy it because it had really good literature; it was written in perfect French. It also had really good reports on the news. And also because by buying it once a week, he could read the news of the whole week. He subscribed to it. Many times I used to read it, too. If there was an article against Jews or the leftists my father would show it to us. There were the Croix-de-Feu [57](#) as they called them.

There was an Italian Fascist organization that Jews were also members of before the anti-Jewish measures [58](#). All those Jews that were Italian citizens were compelled to become members, since it was supposed that everyone was a fascist. That is, they were fascists not out of conviction but out of duty. If you weren't a member of a fascist organization they wouldn't give you a passport. Only men could go sign up in fascist organizations and their children, girls and boys. And they would have celebrations where they had to wear their uniforms.

They used to call the little ones 'Balilla' [59](#). If you went to the Italian school you had to be a member of the 'Balilla.' Other Jews, apart from the Italian Jews, weren't in any local fascist

organizations. I don't think that you could anyway. There were many students who were Jewish in the Italian school but didn't have Italian citizenship. They didn't take part in the 'Balilla.' I remember my uncle Dario being so full of himself, that he was an Italian fascist etc. He even had the sign of fascism on the 'boutonnière' [French for 'buttonhole'], the fascio. Not that they cherished their beliefs. They just regarded it as something special that the others didn't have. I remember mocking them. At the Lycee we were very liberal, so completely the opposite.

The Italian Jews themselves weren't any different. They didn't have their own synagogue; they would come to the Beit Saoul synagogue, which was the largest one and the most modern. They used to go to the Italian embassy if there was an Italian national holiday. They used to invite them all at the embassy. Before the time that they were put aside, discriminated, that is.

While I was a teenager and a student I used to read literature. I really liked one book by Dickens, but I forget which one it was. I read many books by Jules Romain as well: 'Les Hommes de bonne volonté.' This was about twenty volumes. My friends were also reading it and often we chatted about them. [Romains, Jules (1885-1972): born Louis Henri Jean Farigoule, French poet and writer, founder of the Unanimism literary movement. Among his best-known works are the play 'Dr. Knock,' the cinematographic tale 'Donogoo- Tonka ou les miracles de la science,' and a cycle of works entitled 'Les Hommes de bonne volonté' (The Men of Good Will).]

My parents took us on holidays only a few times. But with the Sailing Club, we didn't need anything else. I think they took us only once to Edipsos [spa resort on the island of Euboea, 330 km south of Thessaloniki] because my mother had to go to the hot springs. My mother suffered from rheumatism and arthritis. We had a great time there. It was a very nice hotel with great food. We ate in the morning, afternoon, and evening.

My parents were traveling together without us, too, but not for holidays. My father had to go for treatment in France, at the Mont d'Or, because he had a problem with his ears and nose. Sometimes he would go alone and sometimes he would take his wife with him. Sometimes they were taking our sister, too, and they would leave us behind with Grandmother. That was when we were younger.

From the third grade of high school my father told me in the summer, 'You will rest for one month, and the other two months you will go to the factory and work.' He would have me wear a blue uniform that the workers wore, we used to call it 'retsina' then, and said to me, 'Sit down and learn all the machines one by one, how they work, inside out.' And I learned. I quite liked it as well, and this is what my father wanted me to do, to go and study at the university in Zurich. That's why he made me learn German. I was learning German at school and I had a private teacher at home.

The International Trade Fair of Thessaloniki would last three weeks and it was a great event. This was the only fair at the time; there weren't any other specialized fairs. The fair at the time was like a festival. Aunt Daisy used to take us when we were little. It was a chance for her to meet up with her friends. Later, when we grew older, we used to go on our own. We mostly went to the exhibition because of the games that they had, the little cars and the big wheel. Many, many people used to go to the games. We had to queue to get in. The fair was so successful because of the children that were going to the games. The adults would go, too.

We would also go around and visit the different stands. The best and bigger stand was the one of National Agricultural Production that showed you all the agricultural and cattle products. A very interesting stand was the one of the Carpet Manufacturing Association which had really tasteful things. All these hand woven carpets. They were one nicer than the other one. My father loved carpets very much, he was a collector you could say, and he would buy one carpet every year from there. Unfortunately they are all gone. We only have one left.

There would be many celebrations at the fair. To catch people's attention they would even bring acrobats. One of the things they had brought was 'the barrel.' It was a very large surface in the shape of a barrel inside which a motorcycle was moving. Another one was jumping from 30 meters into a barrel of water. They would have fireworks every year, and really nice ones. Not only at the end of the fair. Sometimes they would have fireworks on the weekends, too, because there would be three weekends during the time that the fair lasted. We could see them from our house, far away. It really was a cheerful time, a feast for Thessaloniki.

The time of the fair was a time when there would be a lot of business in the city. This was because it had so many visitors and it would last for quite a long time. I remember that if it rained in September, they would cry. They would rent out the spaces in an auction and the poor guys that were renting for restaurants or cafes: when it rained it would ruin their business.

Also, something that existed only at the exhibition was black beer. One could only find it at the fair, as well as the frankfurter sausages. There were many places out in the open that would sell black beer and frankfurters. They would give you some mustard in a small piece of paper separately, and it would be a feast. Everyone would go to the exhibition, men and women, especially on weekends there were so many people that you couldn't get in. I remember one time when there was so much pushing around at the door to get in, it was unbelievable!

Sometimes my father took part at the fair, but not many times. I remember about four or five times. He had some agencies, so had to show the products. My father didn't have his own stand. He was renting a space inside somebody else's stand. An employee would stay there. He would sometimes take orders. There were many different stands where one could buy what one wanted there and then. We didn't have anything similar, we just exhibited the products. If someone was interested to make an order, we would take the order and deliver it after the fair ended. My father took part at the fair from about 1930 to 1935. After that they stopped. They didn't need to anymore.

Before the war, when I was a student at the Lycee, I supported Hercules [60](#). Hercules was the oldest team. We used to say at school: 'Up for Aris [61](#) and Hercules, down for PAOK [62](#), the wasters.' Waster in the sense of someone who is not alright, no good, does tricks. My friends didn't support Hercules.

Here nothing would happen with girls. In Thessaloniki there were brothels before the war. There was one in the '105' area, where the old fair ground used to be. There was a house there that was regarded as a luxurious one. You would pay 100 drachmas and five for the condom. I went there. With my friends, of course, not alone! Not all five together, I think two or three of us went. The girls were Greek, There weren't any Jewesses.

It was quite natural to go to a house as such in order to have a sexual experience. You didn't have any other choice. It was really difficult to go ahead with a girl that was the same age as you. You were afraid. Unless you were, I don't know what. Because you would have to speak not only with the parents of the girl, but also with your own parents. The parents were very strict. You never talked about it at home.

I remember they used to give you these books in French. It used to be called: 'ce que tout jeune homme devrait savoir' [French for: everything a young man should know]. It was a book, half scientific let's say, that explained the whole issue of sex. How it worked. What kind of protection one had to take etc. Because you know, Father would never come in, sit down with you and tell you. They gave me a book like this on my bar mitzvah. Someone brought it, and my parents were not pleased, I could tell. 'What is this now? Are you going to read this?' Etc.

The first time that I went to such a house, was before taking my exams for the Polytechnic. I was quite old. My father, of course, didn't know that I went. For each one of us it was our first experience. We all decided one day. To go and see what it is all about. The house had a lounge where all the girls were sitting around. They had a bulletin board with the pictures of the ones that had their period, in order to avoid them. Or they had a red ribbon.

In any case, it was a thing that really didn't satisfy you at all. It was a mechanical act without any feeling at all. You would only go to release the tension, that was all. We would chat about it with my friends afterwards. After the war that we continued going more often, we even had our preferences. 'Let's go there and see if she is in,' we would say. Those were girls that cared about you a bit more.

I graduated in June 1940. I had passed my second Baccalaureate, or bachot as they call it. The first bachot is like a high school diploma. The ones that want to study further, they specialize. They take the Science Baccalaureate, which consists of mathematics, physics, chemistry and cosmography. Others that want to take the philosophical direction would take the Philosophy Baccalaureate, which is suitable for lawyers or literature.

I had chosen the Science Baccalaureate because I wanted to go to the Polytechnic and my father wanted to send me to Zurich. But when the war ended he didn't have any money to send me there, even though Zurich, or rather Switzerland, remained a neutral country. He said, 'Ok you can go to the Polytechnic.' And I went and stayed in Athens for the whole summer.

There weren't any tuition centers at the time, except the one in Athens of Kanelos. Kanelos was an assistant professor and the owner of the tuition center, which was the only place where you could take classes for the exams to enter the Polytechnic. And indeed he was very good at it.

Together with a friend, who was taking exams at the Polytechnic, too, Raul Abastado, I went there in the summer and rented a room with him in a hotel at the corner of Ermou and Voulis Street, and we studied all day. We would go and eat breakfast, until the room service would have cleaned our room. We would have coffee and croissants. Then we would return to our room and study all day. In the evening we had three or four hours of classes. We would get on the bus and go, we didn't use taxis. When we would leave the class, we would go to a restaurant and eat. Later on we would get back to the hotel and read again.

I didn't miss Thessaloniki. Athens seemed very nice to me. It was an ideal city for me then, I used to say that it was the best city in the world. It was a very quiet city, with pleasant neighborhoods with small taverns. We went very often to the theater to see revues; there were many at the time. It was in Zappeio [Exhibition space in the centre of Athens], Aigli and Oasis. Oasis was the restaurant and at the same time you would watch the play.

In the summer I was there, there were Traiforos and Vembo [63](#). It was great to sit down under the trees, listening to music outside and listening to Traiforos and Vembo. We also used to go to the Champs de Mars [In Greek 'Pedio tou Areos': park in the center of Athens.]. There was a restaurant there and live music. I don't know why, it was a very easy-going life in Athens. Raul and I used to go out every night, just the two of us. With the other ones from the class, we didn't go out. There were only one or two other people from Thessaloniki.

It was the first time that I spent time away from home. I really liked that, the independence. Even though we didn't do anything special, as we didn't have time to do anything. I used to call home, once a week, on Fridays. We would go out to the central post office which was in Syntagma [main square in the centre of Athens], and we would call from a telephone there.

I never spoke with them for more than six minutes. It was very expensive. At that time we would speak for three minutes and pay 25 drachmas. It was a lot of money. A daily wage was 50 drachmas then and we would pay 25 drachmas for three minutes on the phone, so that really was a lot of money. They weren't very worried about what I was doing. Today, in the family, the children come first. In our family it used to be, the father, the mother, the sister and then my brother and me. That's how the hierarchy was.

I took exams for the Department of Engineering and the Department of Chemical Engineering. I didn't pass in the first one, but I passed in the second. I passed at the Department Chemical Engineering, which was very strange because 100 people would pass at the first department but only 30 in this one. So I got into the Department of Chemical Engineering department, with a long-term plan to finish it, do one more year and from there transfer to the Department of Engineering. The exams were taking place in September and the results would come out in a month's time. I took the exams and went back to Thessaloniki. The results for the Department of Chemical Engineering were published on 26th October.

I saw the results in the paper. We knew that they were being published on 26th October. My brother heard the paper boy in the morning. The paper boy used to come around the houses and sell the paper. As soon as he heard him, he went out, bought the paper and came to wake me up. He said to me, 'Mico, I've brought the papers, come and have a look.' The results would be published in the Jewish newspapers and the 'Makedonia' and others.

I ran to my parents, and told them that I had passed. My parents went crazy, they were really pleased. The whole family would call each other on the phone and chat about it, 'Mico has passed, Mico has passed.' We had a phone at home, an automatic one, for a couple of years already. This was one of my happier moments in life. That day, on 26th October, everything was shut in the city. I got my results on Friday; on Saturday I got my things ready and on Sunday I left. My friend Raul and I left, we didn't have a chance to celebrate. We weren't in the mood to celebrate; after the war how can one be in the mood? We all had lived with the fear that the war might reach us.

- **During the war**

When the war started in Europe, the general atmosphere in Thessaloniki was charged with fear. Fear for the future, and of what was going to happen. The destruction of France was a terrifying event. We were astonished. Especially at school, when they told us that no one was able to cross what they called the Maginot line [64](#). When France fell, the school closed. It was the end of the term for the summer anyway.

Everyone was in mourning. In Thessaloniki there were many that were really pro-German, and were talking about the Germans. What they did wasn't right and how could there be peace. We used to hear things like that in the shop or in the tram, where one could hear conversations. Many used to speak quite loud and one could follow the conversations.

We were worried. And our parents were very worried. They were worried that they might attack Greece, and what would we do then? They were worried that they might attack Greece because there were many Jews here. We knew about the concentration camps, where people were incarcerated at the time, the way people were being tortured and what they did in general. When they seized a country like Czechoslovakia, and then France, we knew that the people there suffered a lot. We knew from France, that under the occupation, the first thing that was going to be missing was the food.

When the war was declared, I was very impressed. What impressed me more than anything was the people's enthusiasm and their eagerness to go and join the army. And how organized everything was. I heard about the war at 7 in the morning while I was having my morning shave, because I used to shave at 7, and at 8 I had to be at the Polytechnic. It was the first day of the classes for the chemists. The rest of the classes had already started.

So while I was shaving I heard the sirens. 'What is going on?' I thought. We were at war. We were stupefied. I don't remember how the rest of the day passed. What I remember was the way we were impressed at night, seeing all the people hanging from the trams, and everybody running to go and join. And everything happened in great order. This excitement on the night of the 28th October in Athens was something that really made one move. And we waited.

On 28th October we didn't have any classes. I shaved and went there and they told us that the Polytechnic was closed. Whoever wanted to join the army should go and join. You had to be 21 years old then. They gave us ID cards, we subscribed and I had the ID card of the Polytechnic. It helped a lot along the way. When they would stop us, I used to show them the ID card of the Polytechnic.

On 29th October we didn't do anything. We couldn't do anything. We were moving around aimlessly. We would meet up at the park in Zappeio, in the Royal Gardens; we would discuss what to do. We were afraid that we might run out of money. They had blocked all the bank accounts.

I think that I stayed in Athens until the end of November. I couldn't get back, because there was no way. We heard about the bombings in Thessaloniki and were very worried. There were many bombings. In fact an Italian plane had fallen on the Olympion [hotel] and a balcony had broken down and collapsed. We had great air defense. There was one guy here, who was in Votsi at the air defense. He shot down three airplanes.

When the war started, there was fraternization between Christians and Jews. Because when the war started, the Jews were fighting not only for their homeland but against the Axis, who were the fascists and that's why they had one more reason than the Christians to go and fight. While they were saying that the Jews are fearful in the war and who knows what else, they proved to be the complete opposite. Especially the men from Thessaloniki who were the first ones to go in the front line, such as those in the 50th regiment, which was the closest to the border, and where more than half of the men were Jews.

I remember the death of Mordehai Frizis [65](#). All the newspapers in Thessaloniki and Athens wrote about it. They would discuss it and say, 'all the Greeks are fighting together for freedom.' It was written that he was the first officer of a higher rank that got killed. Then it was mentioned that Muslims in Thrace had died, too. It also said that all united, with no difference of religion or ethnicity, were fighting for freedom and the country. I remember that well.

This was quite a positive thing to hear after the situation with Metaxas, who didn't recruit Jews in the EON. He would recruit them in other cities but not in Thessaloniki. Everybody wanted to get in the EON. We mostly wanted to get in it because we didn't want to be any different from all the rest of the people. Not that we were fond of fascism and the rest of it. Because Metaxas, one the one hand, had a really excellent attitude on account of the war, but on the other hand, what he did with beating people up and stuff like that was another story. We knew from the security police what the people who were regarded as communists went through. The word was spreading around. They were sending them to islands into exile. And many were Jews who were leftists. We knew that fascism was fascism. But then everyone had changed in favor of Metaxas.

At the time I lived in the hotel. And we had many alarms, and many times we would go to the basement to hide. I didn't think of going to join as a volunteer. They didn't recruit others than the ones that were of the right age at the time. Even the ones that were of the right age, in case they weren't fit, they would only use them in the civil services. Not in action.

We were talking all day about what was going on. There were others from Thessaloniki, who where also at the university, and they, too, were bound. We knew each other, we would all get together and go to cheap restaurants. We were all afraid that we would run out of money. I was scared, not optimistic or pessimistic, just afraid of what was going to happen.

In order to go to Thessaloniki, we rented an old car and we got there. It took us three days to get there. We were all Jews. There were another four that were from the university, too. I remember three of us sat at the front, the taxi driver and another two, and three more at the back. We hired a taxi to go together. Because, first of all, we started wondering what were we doing in Athens? We should go and be with our parents. That was the main reason. We were better off in Athens, because it had been announced that the city was not in danger because it had been confirmed as an undefended city, but we had to go, to be near our parents.

We went through a lot during the journey home. We ran out of petrol on the way, and we couldn't find petrol anywhere. We bought some from a soldier driver. The only road that was alright was from Veroia [city in Northern Greece, 76 km west of Thessaloniki] to Thessaloniki. The rest of the road was a dirt road. The car broke down once on the way, so we had other adventures. We got to Axios Bridge [a river south of Thessaloniki] and they wouldn't let us pass. We slept in the car. At 6 o'clock in the morning, they let us pass and we got home.

Our parents weren't expecting us; they didn't know that we were coming as we hadn't told them anything. When I got home my parents were very pleased. They were pleased because they felt bad that I was far away from the family. The families had to stick together then and go through whatever difficulty united, all together. That was the spirit.

They had made a shelter in the house. My father had built it quickly, during the war. In the dinning room they had put sacks with sand, to make it more secure. When there would be an alarm, people from all around the neighborhood, as many as could fit, would come to hide in our refuge.

Everyone was celebrating and getting excited with the victories of the Greek army in Albania. The bells were ringing, people were out on the streets. Especially when they took Koritsa [66](#), that was another site. Excitement and celebrations, with church bells ringing, sirens, whistling- buoys of the boats in the harbor wailing. I haven't seen more excitement than when they conquered Koritsa.

It was the first defeat against the Axis. Until then the Germans had moved as they liked. No one had ever stopped them. But then they held down their horses. And we were expecting that the Agioi Saranta [67](#) and Elbasan [city in central Albania] would surrender. But they wouldn't, because they wouldn't take the decision to go for a major attack. They seized Koritsa and then they stopped. They didn't try to advance further into Albania, because they didn't want to challenge the Germans.

The conditions had changed in the house. No one was making unnecessary expenses. Nothing posh, no one was buying new suits or clothes, or any luxuries. There was nothing like that, it was complete simplicity. One could still find food during the Greek-Italian war. During the occupation we could no longer find food. Many people we knew were sent to the front line. But none of our relatives. We didn't have anyone who was of the right age to be sent, as they were all older. They were acquaintances from various other families. We would hear that someone came back with frostbites, someone else got killed.

At the time, all women were knitting for the Soldier's Undershirt [68](#). They were knitting gloves, thick socks, because the shoes weren't very good and most of the soldiers were getting frostbites. Many of our relatives were knitting: my mother and others. That was the Soldier's Undershirt.

When I came back, I was mostly in the shop rather than the factory. I remember many officers coming by: from the revenue office of war material, the 9th car division etc. I was writing the invoices. And my brother was studying alone for his baccalaureate. He had taken my books and he was reading them by himself.

We weren't going out at all at night. We would meet up with friends, but earlier and at 9 o'clock we would be at home. We would talk about how many alarms there had been the night before. When there was an alarm we would go to the shelter and many others from the neighborhood would come. Sometimes they would arrive earlier than us. The shelter had a corridor to get in, which was like a maze. It didn't have a direct exit; this was in order to avoid that a bomb thrown outside the shelter, would get in. When we heard the bombs falling, even though we were in the shelter... We would hear a bang and the whole house and the shelter would be shaking.

As soon as the war started, the factory started working for the army. Day and night. And they had exempted all the workers from the army service. There were 35 workers. They released them all.

Because they were in need of our products and the whole production was going to the army. The barbed wire, the chains for the cars, the hinges, the nails; they needed everything.

My father had some goods that had to go through the customs in order to have some supplies. And he was trying to have them go through customs. It was really rare at the time to have goods sent to you because one couldn't bring anything in. We were very lucky to have the goods arrive at the time.

My father was really worried in that period of time. He was worried about the war, and of what was going to happen. We had beaten the Italians, but wouldn't the Germans come to help the Italians? That was the big question. Unfortunately, he wasn't thinking of leaving Thessaloniki. He kept saying, 'I don't want to.' Because he had seen the refugees that had come. So he was telling us all the time, 'Should we become refugees, too? Leave our house, and become refugees?' At the time one could no longer leave for Palestine. They wouldn't allow anyone to go anywhere in Europe either. They wouldn't permit you to leave. He never even thought about it. No one could have imagined that the worst would happen.

Metaxas died, and three or four others followed, and we wondered if it was a curse or if someone else was inciting those moves. We felt like we had lost our protector. Not our protector, but our governor, our leader. These were really dark things, and we were very worried about the war, and I think our worries were justified. Not that we ever thought that we would be in greater danger after Metaxas's death. We never thought about it. The situation seemed bad enough already. When we heard that the Germans had attacked Greece, we thought that's it, we have lost. We were afraid that if the Germans would come, they would do the same things here as they were doing in Germany. And so it happened. As far as Jews were concerned, we had no doubt.

Just before the Germans entered, many wanted to leave for Athens. Even we did, Father wanted us to go. He wanted to at least send us. But it was very difficult to get a train ticket. And even though we knew the manager of SEK [Greek State Railways], Mr. Dimitriou, we didn't leave. Our father wanted us to leave but only half-heartedly. And he didn't want to leave and abandon the shop.

By the time we knew that the Germans would be coming in the next day - we knew it the night before - the Greeks that were retreating had set the fuel tanks on fire. The fuel was all in the Behtsinar area. Everyone opened their warehouses for the people to get supplies. Near us was the Allatini flour mill [69](#), which was working solely for the army. I remember they would go and get bread from there. They also used to carry, I don't know from where, jerry-cans of olive oil. I don't know from which warehouses they were getting it.

I can say that after the Greek army had retreated and for the two following days that it took the Germans to come, it was pillage and plunder. From my family no one went to get bread. But I remember neighbors coming with ten loaves of bread. They were carrying them in sacks. I also saw that they were carrying jerry-cans of olive oil. We could see the smoke and the fire. They had blown up some bridges, before leaving the place. They thought that they could keep the Mount Olympus line, but they didn't.

When the Germans came to Thessaloniki, a friend of mine, a school friend who used to live nearby, and I thought, just out of curiosity, 'Let's go out and walk to the White Tower to see what is happening.' We would walk as far as we could. The first Germans that came to the White Tower

square were some motorcyclists. They had trucks that were following with machines that were printing out the occupation marks [paper money issued by the German authorities]. I think that one mark was fifty drachmas. And when they paid you with this currency, you were obliged to accept it. That's what they called occupation marks. Because they were saying that the country that has been occupied should maintain the armed forces that had come here to protect it. That was the first thing that made an impression on us. I think that they were giving sweets to the children, as propaganda.

When the Germans came in, they started making up orders. They ordered the Jews and afterwards everyone else, to give in all the radios and all the bicycles. They pretended that they needed them. The radios, so we could no longer listen to the news. We were listening to the BBC then. They forced the Sailing Club to turn away all the Jews. From the Marine Club, too. Less from the Marine Club because it was more reserved, but there were many Jews at the Sailing Club. The Germans told them there, 'You will throw them all out.' Alright. Then they went and they seized all the boats.

As soon as the Germans came in, they put signs up in many stores 'Jews are not welcome in this shop.' Mainly in patisseries such as Flocas. Some store owners put them up. It was something that the Germans wished, but not all the store owners put them up. This didn't last very long though. In a month's time they had taken them all down again. They thought that it was compulsory, but when they saw that it wasn't they all took the signs down again.

Two days after the Germans entered, a paper from the 'Kommandantur' [commandant's headquarters] arrives, saying that our house was seized. The Germans had chosen around 50 or 60 houses, the best ones in Thessaloniki, for the officers of the higher division to move there. In many families they occupied one room, where one or two officers would live and one would have to take care of them. Not to feed them, but to keep their rooms clean and tidy. Of course all this for free, nothing in return.

Our house was one of the nice houses. They took it because we were Jews. They told us, 'We give you four hours to empty it, take with you only your personal belongings, nothing else, and leave.' Where furniture or anything heavier was concerned, we couldn't take any of that. My mother went really mad, because for a housewife, the most important thing is her house. She didn't know what to take and what to leave behind. And the poor woman never saw her house again. They turned our house into an officers' club, an officers' mess. Because it was such a nice house, it had a piano, a garden, furniture, everything.

Grandfather Alvo had already died, only his wife was still alive. Grandmother Alvo died during the occupation from natural causes. I think it was in 1941 or 1942. She was ill, she had cancer. They already knew what kind of illness cancer was. We all lived in our own houses. We hadn't all gathered in one house. Two or three days after the Germans came in, we left our house. At the beginning we went and stayed at my aunt's, my mother's sister, Lily. We were a bit crammed there.

Afterward, we moved into the apartment on top of where my aunt lived; it was for rent so we rented it out. That was the house on Skopelos Street which was the parallel street to Papakyriazi. We stayed there until they turned it into a ghetto. They forced us to go and live in the ghetto. The ghetto was introduced in February 1943. From April 1941 until February 1943 we lived in this house on Skopelos Street.

In the new apartment lived my mother and father, my sister, me and my brother, who was studying for the Polytechnic. He studied in 1941 to take exams to get in. There was hunger then. There was nothing around in the summer. I went to the shop at Ionos Dragoumi Street, my brother stayed in the house and was studying, and my sister went to school.

Until February 1943 my father was running the shop. At the time we had some transactions but there were difficulties because they would come and take by force whatever they wanted at the price they would name. Because I knew German, I was acting as the interpreter there. And they always told you, 'Don't you agree? Let's go to the Kommandantur and we will solve the problem there.'

The ones that were coming were Germans or German interpreters. They always came escorted by Germans in uniform. The interpreters were sometimes getting the goods this way, to prove their smartness to the Germans. Sometimes the things they needed they took for themselves. These interpreters were Greek Christians that knew German or Germans that had lived in Greece. They called them the 5th column.

The Germans, who already knew that they were about to declare a bigger war, had sent agents to all the countries that they considered they would occupy later on. The embassy here had a few of them. One of them was one of our neighbors. He was the secretary of the German Embassy before the war. He lived a little further up from our house. My father knew him. Sometimes, when Father needed a certificate for his goods, he would go to him.

My father very often used to go to a liquor shop that was at the corner of Vasilissis Olgas and Kyriazi Street, where our house was. Its name was 'Anatoli' - East. They sold wine there, but they also had little glasses to taste the wine before buying it. Many times my father would give me the flagon and tell me, 'Go and get wine for the house.'

This secretary was sitting there pretending to taste the wine. He knew Greek, he had learned Greek because he had lived here for so long, and he was making propaganda on behalf of the Germans: the Germans are here and will do a great good, they will civilize you and they will teach you new things etc, and you shouldn't be afraid of them. He would gather a few people around him. This secretary was called Paulus. He was here for many years. He was a Chancellor. That's how they are called. His children went to the German school. When the Germans left he vanished, we never saw him again.

I also went to work to the factory then. I knew how because I had learned to work there. I was a workman in the factory. I did the job of a workman but I had learned to do the lists for IKA [Social Security Service], and the wages' lists. I worked a bit in the office and a bit as a technician.

In October of 1941, classes in the Polytechnic started regularly. I went down to Athens to follow the courses. I had rented a room in a family house. In Syntagma on Xenophondos Street. It was a rich family but with the war they were drained and left with no income. In fact, they didn't even have any heaters. They were warmed by a brazier.

At the time you couldn't find food even in restaurants. We had a customer from Larissa, who did some transactions with the Italians and he would sometimes bring us bread. Just like this, without me paying for it. He would call me and say, 'I have two Italian loaves of bread to give you.' Things

were really hard. But we went to our classes at the Polytechnic in the morning and in the evening.

Then the winter came, and what a horrific winter that was. The ones that weren't from Athens suffered a great deal. Even the ones from Athens were suffering. They had no heating, no food, nothing, because you couldn't find anything else than cabbage leaves. It was horrid in Athens in the winter of 1941. It was cold, really cold. I saw in front of me a man collapse and people taking him away in a coach. The Polytechnic was closed again because of starvation. When it closed, I came back to Thessaloniki again, this time on the train. I came back around March 1942.

In 1943 they took over our factory and then they arrested me and my father. Until then we were working at the factory. Because there was no electricity we worked there only at night. And we were trying to get hold of raw materials. We had five or six workers working of the thirty that we had in the beginning. Anyway not all of the machines were working anymore. We didn't have the raw materials; we didn't have any moving power. We didn't have petrol. We had gas with wood. We would start the motor on wood.

The products of the factory were in great demand. We didn't produce all the products. We produced nails and a few other things. I remember the nails were made out of wire. But because we had no wire, this is what we did: We went to the junkshops and the old warehouses; we bought barbed wire that was available in large quantities. We would buy it, we would untangle it and take the prickles off and we would turn it into normal wire, which we then took and cut to nails. You can imagine how much that would cost. Even so, we still had a margin for profit. We sold that at the shop, the Germans weren't taking this for their army needs.

Apart from that, we had set up a wheat mill at the factory. Because starvation had started and there was already great shortage. They would come and we would put the wheat on the mill and make flour, for people to make bread at home. They never paid you. You wouldn't accept a payment but you would get a small percentage for the milling. I don't remember what percentage we were getting for the milling.

During the occupation they had recommended to me some secret houses [non-registered brothels]. These were much cleaner and nicer, and one could find nice girls. Many girls went there out of pure necessity because they didn't have any money. And it was completely different from what we knew from the professionals. I remember at Proxenou Koromila Street there was Mrs. Pipina. She had really nice girls and a nice environment. It wasn't like you had to go to the lounge and choose. Sometimes I would be on my way from the factory and I would get in the mood, and go. That time of the day you wouldn't find anyone there and it was...

I don't remember traders in the market to be regularly in the black market. Whoever was wasn't doing it all the time. The regular traders couldn't do such a thing, because there was also a market inspection. And they were after you and one had to be very careful. In what price you are selling etc. There were the jumpers as well. The kids that would jump in the German cars and unload them. They would throw the sacks from the top of the truck. The black market was basically for the ones that were in great need and had no other choice.

The shop worked with the goods that it had. It couldn't get any new supplies so it was selling stored goods. It was selling every day. There was money, but it couldn't get exchanged. Because the traders couldn't replace the goods and bring new ones and they were trying to turn their assets to

sovereigns. Something that was forbidden but one could find some in the black market. I don't know any names of the black market traders. Because everything was very secretive.

At the time they had also brought from Italy the 'nylon' sovereigns that weren't authentic. These ones, even though they had the same quantity of gold, they sold cheaper. They sold them and no one would buy them. Even the Bank of Greece when they were getting them, they were saying they were nylon and that they were not real sovereigns. They had Queen Victoria or King Edward on them and the right quantity of gold, and they still called them fake. And they used to do this other trick; they would put them in acid and lower the weight.

My father was trying to turn all his assets to gold sovereigns. All the traders did, too. Because the drachma was losing its value. Day by day it would drop lower and lower. When they gathered us, the downfall started. From there on, every day was a new drop.

Here in Thessaloniki we didn't starve. One could still find things. But what? For example one would go to Halastra [village 20 km south-west of Thessaloniki] and buy one or two sacks of wheat. You would bring them back and grind them. One of our neighbors was going to Halastra, Staninos. He was Greek, but he originated from Italy and he was a Catholic. He would go on a boat with someone else. He would buy a few sacks and come back and sell them, with a profit, of course. They were selling meat, once again secretly. They may have given us cats instead of lamb sometimes.

Others were going to the villages. The villagers had picked up everything and had supplies! You would see a piano that they had taken to go and deliver on a cart, one of these village carts. You would see the most amazing things owned by villagers. It was a golden season for them.

In that period of time Mother was trying to find food. She was trying to get anything from friends or from neighbors: 'So and so brought this, do you want some, and should I send you some?' This all turned out to be the black market because one couldn't go to the market. There was nothing there, one couldn't find anything. To go to the butchers and buy meat? But one could find everything in the black market.

It was then that the Community helped, because of the prices that were very high and the starvation. My mother used to go and distribute. The Community would buy whatever they could and my mother would go and distribute the food. She would put soup in cups or they would give corn bread, anything they could get.

At the time, because one had to be home early, and since no one was working, people would gather in the afternoons, friends and relatives would gather and talk about the situation. We would gather quite often. And everyone was pessimistic. The people didn't know what to do anymore. They were saying, whatever is to happen will happen. Most of the ones meeting up were Jews, but I remember two or three Christians, too. As they were neighbors they would come, too, and tell their side of the story.

There was the Charsi radio, as it used to be called. There would be a news release. Charsi is Turkish and means market, so the news that we heard spread by word of mouth. We used to listen to Charsi from the time they had started the war with Russia. It was in the Stalingrad area where the Germans didn't succeed. We would say one day, 'we had this victory,' and then the next day

another thing would happen. Or they sunk so and so many British boats. At the beginning all the news was horrifying and defeat was mentioned all the time.

My brother went down to Athens to take his exams for the Polytechnic in June 1942. They called us all to gather at Eleutherias Square [70](#) on 1st or 11th July, I don't remember the exact date. There many things happened... It was the first call for forced labor: to go and be drafted for labor. And the Germans transformed it into a feast. They had people photographing all around the balconies of the buildings that they had occupied. They would make you do gymnastic exercises; they would beat you up, two or three died from the beating. And they also had the women soldiers that were called 'Blitzmädchen.' This is a compound word: 'Mädchen' means lady and 'Blitz' means thunder. When we saw this happening we called my brother and told him, 'Don't come back to Thessaloniki.' And from that time on he stayed in Athens.

With our customers in the region we had great relations. When the persecutions started we sent them all our goods to store for us. A couple of them proved to be useless and kept them for themselves but most of them kept them safe for us.

They had taken my uncle to forced labor, close to Katerini [71](#). They had taken all the Jews there for the new railway and the road they were building. Our customers from Katerini were bringing him food. We had customers that we knew from before the war, and they were bringing him food. My uncle worked until they paid the ransom. For a couple of months. Then many of the doctors became involved by giving you a certificate that you were unsuitable to work. They issued such certificates. I think this is why Solomon could leave. He managed to get a certificate stating that he was unable to work.

From my family no one else went to the local forced labor camps. I worked in a factory. There was an occupied factory that was making wooden boxes. It was close to the railway station. It belonged to a Jew; I think his name was Cohen. At Santarosa Street, they were making embrasures. There were many factories making embrasures at the time. They didn't make any plastic ones then; they were all made out of wood. I worked for about a month and a half. Until the Community had to pay the ransom.

My job was to cut and nail crates. They were crates for fruit. A kind of a carpenter's job. We would start early in the morning. Sometimes the tram was operating and sometimes it wasn't. When we knew that there was no tram coming the next day we had to get up an hour earlier to walk from the 4th stop of Martiou to get there, and an hour to get back. We would go there, we would get some food to eat, and we would finish. We would start at 7:30 to 8 in the morning and we would finish around 5 in the evening. The working day would last eight hours.

The factory didn't have many Jews. German cars were coming to load things up. We were supervised by both Jews and Greeks. Their behavior was good, normal. Both younger and older people worked there. To work in a factory like this at a time when there was forced labor, you had to have a way in, that is, you had to pay. In comparison with the railway tracks, this was a piece of cake. I don't know how my father arranged it. He knew someone in there, maybe he was a customer of his, and he chose the workers. He said, 'I want this one.' I don't know how it happened, but it was regarded as great luck.

Later, in February 1943 the persecutions started. They came one day at the shop and took my father and my two uncles to the 'Kommandantur' that was down Agias Sophias Road. I was at the factory that day. Around that time I went to the factory every day. They picked them and kept them there. They didn't allow them to come back. And I was at home with my mother and sister that night. Danny was in Athens. We were scared because Father hadn't come back and neither had any of the uncles.

They sent a gendarme to the house, who said, 'The son should come with us and bring the keys of the factory with him.' So I went, too. They waited for us there, they took the keys to the factory and they sent us to the transportation department, escorted by gendarmes. That maybe was the worst experience. What was going on at the transportation department was beyond one's imagination. The dirt, one on top of the other, some pot heads smoking, crazy, and all together. I don't know how my father could take it. But the poor guy didn't even know what was ahead of him.

We slept on the ground. They gave us some blankets, or perhaps I had brought blankets from the house, I don't remember. Next to us there were criminals. The next day they sent us to the Pavlou Mela Barracks where the prisons were [72](#). We stayed there for three weeks: my father, my two uncles and I. And they had taken in many more merchants. Benrubi who had a glassware manufacture and other merchants that were dealing in iron goods like us.

A parenthesis: There was a cell chamber with 400 Greek communists. And each time that there was a case of sabotage they would take a few from this chamber and shoot them. Many times they would come at two in the morning. Two or three times I remember something like that happening during the night. A German guy would get in the chamber while everyone was asleep and he would say a few names. They were the ones to be executed the next morning. As a punishment because of the sabotage that had taken place. They took us out of there by paying an amount of gold sovereigns to Papanaooum [73](#). He was a German collaborator. He was working with the Germans, the infamous Papanaooum and a couple of others of his band; they were sharing the loot with the Germans.

They took us to the 'Kommandantur' in order to empty the shops. As soon as they had sent us to Pavlou Mela, the very next day, the emptying of the shops started and it lasted for three weeks. They were emptying shops morning and night. There were these very large Schenkel trucks then, Kroup I remember, they would take away the things. And they threw them out of the windows. They were taking things and throwing them straight out of the windows. They didn't leave anything behind. Not even shelves or counters.

This all happened in February 1943. After they had emptied the whole shop they gave it to someone called Karatzas. He was the one that was collecting all the fruit and agricultural products from northern Greece. He would store them in our shops, and then give them to the Germans at prices that were already prearranged. But he also bought them at very low prices from the farmers and the merchants. In other words, he was collecting all the food for the German army. Maybe they were sending them to Germany, too, where there was a great shortage. When the Germans left, Karatzas left for Germany, because he was afraid of being accused as their collaborator. He never came back to Greece.

In February 1943 [74](#) they put all Jews in a ghetto. One couldn't live wherever one wanted in the city. You had to live in certain neighborhoods, the ghettos [75](#), which Greek gendarmes were

guarding and they had put civil guards on duty, too. It was the area around the Community offices. This area started at Androutsou Street and went further than where the Community was, to Evzonon. Everyone was in that area because that was an area where many Jews lived already. They had taken an area and guarded it so that no one could get out.

Besides that, we were all wearing the stars. Later, when I left, I found out that it was the easiest thing to take off your star and throw it away and get up and leave. No one would say anything to you. The Germans were very smart and associated everything they did with fear. The only measure that they were taking was to make sure you were scared. They said that if anyone tried to leave they would shoot them in cold blood. That was enough for no one to even try. If you were to take your star off and the gendarme saw you, he wouldn't come and ask you for your ID. Because there weren't only Jews in the ghetto, there were also Christians. Whoever was living there hadn't been thrown out of their houses, and they didn't ask them for papers or anything. So the terrorization of the Germans was based on fear.

Some Jews left the ghetto. The ones that could just left. It happened two or three times that someone saw them and killed them on the spot. Among them was a good friend of mine, Maurice Errera. At the cemetery there is a grave of six chaps, who were the same age as I, who they caught during their attempt to leave. They weren't caught by the Germans, someone gave them in. And they caught them and executed them straight away. That was enough to terrify all the rest of us.

I was living in the ghetto. We were at Miaouli Street. The Germans wouldn't let you go. They would make us do many things. Everyone had to declare all their assets. They ordered some young men to collect all these declarations, and I was one of them.

They set up an office for us at a school nearby. And people would come to fill in their declarations, and we were helping them to fill them in correctly.

The Germans had made lists of forty or fifty of the most distinguished members of the Community and they said that they were going to be their hostages. Among them was my father. They said, 'If any of these people leave, we will kill as many.' Their mentality was threatening. And my father thought, 'Twenty young people to be killed because of me?'

At the time my father and his brothers couldn't even go to the shop. They had occupied the shop then. They went to the Community every now and again. There were thirty or forty distinguished members of the Community that would gather there every morning and talk. They were taking decisions on how they should help. This was because they had to worry about all the rest that weren't working and had to be fed. My mother and sister were at home. It was the most difficult period of my life.

While I was in the ghetto we never thought of getting in touch with the resistance. We didn't know that it was easy to get in contact with them. We knew of EAM [76](#), because, I remember, we used to have a maid in the house, for many years who later married a doctor, and she came and brought coupons for EAM. And we gave money to EAM. We gave money to EAM but we never tried or even thought that they might be able to help us leave.

Everyone was saying that we should go into hiding in a nearby village. And they were afraid what could happen without an ID, if they ask to see your ID on the way, etc. Unfortunately, very few

people sought refuge with the help of EAM. I don't know why. It wasn't widely known then. We didn't know what action to take, who they were. EAM was at its very beginning then, it wasn't yet organized. There were also other organizations like EDES [77](#). They were saying that they were nationalists, and the others were communists. But we knew very little about the resistance then, either rightists or leftists. If it had only been a year later...

After that the deportations started [78](#). They started in February. There many deportations had already been accomplished. Our turn hadn't come yet. My parents were devastated, especially my mother. But unfortunately no one could have imagined what would happen. I was a rebel. I didn't want to accept it. I was saying, 'I will go out and fight, I'm not going to sit here and wait.' I couldn't accept this passive attitude. We can go and throw a bomb and burn the whole Community so they won't have any files, or anything etc. Because they are governing us through the Community, the Community is giving a hand for such a thing to happen! And I said, I would try.

My mother and father wanted me to be saved, but they were also scared that I might be caught. Also because there had been this incident with the six young men that we knew got caught. And when Mother would hear those things... But when she realized that the situation was becoming very difficult she told me, 'Go.' I told her that I should take my sister with me when I was to leave, but my mother didn't want to be separated from her. She didn't let her go, so I left alone.

Daisy and her husband had influenced me a lot in my decision to leave for Athens. He had acquaintances there. This railway man that took me, I think, was Demis's godchild and worked at the SEK [Hellenic State Railways]. He told me, 'I will take you.' You see, the main problem was to pass through the control at Platamonas [village 140 km south of Thessaloniki] because the border line between the Germans and the Italians was at Platamonas. If you could pass through, then you were in the Italian zone, so you were alright.

I would leave from my aunt Daisy's house; she lived in a side road of Kolokotroni Street, near the School of the Blind. There was a river bed there and the house was located there. Before I went around the house I bid my parents goodbye. My mother was crying, my father was very skeptical and he said, 'Be careful my child,' and continued, 'I don't know if we will meet again.' And indeed we didn't meet again. Those were tragic days.

Aunt Daisy's house wasn't inside the ghetto. It was on the ghetto's borders, at the water front. The railway man came to fetch me at night, took me to his house and I spent the night there. He was living with a friend of his. It was a house in the Xyladika area near the railway station. And I stayed there all day. No one knew me.

In the evening, when he had to go and work, he had me wear a railway uniform, gave me a torch to hold and a hat like they used to wear, and took me with him. When I was leaving an old workman that I knew - because this was near my father's factory at Baron Hirsch - saw me and waved at me from far away.

We went to the train station and got on the train. At the train station the railway man didn't face any problems to have me pass. It was the easiest thing for someone to leave. He put me in a wagon. He put me where the breaks were, they had hand breaks then. He said to me, 'You will sit here and you will not move at all. If anyone comes, pretend that you are sleeping.' And this is how it happened. When we got to Platamonas they stopped the train for the control. You had to have an

'Ausweis' [German for 'ID' or 'permit'] to pass. The German inspector came and I pretended to be asleep. He patted me on the back and said, 'Schlaf, schlaf,' meaning, 'sleep, sleep.' The controls were over, the train started moving again and we breathed a sigh of relief.

A bit later, after two or three hours, we got to Larissa. I got off there. We had customers there and I went and found them. The Economidi Brothers were there, who had a metal store in Larissa. And I asked them to get me a ticket to go to Athens. And they got me the ticket. They knew people, and I left aboard the train the same night.

I got to Larissa in the morning and on the same day, at night I got on the train to Athens. There were about six or seven Jewish families in the same wagon in which I was, not to mention all the Jewish families in the rest of the wagons. The train started moving. And at every stop it would stop for a long time. The next morning we started heading for Lamia [city in the mainland of Greece, 332 km south of Thessaloniki]. The train wasn't going through Lamia, it was going through Lianokladi.

Before we got there, they bombed a bridge; it was this great explosion that took place, at the Gorgopotamos. [Editor's note: On 25th November 1942 the railway bridge of Gorgopotamos was bombed by the partisans of EDES and ELAS under the supervision of the British Commandos.]. And we got stuck there, five days on the train. Stuck there with no food, nothing. I had some money on me. At some point, a villager came by with some chicken that he had cooked and he was selling them very expensive. I bought a chicken and ate all of it. Thankfully we had water.

Then we all got off and walked for a long time around the bombed bridge. We found busses opposite. We got on the busses and they took us to the nearest station that the train could reach. I don't remember what place it was.

Then we had to face the same problem when we arrived in Athens. We were going through control again, when we left the station. They asked you for your papers etc. By pure chance a railway man, whom I didn't know, seemed to like me. I told him, 'Look, I don't have papers,' and he said to me, 'Don't worry you will come with me.' Wherever one would pass through control, there was a soldier with a gun asking you for your papers. This railway man showed his papers and said, 'Come on, my child, my child,' and this way I passed and got to Athens. I arrived in Athens in April 1943.

When I got there, my brother was already living at the house of our friends Nicos Latronis and Antonis Papahrisanthou. They were cousins and friends even though Latronis was slightly older than Papahrisanthou. Nicos Latronis was one of our customers, who had his shop in Patra [city in north-west Peloponnesus, 460 km south of Thessaloniki]. But they had opened another one in Piraeus. Latronis was a very good friend of Uncle Solomon. He also knew Father. And Solomon was a very good friend with his brother, Thanos Latronis, who had once been the mayor of Patra.

Danny, who had gone to Athens to study at the Polytechnic, had stayed in Athens. Latronis met him accidentally on the street. He told him, 'I hear that in Thessaloniki things are not going well. You should know that you have no problem. When you feel that you cannot make it, just come to my house. You will come to me, understood?!' And instead of my brother going on his own, he brought me along with him. When he heard that I was coming to Athens, he called Latronis. He told him, 'Look, my brother is coming, too.' 'Alright,' he says, 'Come with your brother.'

Nicos Latronis had us as his guests in the house of Papahrisanthou. I remember my first impression when I got there. They lived in Pangrati [a neighborhood in Athens] in a very nice house that overlooked the 2nd cemetery. The house was on a hill and we could see all the way down to the airport. I remember the eve of Easter. That's when I first met Antonis Papahrisanthou. He cooked intestines. We celebrated Easter, went to church for the Resurrection, where they introduced us as their cousins.

The house was very big. My brother and I shared one room. Latronis with his wife Dina had another room, and Antonis had another room. At the time his sister lived there, too. She was called Ourania. But she later left; she didn't stay until the end.

Later we got ID cards that Evert [Angelos Evert, Athens City Police Chief] was giving out. Proper ID cards because, you see, the ID cards were done in relief then, so one couldn't just make fake ones. So what did they do? They were taking other people's birth certificates. In a very simple way: they would go to the Town Hall and get them. I was called Konstantinidis Kostas and my brother Konstantinidis Vassilis. They were taking these birth certificates and with two witnesses one would go to the police station, and there they would give you the proper ID card. The only difference was that they had someone else registered in the same name of an existing person.

We had a really good time with them. Latronis had an employee, who was also his girlfriend. She was a beautiful woman, very beautiful, and she was from Patra as well. Because she got pregnant, he decided to marry her. After a couple of months they got married. The wedding took place in the house. Only we and a few close friends were present.

Latronis and Papahrisanthou didn't think that they were risking anything at the time. But that's how it was. There were many like him. Latronis was very religious, he would go to church every Sunday and he felt it was his duty to help anyone who was in danger. I am certain that this is how it was. He probably also helped us because of the friendship that he had with my uncle.

Later on, my uncle Solomon came, too. Suddenly he rings and he says, 'I am in Athens.' And Antonis says, 'We've been hit by a bomb.' Because one could tell my uncle, as he didn't speak Greek well. He spoke Greek, but with a bit of an accent... Besides that, he had been in Athens before. And some people around the neighborhood knew him. Uncle didn't have an ID card, he hadn't yet gotten one. I think that he got one later on. Uncle Solomon stayed hidden in Athens until the end of the war.

Sometimes we would go out at night, to a little tavern to have a glass of retsina. We would go to the open air cinema or theater hall in Zappeio. But we generally avoided walking around much. We had money on us. We had brought money and we had sent many goods to Latronis to keep. My father had sent them. He sent about 60 boxes of metal ware. The most valuable, either in weight or in size. At the time having goods was like gold. It was even better to have goods rather than gold. They trusted Latronis. Sometimes they would open one box and sell it. There were neither imports nor any production here.

During the months that we were hiding in Athens, there was no single occasion when our Christian friends, who were helping us, got scared. Then we decided that because our uncle was known in the area, we should rent another place near by. We were in Pangrati, on Marko Moussouri Street. Close to Plastira square we rented an apartment. Down there, no one knew us. But we didn't use it

very much, because we soon left. Latronis used it afterwards. Later his brother Thanos stayed in that house.

Throughout the time we were in Athens we didn't meet one Jew. Sometimes we saw one, but from far away. Two or three times we came across someone, one time at the cinema. But this happened very rarely. We didn't walk around a lot and if so, we mostly went out at night. They didn't even have many lights then, it was pitch black, and you couldn't be seen.

I had no contact with people; I didn't know anything about the resistance organizations in Athens. First of all, our friend Papahrisanthou was completely against EAM because he was an officer. And we didn't talk about it. Unfortunately, because had we known...

I had stayed in Athens since Easter 1943. It must have been about May or April. A month later Antonis already started to tell us that there would be a team of officers who wanted to leave for Cairo [79](#). Antonis was second lieutenant: not a combat one, but of the Logistics Unit. They had hired him from the Military Pension Fund [MPF] of the Air Force to keep their books, because he was a graduate of the School of Higher Business Studies.

Many officers were coming to get paid at the MPF, and they started stirring things up, since they knew that the rest of their colleagues had gone to Cairo and had all climbed the ranks. So they were saying that we should not be left behind. It was a team of about twenty from the air force, ten from the navy and two or three from the infantry. And they bought a boat. We would go to a beach in Euboea [an island north-east of Athens, 450 km south of Thessaloniki] where the closest port to cross over to Turkey is, and the boat would come and take us.

Antonis had told us to go with him. Antonis didn't have money. We financed Antonis, but the two of us didn't go together. I went alone, because we thought that I should go first and if it worked, Danny would follow on the same path. We paid 30 sovereigns, I think. That was a lot of money at the time. With two gold sovereigns you could feed a family for a month. Because the way the system worked was that you would buy the boat and it would come and pick you up and it would get you over but after that the boat would stay with the captain. For every journey the captain would get a new boat.

We passed from the mainland to Euboea, and all night we walked through Euboea until we reached the other side. The small port where they were coming to pick us up was called Akeoi. I don't know why, but we waited for about 15 days. The boat didn't come to pick us up. I remember the time when we stayed there for fifteen days: I washed my clothes in sea water. We didn't have much water or soap or anything like that.

At the same port, the boat that was regularly doing the transport between Greece and Cairo came by. It was one from the Greek secret police. The 2nd office of the Greek government in Cairo owned it. They had it as a liaison. For us it was very good because this ship was very fast, it had really good engines and it was armed. I heard that on another journey they made, the German speedboats approached it. These were checking en route. One time that they came for inspection they let it come very close and they threw grenades and sunk it.

I remember it was 15th August 1943 when we got on the ship. We had with us a known Greek spy who was going back and forth for the English. She had done it several times and in the end the

Germans got her and shot her. I don't remember her name, but she was well known. She was with us.

They put us on the boat and they put us down in the hold. We couldn't stay on the deck because airplanes were going by, and they had put up the Turkish flag. Thankfully that night a great storm was raging. It wasn't just our team. There were many other villagers who were leaving: for the adventure, to go and fight. The villagers that came with us knew nothing about the sea. And they started throwing up.

At four in the morning we got to a beach in Tchesme [Turkish harbor, right opposite Chios island] at the opposite side, in Turkey. He left us and the Turks received us. They undressed us first taking away whatever we had on us. They mainly wanted watches, fountain pens, and matches. Matches or lighters weren't allowed then. After they had taken everything, at the beginning they said, 'We will turn you in, in Mitilini. We will take you to Mitilini and turn you in to the port authority, to the Germans there.' And we would reply, 'No, take this, take that.' So we were offering our things to them ourselves in a way.

After they got everything and knew that they hadn't left us anything they said, 'Let's go to the Greek embassy.' They brought busses and took us to Tchesme, the city, and they locked us up in an inn. That's where they decided to put us until we had papers to pass through the control. Later on they came from the Greek consulate in Izmir and took us.

In Izmir, again, they put us inside an inn. There was a control and then they put us on the trains. It was the Greeks now, the allies. We had to get on the train to go to Aleppo. Aleppo is in Syria, the nearest place to the Turkish border. In Aleppo others received us. There they kept us too, for two reasons: one, to go through the control for spies and second, to check whether we had any illnesses. We were in quarantine.

We stayed there for three or four days. There was a lot of food. Everyone fell over the food and because we ate out of gluttony we spent all three days being sick. I had the luck that the one who questioned me was an Englishman from Thessaloniki, he was called Donaldson. He had a shop with fine liquor and food etc. It was like a grocery shop with luxury goods: black caviar, fish roe and champagne. And he knew my father. Well, when he heard my name...

Then we had to go through the recruitment. Since I was with all the folks from the air force, who were anything from group captains to pilot officers, they told me, 'You will come with us to the air force.' And for as long as I served in the armed forces I was everyone's favorite kid. From there they told us that we would go to Gaza. There was an army camp in Gaza for all the Greeks of the air force who wanted to do the first training, the infantry training, there. There were ground officers who were training us.

My uncle Joseph was in Tel Aviv. As we passed through Haifa there were many people from Thessaloniki working at the docks. And I heard them speaking in Spanish. I called out to one, 'Come here' in Spanish, and he replied 'What, what is?' 'I just wanted to let you know that I've just come from Greece, from Thessaloniki.' 'From Thessaloniki, from Thessaloniki?' he uttered in amazement. Upon which I asked him, 'Please, can you find out the telephone number of my uncle in Tel Aviv? He is called Joseph Alvo. Can you inform him that I've come through here and that I am with the Greek air force in Gaza?' And he did. Straight away.

Around three or four days later, while I was there, at the army camp in Gaza, I saw a car arrive in the morning with my uncle in it, my cousin Marcel and a Greek officer from the provost marshal's office of Tel Aviv. Since my cousin knew him, and he was told that I was there, they took him with them to help me get a permit. And even though I hadn't taken an oath yet, they gave me a permission to go for four days to Tel Aviv to be with the family, and tell them everything that I had to say to them. Afterwards I came back. All this happened in October 1943.

When we got to Tchesme we sent a message to Danny. We sent him a message saying that we had arrived and that we were alright. So he decided to take the same route and come, too. But they were more unlucky than us. I left in August. He left a month later. They stayed a long time up in the mountain in Euboea. There was only one hut on the beach. This was a hut for the shepherds to live in the winter. When they went there, it was abandoned. My brother stayed for much longer there. He arrived in Gaza about three months later, in December 1943 or January 1944.

When my brother arrived, many others arrived with him. My brother arrived in Gaza and went through the same training that we had when we first arrived. He later went to Cairo where he passed his medical tests. I think we met just before I was leaving for South Africa. He was in Cairo, while I was waiting for my turn to come to leave for South Africa. I passed my tests etc. My brother and a friend of his had just arrived in Gaza. We were able to get a permit to leave, because we had contacts through Papahrisanthou, and they came to Cairo. We all gathered there with Papahrisanthou and two of his colleagues that had come with the mission that I went with, and we had a photograph taken of all of us together.

Danny had to take the same route. The first stage was the Bulawayo School [city in Zimbabwe, formerly British colony of Southern Rhodesia]]. After he had passed his tests as an operator he went to Salisbury. It was then the capital of Rhodesia [today's Harare, capital of Zimbabwe]. That's where the third stage ended. When the war ended, he was in Salisbury.

Everything was finishing naturally and we had to go through the OTU, Operational Training Unit. There they make you fly with the type of airplane that you were going to be using in the missions. Neither of us had the time to do this, because the war had ended and they gathered us in Egypt, wherefrom they put us on the boat and we returned to Athens. I came back in December 1944. My brother came back much later. We were all from the same unit. And we did nothing at all. Later Papahrisanthou took my brother to work at the ministry, where he was working himself and wherefrom he retired.

My uncle Solomon didn't go through many adventures. He hid in Kolonaki in a family house which Latronis had found for him. The owner's name was Mr. Tsikros; he was a very good gentleman, an old Athenian. One was pleased to see him passing by, he was already of advanced aged at the time, but he was always clean and neat, so when we opened a shop in Athens, we hired him as a manager.

From the rest of the family members only those that were Spanish had managed to leave. The Saltiels were Spanish citizens. After the deportations in Thessaloniki had come to an end, they gathered all the Spanish citizens in the synagogue and told them, 'You have two hours to take your personal belongings and come here. The train is ready. Come back here. We will send you to Spain.'

Sento, his father Daniel and his wife Mathilde left together. First they took them to Bergen-Belsen [80](#). From there, on the train they passed through the whole of occupied France and got to Spain, where they stayed for around 20 days in Barcelona, and from there they took them to Morocco, to Casablanca, where the allies, the Anglo-French had already entered. They first put them in an army camp where there were many children from other countries and Greeks from other countries. In the camp, they had Mathilde Saltiel teach small children because she knew French very well. In fact, when we left, they gave her a diploma for the conclusion of her duties, thanking her for being such a good teacher. Later, through Morocco they went to Gaza and then to Tel Aviv, where they had relatives.

Sento's wife remained hidden and didn't turn up when all the Spanish were gathered. She managed to get to Athens and hide there. But she suffered. The Spanish that left from Athens weren't taken to Spain like it had happened with the first deportation. They took them to Bergen-Belsen. So she thought that she would be doing better than her husband and hid on her own but she suffered much more. She did survive though, and so did her two daughters.

Moshe Gattegno was with the Spanish. When the Spanish were liberated from Bergen-Belsen, he got eruptive typhus.

Aunt Lily survived, too. She had gotten married to Mario Modiano who was Italian. When the deportations started, the Italians put all the Italian citizens who were in Thessaloniki on an army train and moved them to Italian land. They didn't let the Germans take them. The Italian embassy helped many people. They gave out many certificates with fake citizenship. If, say, you had a grandfather or an uncle or someone, they would give you a certificate saying that you, too, are Italian. And they would send you on their own army train. So, this way they came to Athens and went into hiding.

When Italy fell and surrendered, Aunt Lily was in hiding in Athens with her two children. Her husband went to the mountains, with the partisans. They helped him to go and hide there with his two brothers and his eldest son, Tori. They didn't fight; they were old then, about fifty years old.

Aunt Ida married a Greek Jew. And they were all deported. She didn't survive.

My mother didn't have Spanish citizenship, because she was married to a Greek. My parents left during the last but one deportation to the camps. While she was at Baron Hirsch, my mother had tried to commit suicide by jumping into a well, but they managed to stop her. We heard of this from others that were there and returned.

My mother had psychological problems. She was a bit... I don't know why because she was living happily with my father. They didn't have many arguments. However, she had lost her mother very young and she took over to look after her brothers and sisters. She was about sixteen or seventeen when her mother died. Maybe that created psychological problems. Or maybe it was hereditary. Because I see that my brother has similar problems. My mother had fears. I don't know exactly what it was, but I know that my father had taken her two or three times to Semmering in Austria, to an institution, for treatment. Maybe that explains her suicide attempt. Her nervous system was already weak. And maybe she thought, it would be better, it would save her from it all.

My father's brothers were not on the list. I mean the list of those people that were not allowed to leave, or otherwise, they would execute the rest. Since they managed to leave it was for the best. My father didn't tell them anything. Nothing at all. Everyone was free to do as they thought was best. At the time they used to say like they say in French, 'sauve qui peut.' That means: Whoever can, let him be saved.

You have to understand that no one was thinking that they were going to die. They thought that they would take them there and put them in forced labor to work. We would go and buy good hobnailed boots and warm clothes and things like that. People hid the money in the shoes and the belts in order to have money to spend. The Germans had also done the other thing: you would give them drachmas and they would change it to zloti, which was a worthless piece of paper.

My father really appreciated German science, but not the culture. Because we already knew from World War I in France, that they had done a lot. He appreciated the industry and with many suppliers he had excellent relations. He couldn't have imagined that the Germans would get to this point. My father thought it was compulsory to follow the orders of the Germans. He thought that by having a good behavior towards the Germans, their luck might be different from the others. I think that if they had known that they were going for certain death, at least half of them would have left.

What I found out is that when they got to Auschwitz, my sister and my father didn't go straight to the ovens [crematoria]. They worked for a while in forced labor. My father lasted three or four months. He, who was used to getting up in the morning and having his shower and go to the office. I can only imagine what he went through. My mother went [to the crematorium] straight away,, and my sister lasted only a very short time.

Olga was the wife of Bernard Landau, who was put in prison by the Germans because they regarded him as a spy. He knew how to speak German better than the Germans. He was an Ashkenazi. In the family they considered him a little bit as an outsider. He left with the last transport to the concentration camps because he worked at the Community. But neither he, nor Olga or his children survived. Only his older daughter, Yvonne, who got married to a Spaniard and got the Spanish citizenship made it. She survived and later went to Palestine.

Rebecca left with her husband and two daughters and went to Auschwitz. My uncle Daniel lived in the ghetto at the time. Nevertheless he managed to get out of the ghetto with his wife and his two children, Nico and Mary. It seems that when the deportations started a number of people left. Only a few though. Roula's mother, who was from Volos, sent someone to take them and bring them to Volos on a boat. Then, when the Italians surrendered, they went up to the mountains of Karditsa.

Daisy's husband thought that it was better to leave and go to Athens. He had friends there. Daisy had no problem to go to Athens because she had married a Christian. They had excluded the ones of mixed marriages, but those were very few.

In the Middle East I started finding myself again. I felt free. I felt like a human being again: I felt that I was of some value, that I could be of use, because I have to say that everything came easy to me. I had no problem with colleagues or trainers or teachers. I was getting along very well with others. Especially in the air force I had the protection of those we had fled with. I didn't need any protection, but anyway. I remember that when I went to the camp of Ai Giannis I never had a problem to adjust. And down to the present day I don't have a problem to adjust. I adjust to all

situations easily.

In Gaza we stayed for as long as we had to, in order to finish our training: four months. I remember when I took a leave for Tel Aviv. I went as often as I could, I would always go to my uncle's house. They gave me a leave when he first came and visited me with a marshal from Tel Aviv. Later on, before I left for Egypt, they gave me permission for a week, I think, or ten days, because I was leaving.

We were crossing the borders from Egypt to Palestine on the train. We would go through customs in Kaltara. The name of the place where the customs were was Al Kaltara. It took about twelve hours on the train. And all the trains were army trains. I stayed at Uncle's Joseph house. He lived in a very nice area: at Rothschild, Boulevard Rothschild. I ate with them, we would go out together, and my uncle took me to buy me some clothes because I had nothing.

In the beginning, when I found my uncle in Tel Aviv, I felt great love and trust towards him. He treated me really well. Uncle Joseph was a landowner in Tel Aviv. He would buy land and construct buildings. He also worked in the Discount Bank, which was one of the largest banks. But because he and his son didn't get along with the rest of the associates, they had withdrawn. It was one of their biggest mistakes in life, because later on the bank became an international bank.

I don't remember if Grandfather and Grandmother Saltiel were already there when I went to the Middle East. I met them in Palestine every time that I would get a permit to go out. They lived in Tel Aviv. I used to visit Grandfather and Grandmother when I went to my uncle's Joseph. They rented a room. They had brought some money with them. Not a lot, but Grandfather had some.

I didn't know Hebrew, but this is what was happening. At the time, the first immigrants that had come were from Germany, and they all spoke German. For example, just like they speak English in Palestine now, back then it was the German language. In any shop that you would get in, if you spoke German, they would understand you.

I was more interested in the fact that I was in a family environment again. I appreciated that very much. I couldn't see any difference in that I was with many other Jews. I wasn't aware that it had to be Jewish land. And I didn't imagine that it could happen either. I knew that many Jews lived there. I didn't feel more at home, I never felt that there. I could only feel the difference between being under occupation back home and being free there. I was quite proud that I was wearing an air force uniform. I didn't have any conversations on this subject with Uncle Joseph. He never suggested that I should stay there. He had his interests there and he hoped that he would keep having his interests there.

When I arrived, I was the first one to arrive from Thessaloniki. There were many people from Thessaloniki in Tel Aviv. And I told them what had happened here, without knowing what happened afterwards. We knew that they had interned people and took them to Poland. But what was going on in Poland we didn't know at the time.

When I was in Gaza there was a sergeant major of the infantry, who was called Vamvakas. He was from Paliouri and he was an apiarist. We became friends and when I would get a permit to go out on Sunday's we would go out together and chat. All of us from Northern Greece got together and went out on Sundays and sometimes had a beer together. My uncle had given me some money

then because I didn't have any.

When we were done with all this, they started asking who wanted to go as a volunteer to fly, to go to the air force. I was the first one who went to register. But to do so, you had to go to Heliopolis, which was an outskirt of Cairo. This is where the hygiene offices of the English were, where they would put you through a very thorough health check, especially on the eyes. They would exclude two out of three people because of their eye sight. But until our turn came, we had to stay in Cairo for around 15 to 20 days. They had put us in a unit there.

I got to Cairo at the beginning of 1944. I got a permit again and came back to Tel Aviv. My uncle was very upset that I had registered with the air force and that I was going to get my training down there. He wouldn't forgive me for this. He was very afraid of danger.

We would go from Heliopolis to Cairo on the train. Because we lived in Cairo but all the health tests were in Heliopolis. The tests would last two or three days. One would have to come and go, come and go.. There were others together with the English. There were Serbs and Poles; Cairo was international at the time. And one could see there Greeks, many Cypriots, Yugoslavians, Poles, Canadians, in short, people from all over the world. There were also many from New Zealand and Australia. Thankfully, I passed my tests and I was judged to be suitable. They told me, 'Now you will wait for your turn to be sent to Rhodesia.' My first training was in Rhodesia, in Bulawayo.

All this time that we had already spent in the Middle East, in Cairo and Gaza, maybe afterwards in Bulawayo, it was the first time that we realized what the leftists were working on. They told us for the first time when I was in Cairo. At the end of 1943, a movement was created [81](#), in which the navy was taking part and some from the infantry. The English had sent the ones from the infantry behind bars, in Ethiopia, where there were also Italian prisoners. I don't know if they let them go free afterwards, because they didn't trust them at all, especially the English. Thankfully, the air force didn't take part, only the navy did.

We would hear these things; news would travel by word of mouth between us. We knew that they were behind bars. They called it, 'wires.' To tell you the truth, I felt a bit ashamed. I was thinking: We came here to fight, and we immediately turned things into politics and did exactly the opposite thing. They wanted to have the Cairo government fall. The Prime Minister was Tsouderos [82](#). I don't remember hearing anything in the air force about communist propaganda.

There was a Greek woman [prostitute] in Egypt that all the officers used to go to. Papahrisanthou, our friend, took me to her, too. She was a very nice girl. She served all the officers. At the time in the army, but also when we went out, we didn't have any female company of the same age that we could go out and entertain ourselves with.

About twenty days later, they loaded us up on some small airplanes with two engines. Inside the airplane there were twenty of us, ten by ten we sat. We left Cairo and we had to land every two hours to get supplies again. Our journey lasted three days. The first night, I remember, we stayed in Khartoum. We messed around with women there. We went to women, we all went together. It had been months that we hadn't been even close to a woman.

The second night we got off in a place that was called Ndola. Given that the weather was really bad, we had to stop our journey and land in Ndola. Ndola was in Northern Rhodesia [today

Zambia]. I remember that airport there; the guards had mosquito nets in front of their faces. There were so many mosquitoes! We stayed there for one night. In fact in the hotel where we stayed, a Greek guy, who was a barber, came, because the hotel manager had notified him and he came to keep us company for a bit. I can say that wherever I went during all these journeys, I didn't find a single place that didn't have Greeks.

Next morning we left early and got to Bulawayo. The ITU was there, the Initial Training Unit. We started having theory classes there, where they taught us a bit of everything. I knew very little English, but I learned it there, because in my class at the beginning we were only three Greeks, the rest were English and South Africans. And also they didn't like each other, the English and the South Africans. They would fight and punch each other.

We learned all the theory about flying. How does the airplane fly, for what reason, how the engines work, everything. We stayed at Bulawayo for three months. In the first stage, I think, we did our first flights, because everyone regarded themselves as pilots. And it is there that I was rejected as a pilot because I didn't pass where landing was concerned.

Later on I registered for the position of a navigator, because air navigation is all about trigonometry, and we were going to the second part of the training for a special aeronautical course, in East London, South Africa. We went to East London at the beginning of 1944. Every training - there were three stages - lasted three or four months. In East London we specialized in air navigation. With the radio or with the stars you knew where you were, and were flying. That was right at the end before we went to Cape Town.

East London was a nice city. A small city, but very pleasant. There were British there, and blacks, too. In Rhodesia it was the first time that we faced the segregation between the whites and the blacks. This actually made a great impression on us, a very bad impression. We would go for a walk in the park and they would have a sign saying, 'Europeans only.' We couldn't understand it. Later on, when we had stayed there for a little longer, we partly found out - not completely but partly - that they were right. They really were people of a much lower intelligence than us. But why were they lower? Because they didn't allow them to be educated!

After East London we went to Cape Town. In Cape Town we mainly had practice on air navigation, which was very interesting. On the plane. The English were so organized in everything, they were great! Of course, we didn't have many real Englishmen. Most of them were Welsh and Scottish. The Scottish were the best. What I liked most was their discipline. For example they would teach you about the machine gun of an airplane and how to dismantle it and turn it to screws and nuts, and then put it together again so it can be used again.

Our trainer for the armaments was a flight sergeant. We had students in the class that were flight lieutenants and higher positioned. They were sending them, too, because they were people that had fought and now wanted to join the air force and because they were very good. You should have seen when the flight sergeant was giving the lesson, how the flight lieutenants sat in front of him. At the time it didn't make a difference, he was the professor. One could fly and have as a pilot a non-commissioned officer and an officer as a seaman, but still the non-commissioned officer would be in charge of the aircraft.

There were many women soldiers in the army then. English and South African. I had a proper [sexual] relationship with a girl in South Africa. What impressed us was that when we went to South Africa we found the ethics there to be as they are here today. The girls there were completely free. Some that were smart realized it quickly. For me it was something that I couldn't imagine.

I went out with girls from the army and others. You would get in a shop, for example, to buy something, and you would start a conversation. And you would go out at night with them. But I never imagined that we could take it further. Because we still had the attitude that you will dishonor the girl. But they were different. In South Africa they regarded that girls seventeen or eighteen years old could have sex without getting married. So we would go out and kiss and hug and make out a little sometimes, but that was it. Nothing more. Although they were available! They must have thought that we were fools. Because we thought that if you had sex with a girl, you had to marry her straight away. That was the attitude at the time. You had to go and sort it out afterwards.

I remember there was a friend of ours that was seriously wounded. He was a seaman bomber, and he was teaching us how to hang the bombs under the airplane. He made one move that he shouldn't have made, and the bomb exploded. And it burned his whole foot, all of it. He stayed in hospital in South Africa for five or six months. With the nurses there he had a great time, even though he looked terrible. He was a handsome man. He was very masculine and handsome and had really good manners. When he came back he told us all about the great time he had with the nurses in the hospital.

The English and the South Africans really disliked each other although they were allies. Especially in Pretoria, where there were many Boers, there would be battles. In the bars and wherever else. The Greeks avoided trouble, they didn't mix.

Something that made an impression on me when I went to South Africa was that I found there Greeks from the Sailing Club. They had left from here as refugees and went to Johannesburg and opened a tea room and made a lot of money. Their tea room was open all night. There we were told that most of the tea rooms were Greek owned anyway.

At the end of 1944 we finished the training. We weren't fit to fight yet. One had to do the OTU, which was the Operational Training Unit. They trained you on the airplane that you were going to fly with. We didn't do the OTU. We didn't do our OTU, because by that time Greece was liberated and they sent us back.

At the end of October or beginning of November 1944 I went back to Cairo. We waited for our turn, to return to Greece. Things in Greece were still very complicated, but they gave me a permit. They gave me the permit while we were at war, and the war ended and I took it and came with an army airplane to Athens, where I stayed for a week. Thanks to the officers they brought me on the official airplane. And I went to visit Aunt Daisy, who was then in Athens. I hadn't informed her, and she didn't know that I was coming. She was lying there on her bed reading. And suddenly she sees the door opening and I get in. This week in Athens went by and then I returned to my unit, and waited for the time to get back.

They brought us back on a ship: the 'Aksou.' I met a Cypriot girl there and we had a little romance, which was very nice. She was a very nice girl. She was from a good family; her father was a district

attorney. We wrote to each other for a while afterwards. Later she came to Athens to study there.

They brought us back after the December events [83](#), the so-called 'Dekemvriana,' at the end of 1944. They didn't bring anyone back from the Middle East while the December events were taking place. Later on they took us to Athens, to the end of Patision Road. That's where our unit was.

They sent us to the Air Force Ministry, to perform a service which was giving the officers clothing passes. It was a clerical job. In fact the non commissioned officer who was with me was Karazisis whom I knew from the YMCA summer camp. For three months we had a very good time together.

I had a girlfriend in Athens when I was still working at the Air Force Ministry. It was something strange. There was a kiosk just opposite. And inside the kiosk was a very beautiful girl. I was with Karazisis, just the two of us. He was the supervisor. When we didn't have work we would hang about. She was looking at us, too. We slowly started smiling at each other. We were supposedly going to the kiosk to buy the newspapers and we finally met, and had a relationship in the end. That was a real relationship. It lasted for as long as I stayed in Athens.

We didn't have bachelor's rooms, they didn't exist back then. You couldn't go to a hotel, except if you went to disreputable ones, so we wouldn't go anywhere. At night we would go to the park. When it was dark, in Zappeion. Zappeion had many places for couples to hide. We also had the Department for Morals back then. Sometimes as we were sitting there in the dark someone would come holding a lantern etc. But I was in uniform, and I told him to leave me alone, not to disturb me.

In the beginning we were flirting; later she admitted that she was married. And that's when we carried on with the relationship since there no longer was an obstacle. That disappointed me then, it was a disappointment. She came from somewhere around Thiva. The fact that I was a Jew and she was a Christian never played a role in our relationship. She was younger than me, much younger. How could I have imagined that she was already married? I was around 22 or 23. She must have been around 19-20. She was a pretty girl. She was a village girl.

We finished issuing passes, and after that they sent me to the Air Force Police Office. It was on Academias Street, where I was very often the officer on duty. I had to change the shifts at night, but right behind the offices it was where Aunt Daisy lived. I slept in the office, but whenever I was free I would go there, as soon as I would finish my duty, I would go home. I ate at home. This was at the beginning of 1945.

Later Danny came back, too, and he went through the same procedure. He happened to become a pilot. He was a pilot and flying a twin engine air craft.

• Post-war

I don't remember the day that Germany surrendered. I don't remember, for a start, if I was in Greece when the war ended. I suppose I was in Greece.

Once my brother asked himself what he was doing there, in Athens. He wanted to be dismissed. First, you had to go to the duty officer. He knocks on the door and tells him, 'Mr. Personnel Manager, why do you keep me here? What am I doing here? I am doing nothing. While I am in great need to go and work... Our shop is ruined. We want to build it up again etc...' He looks at him

strangely and he shouts at the minister officer, 'Give him a dismissal certificate.'

I stayed in Athens for almost a year. I was dismissed in 1946.

The first time I came to Thessaloniki was soon after I arrived in Greece. My brother was not there yet. I came to see my uncles. I had come on a ship. One could also travel on a truck. The train transport wasn't working yet. I remember that period very well. I first came wearing the air force uniform. I was walking around in the streets to see what had become of the city. And everything that I saw was so sad. Even though Thessaloniki was liberated, everything went on at a very slow pace. It seemed like it was deserted. The market was deserted; they had nothing to sell. Where the Jewish neighborhoods were, everything was deserted. There were many empty houses. But I don't really have a clear picture of that time because I only stayed for two or three days.

In 1946, while I was still a soldier, my brother was already at the shop. I didn't waste my time in Athens though. I was helping the company from there. It was at a time that imports were conducted here. They would send me goods and I would sell them to traders. I went to sell and I also provided them with goods here. My uncle had come back from the mountains and they had already opened a shop at Agiou Mina Street [Saint Mina Street: one of the commercial roads of Thessaloniki], which was our uncle's property. So we started from there.

When the Germans left and abandoned our shop on Ionos Dragoumi Street, the partisans took over and turned it into their commissariat. When the partisans were gone, the English took it over and turned it into their canteen. They paid us a symbolic rent. And only later on were we able to get it back.

The first time I came back to Thessaloniki I went to see our house, which had been taken over by people stricken by the partisans. And when I saw it...well, of course they looked at me in a hostile way. But there was nothing to be done. In every room there was a whole family, how could one evict them?

The house had two stories. I would have had to evict five and five, ten families and two living in the basement, twelve families all together. I did not dare and didn't wish to do such a thing.

These people had left their villages in Eastern Macedonia due to the activity of ELAS. We called them. They were referred to as the 'partisan stricken.' The General Governorate of Macedonia, acting through the Ministry, gave them rooms in our house. They lived there with provisional papers.

Many started a legal procedure in order to have them vacate their houses and shops, etc.

Thankfully we didn't have to sue anybody. I used my little-by-little tactics. In the end we became best friends with all of them.

I got the house back but it took me a long time. First I vacated one floor. Some among the tenants wanted to get back to their villages. They would come and say to me, 'Give us enough money for the journey and we will leave.' I emptied the first floor and went to live there with Daisy's mother and grandfather. It is there where we first stayed.

As soon as I stepped inside the house, I started negotiating with the ones on the ground floor. Slowly I 'persuaded' them to leave our house. At the time one could buy a piece of land very cheap,

almost for free. Think that with just ten thousand drachmas one could buy the land and build oneself a shanty to live there.

At the end of 1946 I was released from the army. That was three years later than I should have been released. For two or three months I lived in the house of my uncle Daniel and Roula. I later rented a house in front of the Analipsi [Ascension] church, that belonged to someone I knew.

My grandfather Daniel and grandmother Mathilde came to Thessaloniki after me. They had gone to North Africa. From North Africa they were sent to Palestine. When they were liberated and things became smoother, they returned home by boat from Haifa. They first came to Athens. In fact, at the time, there was only one Turkish ship doing the trip between Athens and Palestine, the 'Aksou.' The Greek ships didn't do international transport, while the Turks did.

At the time, to come from Haifa by boat the journey would take three to four days, because the ship stopped everywhere. It would leave for Haifa then head to Suez, from there to Alexandria, from Alexandria to Cyprus, and from Cyprus to Piraeus.

Grandfather Daniel and Mathilde went straight from Tel Aviv to Haifa on a ship and arrived in Athens. In Athens, they stayed in a hotel. They were with their son Sento, who was on his own, without his family. I think that about a month or so later his relatives came back, too. They went from Athens to Thessaloniki. When they went to Thessaloniki, Grandmother and Grandfather came to stay with me.

So I lived with Daisy's mother and my Grandfather Daniel. They lived downstairs and we had rented out the top floor. My grandfather's son lived separately. My grandmother had a brother who was a Spanish citizen, and he had survived. He was younger than her and he was called Saltiel Gattegno. He came with his sister and stayed with us.

There was another young man, too. His name was Maurice Florentin. He was the brother of a friend of mine, a bit younger than me. He was saved because he was in the mountains. He was with the partisans. He was wounded in a battle and his one leg was quite a bit shorter. He had to wear shoes one of which had a thicker sole, so his legs would be the same height. He was on his own, too. His brother had left secretly for the Middle East. He had lost his parents. We took him in with us, too, because the house where we went to live was big enough. Grandmother and Grandfather had one room, I had one room, her brother and Maurice had one room. Maurice stayed for one year and later left and went to Athens.

Uncle Sento and his family, who had arrived in the meantime, also rented a house. He started the lumber trade again. He went into a partnership with someone that he knew, an old lumber trader. His name was Bilimatsis, which a well-known name. They co-operated and their work went really well.

They managed very quickly to make the shop prosper again. It was the golden age of trade then, after the war ended and we were liberated. First of all, the merchants were making quite a lot of money, then the manufacturers and the artisans. And, finally, the building contractors. It was those three... That's how business developed after the war.

When I came back to Thessaloniki, I found the business already set up. So, I got into the business. I didn't have time to see what was happening around me. When we started working we didn't have

any employees. We did everything on our own. First thing every day when I got to the shop was to put the rolls up and pick up the broom and sweep the pavement outside the shop.

We had to start from scratch, me, my brother and my two uncles, Solomon and Daniel; they, by the way, didn't received us in a nice way. Even though they used to be only employees at my father's and uncle's business, they supposedly did us a favor by accepting also us in the business.

Even Uncle Joseph, who loved my father very much, when things came down to business, he would react differently. There was, however, a mentality we grew up with, that one should respect the elder and the parents. And we didn't understand that they didn't want us....We only understood all this later on, after many years.

Some of our old suppliers helped us. And it was through this that we realized what the difference between Americans and Europeans was. We had the exclusivity of rasps of an American trade mark, Nicholson. They were of very good quality. People found out and were asking for them insistently.

After the war, they told us that our exclusivity had expired and that they would assign another representative. In Greece, we were completely unfamiliar with this idea. And though we had been the exclusive representatives of these products, that was it, it was over just like that.

We had another brand's exclusivity; that one was from Italy. When we wrote to them, telling them that we had re-opened the shop, they replied to us, saying that they would provide us with whatever we wished. They asked us if we wanted to get some of their goods to start off. So that was the difference in the attitude of a European in comparison to an American.

Same thing with the sickles from Austria. In no case would they take our exclusivity away. Some of our colleagues would go to them and say, 'Alvo doesn't exist anymore, he is ruined, there is nothing he can do for you, now it is we that are available.' Nothing changed, and we kept it up, even until today. That is, we've had exclusive import for more than seventy years. While with the Americans, business is business.

Our old customers were helping us, too. You see, we had a network all over Greece, and when they heard that we re-opened... I remember the first customers. The oldest one, one from Drama that we had, a certain Zafeirios Iliasis, another one from Soufli [city in western Thrace, 410 km east of Thessaloniki], Mermigkas, and another one, Sakellaridis.

They came up to see us, the last two together. They hadn't suffered at all, because they were from Soufli. Not even from lack of food or from the occupation or anything else. They came to visit us and we started the trade. We later expanded to other areas, too.

About our parents we heard from people that had come back to Thessaloniki. We didn't know then... We knew what had happened there, but we had some secret hopes, although very few hopes. We later found out what had happened from people that were there and had come back. Actually, some people didn't come back for quite a while. After the liberation, it took some people three to four months to return. The father of Lela Salem, who was a distant relative, he returned. He was there when my father died, and he told me so.

It was a very difficult period, because no matter how decent you are, it is very difficult to give back something that you had in your possession. So there were many court cases all the time. There were evictions from houses and from shops.

Properties had been taken away arbitrarily and if you found them you had to claim them and prove that they were yours. For three to four years there were many conflicts between Jews and Christians; but only with those that had collaborated and had taken the Jewish properties, not the rest. Luckily we didn't face such conflicts.

Our goods had been confiscated by the Germans themselves. Thus we didn't have any goods to claim. We had given goods to people who lived outside Thessaloniki to keep for us. We had also given many of our things to representatives and neighbors here in Thessaloniki. We had a good neighbor, Stasino, to whom we had given carpets. He kept two of them for us. He also took care of my stamp collection.. He gave it back to me when we returned.

My uncle had given goods to his representative, Mr. Tahiao. He did a lot of business with Jews. He was great, a remarkable man. My uncle had also given goods to a well-known lawyer, Mr. Nakopoulos. He returned all the goods to him, too. Thankfully, we got back everything we had given to people to keep.

We were lucky and we didn't encounter any cases of unreturned property. From the goods that we had sent to the countryside only two, one from Volos and another one, whose name I cannot remember, kept them and didn't return them to us. All the rest gave us back everything. One of them, in fact, didn't even ask us for money for the transport of the goods to the warehouse.

This way we could reopen the shop and start again. Do you know what it is like to get 100 or 150 boxes in an empty shop? There were others that were saying that the Germans had taken their goods. This didn't happen to us. Because you have to understand, in difficult times, and when there are interests involved, even the best people sometimes, well...

About the events that took place after the December events [the terror that led to the Greek Civil War], I had no opinion. I followed them, but I was neither leftist nor rightist. I was neutral and I just followed them and watched. There was a period of time right after the events, when they would keep a file for everybody at the Security Police on whether you were a communist or not.

There were some that were really communists. Some of the Jews, however, that were up in the mountains, with the resistance movement, in order save their life, got in trouble because they were deemed to be communists. They were characterized as leftists, while in reality they had just gone there to be saved. They had to sign affidavits to prove their repentance [84](#). All these were very unpleasant things. The only thing that we were afraid of was not to be considered as part of the left block.

Needless to say, that the Greek Civil War [85](#) affected our life a lot. All of the entertainment halls were forbidden and were closed. They thought there can't be people fighting and dying, while you're going out at night to entertain yourself. That's how it was, we were very limited. We would hear in the morning that the partisans had gotten to Naoussa [city in northern Greece, 90 km west of Thessaloniki] and burned down this and that and did this and that etc.

I remember we had a really good customer from before the war from Ptolemaida [city in northern Greece, 163 km west of Thessaloniki] whose name was Karahisarlis. They went there and burned his shop. Just after they burned his shop, I called him up and said, 'Stelio, don't worry. Come here and I will give you goods to start over again.' And indeed he came, and we gave them a long-term credit. The man was really alright, and he started all over again.

During the civil war we had a lot of work. The army had great needs. They would buy many things. The fact that there was a civil war going on didn't complicate things with our customers or their orders or the transport to the countryside. We didn't have difficulties, none at all. They had burned Naoussa and Ptolemaida. Less damage had been done in Eastern Macedonia. Our customers' network wasn't influenced by the events. So because there was great need in the market and also for the army, we had loads of work. As long as one had goods to sell there was no problem in selling them.

Many Jews served in the army during the civil war. I was lucky enough that every time that they would ask for soldiers, they would exclude the ones that had served in the Middle East. But some that had re-started their businesses and got married and had children they didn't exclude.

One was Benforado, who had come back from the concentration camps and started his business again from scratch. After he started his business, they took him to the army. Luckily, he had an intelligent wife who was keeping the shop while he was serving at the army.

Marcel Nadjari, who married my cousin Rosa, had the same story. He was called to serve in the army a year and a half after he had come back from the concentration camps. Even though he was in a deplorable state they summoned him and he had to serve as a soldier in the army. And many others, and quite a few got killed.

At that period of time we didn't consider outrageous the fact that Jews who had returned from concentration camps were conscripted to serve in the army. I, for my sake, didn't consider it strange when I saw my friend Marcel Nadjari being a soldier. We didn't think twice about it. Because there is no doubt, that if they had asked the Community, they would have been excluded. But they didn't exclude either the Jews or any others. Many others came back from the concentration camps, too.

Marcel Nadjari didn't react at all. He went and served in the army as if it was the normal thing to do. I don't think that he thought that it was unfair. He didn't complain. On the contrary, he would tell us incidents that happened there. He was an excellent guy, always full of jokes.

After the liberation, many were digging. They were looking for the treasures that the Jews had hidden before they left. What else should the Jews have done with their belongings? They dug holes and hid them. They would dig a hole in the ground in their back yard or inside a wall and they would put their personal belongings inside. We did the same. Thankfully, we found them after the liberation. We had hidden gold sovereigns. Many that were looking and digging up weren't relatives or anything.

They knew that in a certain house there used to live a Jewish family, and they would look around. Some found things. Many found things when the rebuilding started. As the bulldozer was digging, it would bring things up to the surface.

During the occupation they were selling out, and my father was accumulating money. There were two things one could do with the money: Either change it into gold sovereigns or buy real estate property. Many were selling their land because they were in great need.

As for us, we had bought a piece of land opposite the Military Academy that went all the way down to the sea. We bought that from Mr. Varlamidis, who was the manager of the National Bank of Greece. He knew my father and they had really good relations. He had already retired from the bank and was on a pension when he told my father, 'I have this piece of land, come and I will sell it to you.'

According to the law that cancelled all buying and selling transactions that took place during the occupation, you either had to give the difference that the person that sold it to you was asking and then keep it, or it would be cancelled and he would give you back the money that you had paid him and he would take his property back. That was the law.

Because they estimated that most of the people that sold things at the time were in great need and didn't sell things at the right price. So if you had bought it at a lower price, you would have benefited from the difficult situation.

My father did many transactions at that time. I remember there was a big tobacco warehouse on Antigonidon Street, which we bought for about 300-400 sovereigns. We bought it from a Christian, whose name I don't remember at the moment, but he was a rich man. They gave us our money back and that was it. Others asked us to give them the difference and we compromised and that was that.

I learned how to drive after the war with the help of a taxi driver. We didn't have driving schools yet. I went to him together with friends and asked him, 'Will you teach us how to drive?' 'Alright,' he replies, 'I will teach you.' I decided to learn how to drive, because I really liked driving. And at the time there weren't many people that knew how to drive.

What kind of cars did we have? After I learned driving, I bought a jeep from DYSI [Public Service of Collected Material, a service of the state, handling confiscated material]. It was a real disaster, but they didn't sell cars at the time. The car trade was not permitted.

The only thing that you could do was to buy from DYSI what was regarded as useless and beyond mending. I had bought an army jeep. I put doors and a tent on top of it and seats inside. I turned it into a limousine. We overhauled the engine completely, reconditioned the cylinders, put new pistons etc. So it turned out to be a good car. I was one of the first people that owned a car. From my friends only one other had a car, which was owned by the factory and was a utility van.

In 1950 I went to Paris for the first time. It was my first journey after the war. I went to enjoy myself. I was only a young man then. Everyone used to go to London, Paris and Italy. I went in the winter because it was the time when we had less business. This is because during winter our work had a low season, as due to the weather all the construction sites would stop operating for a while and the farmers didn't have much work either. Work started again intensively in March.

So I thought that I should go for a journey, alone. I went for Danny's wedding in Tel Aviv and from there, instead of coming back to Thessaloniki, I went to Paris. Given that I had studied in a French high school and I knew many things about it, I really liked Paris. Because everything that I saw

there, would remind me of where I had read about it, in this book or the other. All these things reminded me of my childhood years. And we had a lot of fun: you would go out at night and it would be crazy.

When in Paris I found Kazes. He was an old school friend of mine, who had lost all his family in the war, and since he was a French citizen he didn't come back to Thessaloniki at all. He went straight to Paris. He had some uncles there, who sent him to university and he became an architect, and a good one at that. He was married to a girl from Thessaloniki, who also happened to be in Paris at the time. He knew her from school. She was at the Lycée girl's school. I knew where she lived and we used to write to each other.

One Sunday morning I went to his place, knocked on the door and when he opened and saw me, he nearly fainted. When we were at school, he was a sickly person etc. How did he survive in the concentration camps? I don't know, it's a miracle. We hung out together in Paris. I had another acquaintance, a friend of Daisy's, who showed me around, took me to the museums. I stayed there for ten days.

On my way back I went to Italy. A friend of mine lived in Milan and I stayed with him for another two or three days. His name was Tazartes. He was an old school friend of mine. Both he and his brother were Italian citizens.

They used to go to the Italian school, but when Mussolini [86](#) was elected and he announced his anti-Jewish laws, they also came to the Lycée. His brother left for the Middle East with the Greek battalion. During the occupation he was hiding in Athens, in Kolonaki [upper-class neighborhood in Athens], somewhere in a house.

After the war and before leaving for Italy, Tazartes worked in our shop for a little while. But after a while he didn't like it here. He went to Italy, to work in a firm owned by someone from Thessaloniki, a big firm, and he did really well.

In 1951, a month after I got married, Danny went to Canada. He left from Greece because of his great fear that Greece might get part of the Eastern bloc. Our fear was that if the government changed, we would have a more difficult time because we were traders. We thought we might as well have another foothold somewhere else. As soon as he got there, Danny got Canadian citizenship, but without losing his Greek citizenship. So that was the reason why Danny left. His wife was already pregnant and we thought that it was best for her to give birth in a country more...

In the first years, the business developed very rapidly. In the meantime they had vacated our shop on Ionos Dragoumi Street and we moved there. It took us three months to fix it, because my father had initially built the shop like the Galeries Lafayette in Paris: offices all around and empty space in the middle.

In this way the shop could never be kept warm. As soon as someone opened the door, the cold air would get in and gather at the top. I remember we had a very large anthracite heater which we used in order to get warm. Many times we wore our coats inside the shop. Later on though, we needed more space so we did a general refurbishing.

The factory didn't exist anymore. The Germans had emptied it completely. I don't know why they had ruined all the machines. The things that weren't so heavy were sent to Germany by railway.

Others that were heavier, they had dismantled, probably in order to take them in pieces. But they didn't get the chance to take them and put them back together.

Later on we found them in a great mess. When we came back, we didn't even know how to put them back together again.

Then, Darik from Chalkida [city on the island of Euboea, 456 km south of Thessaloniki], who was producing the same things, came and bought them very cheap. Almost for free. As a result we then sold the land. That was a very bad move because later on the land became very valuable.

We claimed compensation for everything the Germans had taken from our factory. I have three huge folders this thick - of all the compensations we claimed. The brother of Professor Constantopoulos was in Germany, living in Hamburg. He had changed his name to a German name and had turned it to 'Constant.' He had a lawyer's office there which dealt solely with claims for compensations from Greece. Even though many claims were taken to court, we didn't manage to get one drachma back. We only got this minimal sum that the Germans gave to everyone.

After the war there was no solidarity between the Jewish merchants. Nothing at all, we simply knew each other.

Work went really well because of the reconstruction. There was a lot of work to be done, plenty of work. My uncles weren't very daring. We could have done much better.

After the war we sold metal ware, tools for metalwork, farming equipment, industrial tools. Then we introduced hygienic products in which we didn't deal at first. Before the war we represented a couple of hygienic products' firms. But what kind of things were we selling?

The simplest things: white bathroom tiles, toilet seats, wash basins, taps, just the most ordinary things. Later, when the reconstruction started, all these goods became luxury goods. And we were trying to get the exclusivity of the products. We brought goods mainly from Italy and from Germany. In time, as the demand got higher, they occupied a bigger part inside our shop. We were mainly known for the metal ware.

Many Jews had left during the occupation and didn't come back. They stayed in Athens because their business was going well. One of them was my father-in-law. He had come back from Palestine, he set up his business and he did really well.

I can tell you that the same number of Jews that used to live in Thessaloniki, were now living in Athens, or maybe even more. Athens was really picking up at the time while Thessaloniki wasn't. Especially Piraeus with the trade was picking up a great deal on the expense of Thessaloniki. The Government Ministries were closer, so they managed to get import permits more easily than us. At the time, if you didn't have an office in Athens, there wasn't much you could do. Trade was not free at the time. Everything depended on permits issued by the Ministry of Trade. If you didn't have someone to run around for you in Athens, you couldn't do business.

We had to open an office there, too, so we opened a branch. It didn't have the same variety of goods that we had in Thessaloniki, it was much more limited. This branch would help us to channel certain products that we wanted, but also facilitated the whole procedure of importing. We opened in Mitropoli. We got Latronis to go and arrange things with the licenses etc. Later, before leaving

for Canada, Danny went there, too. Danny stayed there from around 1948 until 1951. Latronis stayed there until he got his pension.

My father worked both with representatives of companies and on his own. He would go and visit the firms that he had found on his own and he would arrange with them to have the exclusivity of their products. For example: he had the exclusivity of this brand in Austria, in Tyrol, which was producing sickles for cutting grass. And they had made a trademark called 'the two hearts.' Each one had two hearts hammered on them. They were of outstanding quality. We were importing this product for over 60 years, and the villagers would come to the shop and say, 'Give me an 'ace of hearts' sickle.'

So when it was the time for the sickles, I would travel around Thessaly [region in central Greece] and Epirus [region in north-western Greece] where they were widely used. Until the 1970s they were on great demand. I remember when the time was ripe we brought up to 40 thousand pieces.

The customers were a mix of people from before and after the war. The ones from before the war didn't all survive; it was the ones that had survived who returned. When they heard that we opened again, they all started coming again. You should have seen how moving the letters of our old customers were when we first came back. I remember especially in Thrace and West Macedonia we had really good customers. We had a lot of support from our customers, especially in the countryside, more so than in the city, because many of our competitors were here, too.

There was a trader who didn't like us at all because he was a competitor from before the war: Economidis, who had a metal ware shop in Egnatia. Nicos Economidis and Sons. He was our greatest competitor before the war. He would say to our customers, 'Why do you go to buy from a Jew?' And our customers would come and tell us afterwards. That was too bad for he harmed himself since it usually made a bad impression on the customer, who would criticize him. With his children, our relations were a bit better. We didn't face any problems with the rest of the people. As time went by, we did better. In the end they had listed me as a representative in the metal ware traders club. We weren't trying to poke each other's eyes out.

We used to visit our customers. Before the war we had two very good employees that used to travel around the whole of Greece, all the way down to Crete. But after the war I took over this job. I would travel around three times a year, from Florina [city in Northern Greece, 166 km west of Thessaloniki] and Orestiada [city in western Thrace, 460 km east of Thessaloniki] to Thessaloniki and Lamia, and many times I used to visit Agrinio [city in Central Greece, 487 km south of Thessaloniki] and the southern part of Peloponnesus. We always used to go around Epirus and Yiannina because we had really good customers there. We had three salesmen that used to travel and bring us the orders. And later we would send them the goods.

We very rarely lost money in the business. We never lost money from people in Macedonia; where does from Thessaly were concerned, we did, not to speak of the Peloponnesians... When I went traveling my most important aim was to take new orders, but also to close old accounts. I remember they all had this same habit; as soon as I would get in they would ask me to first open the books and tell them what they owed us. They would pay their bill first and after that they would place a new order.

After the war the whole business was organized around the shop in Ionos Dragoumi. Later, when we developed the bathroom goods division, for which we needed quite a bit of space, we had to get a warehouse. So we got a basement that served as a warehouse on Lagada Street, right opposite the cemetery of the allies. That happened between 1970 and 1975.

Even though we had taken this space to serve just as a warehouse, we found out that it was quite busy there, too. At the time the whole of Neapolis [settlement in western Thessaloniki] was being built, a part of the city that today has around 70,000 to 75,000 residents. So it was really busy. They were building and they were saying, 'Why should we go all the way to the city center, when we have everything we need around the corner?' At the beginning our competitors were mocking us saying, 'Alvo has gone up there to the cemetery to do business with the dead.' However, later on more of them came and settled there and a new market was created. We did really well there with the bathroom products, both in retail and in wholesale with the building constructors.

We didn't believe in advertising. Only when we got this entire bathroom range and my brother had come from Canada, where advertising is a priority, and told us, 'You are fast asleep here' we did start advertising. Before the war there were very few advertisements. We were counting on the wide network of customers.

I enjoyed working. In general I enjoyed the contact we had with our customers. Either from the city or from the ones coming from the countryside into the city to shop, I was the first one to be in contact with anyone that was coming. We had good relations with our customers and the local ones also, even if they were buying only retail. I met a lot of different people. People would come and go.

Later on, as time passed, we realized that Ionos Dragoumi couldn't survive anymore. First of all, we couldn't load on the road, it was impossible. That's why we got the warehouse. Also the customers wouldn't come and buy in retail because they could not park; as soon as they would leave their car, the policeman would come and tell them 'leave.'

That was one of the main reasons why we decided to sell it. We didn't even think of renting it out to a bank, which would have been a very good opportunity. That was our worst business move, to sell it. We sold it because it wasn't all ours. Fifty percent of the building our cousins owned, the children of my father's brother who were in Israel. They wanted to sell it because they wanted the money.

But what was the situation at the time? At the time there was an exchange control. For example, if someone lived abroad he couldn't take his money with him outside the country. Except, if a Greek, who lived abroad, had money available that he didn't have to bring into Greece. We found a buyer with these characteristics, Koskotas, who bought the shop. He opened a branch of the Bank of Crete there. But we did a stupid thing in making such a move. It was a good opportunity for our cousins to take the money - we didn't want to deprive them of this opportunity.

We had a really good name in the market. We had a great name in the market especially around 1973. I don't know what happened but the prices of all the goods had gone sky-high. They went up by 60 to 70 percent. There was a money-currency readjustment.

We used to get orders from our customers, mainly building constructors, that when they would close a deal they wanted to be sure about the materials and they would come around to book the

materials. They would come to the shop and say, for example, 'You know, I am building a building at this and that place, on this and that road. I will need this many wash basins and this many baths and toilets etc.' That would be a great amount of money. He would then say, 'Because I want to be certain, I want to pre- book them now. I will give you a certain amount and I will book them.' 'How much are you thinking of giving me?' 'I will give you half the money upfront.' That used to happen in most shops.

In 1973 when this very large inflation happened, we were maybe the only ones that sold our goods at the prices they had been booked at. For example: A bathtub that was made in Greece at the time cost 7,000 drachmas, the price went up to 10,000 drachmas. All the others couldn't deliver it at its initially agreed on price. But for us - this was mainly something that I wanted - when I would close a deal with a building constructor and he would give me half of the money, my first concern was to be sure to place the order and stock it at the warehouse. So whenever he would ask for his goods, they would be there. So I was able to deliver it to the initial price, even though the prices had gone up. That move remained famous in the market: that only the Alvos had kept their word and the goods were really delivered.

In the beginning we did whatever our uncle's were telling us. We knew nothing. When we started learning the business, we started being competitive. Solomon especially, because he could see that the customers preferred me. He was jealous of me because he could see that I was calmer with the customers, more peaceful, and I used to meet their demands.

Danny left for Canada in 1951. He stayed there for twenty years and after that he came back. So I was in an awkward position. I was alone against both of them and I couldn't really manage. And especially with Solomon's jealousy, because he didn't have a family and he would get really upset and hurt by issues like that. That's how a great competition had arisen which was very unpleasant. Sometimes we had difficulties, but this happens all the time.

The jobs inside the business were divided as follows: My brother was in logistics, following the orders, the payments in the bank, the prices etc. He had come from Canada and was quite experienced with things like that. As we had many different products he would print out from the computer a list for all the products that we brought, calculating the profit margins and he would tell us at which price we should sell each product. Uncle Daniel was fully occupied with the accounting books. He was old by then, he couldn't manage very well. Solomon was busier with the foreign correspondence. I would give them a list of what we needed to order and Solomon would arrange where to place the orders.

I can't say that my uncles had more power in the business. The important decisions that we had to take all together were: 1) whether to hire a new employee. Usually Solomon arranged that. 2) What to do when we wanted to acquire a new warehouse. These were important decisions. Or when we wanted to give extra money to our employees, we would make this decision all of us together. It was at the time, when the business was going well, that we used to give them a 14th salary as a bonus. While they were already getting the 13th salary for Christmas, at New Year's Eve we would give them the 14th. They were delighted.

Apart from that, we had an extra insurance from the National Bank of Greece. In addition to the insurance at the Social Security Service we had a private insurance fund. When we were to give more money, we wouldn't find much resistance from Solomon. He usually agreed because he didn't

have many expenses. He didn't care so much.

Sometimes we had difficulties with raising the salaries. Not only because we didn't agree, but we had difficulties with the employees, too, because they were envious of each other. One time this guy, who wasn't happy with his raise, got to the point of saying to us, 'Why did you give him such a high raise and gave me only this raise? Did I ask you for a raise? You shouldn't have given us a raise at all.' He got to this point!

None of our employees was from before the war. I remember how we first started, very slowly. At the beginning we didn't have any employees. We were doing the packing on our own and we would open the cases of goods upon arrival on our own. We would arrange them. Then, when a customer would come, we would sell, pack it, deliver it, etc. We hired the employees one at a time according to our needs. We had only one who was Jewish and who later left us. He went to Athens and he opened an agency office. His name was Hugo Frances.

Among other things, we had the children of our customers who used to come to us as apprentices and for training. They used to say, 'We don't want you to pay them, only to teach them the business.' We had one from Kozani [city in northern Greece, 141 km west of Thessaloniki] who later became well known. We had girls, too, not just guys. We had one to run to the bank. The cashier always used to be a woman. They would issue the invoices, keep the accounts. We got to the point of having thirty employees.

What we would take more into consideration when we hired a new employee would be the impression he/she made upon us. Firstly it was their appearance. And we always hired from acquaintances. Someone would come and say, 'I have a niece, why don't you take her?' Then our employees would bring us their friends and relatives. We never had to put an advertisement in the newspaper to hire personnel. We were lucky. We always had really good personnel. That was because we also treated them very well, me especially, I was very liberal. If we were pleased with them, apart from treating them very well, I also wanted to pay them accordingly.

My father wouldn't only be interested in the business. He would talk to his employee also about other, more personal things. I developed this attitude even further. In the 40 to 45 years that I was in the shop, I can say that we were all like a big happy family, and they recognize it now. Some didn't understand it at the time, but some that went to work for others, they would later come and tell us, 'Bosses like you, we haven't found anywhere.'

I had really good relations with the staff of the shop. They used to say, 'At Alvo's no one from the staff leaves.' In fact, we had some good employees whom our competitors were trying to lure away from us, but they never managed to do so.

A specific incident: Our grandmother had a maid, Sofia, who was from Aivati [today Lagina, a village 10 km north-east of Thessaloniki]. She took her from a very young age and she had her there all the time. During the war, she got married. After the liberation, as she was going with a cart from Aivati, a car accident took place and her husband got killed. So she remained a widow. We helped her then because she couldn't work with three young children. She had two boys and a girl.

As soon as the boy was fifteen years old, he came to the shop wearing short trousers, and we took him in the business. Well, and guess what: he came to the shop when he was fifteen years old and he left when he got his pension. His name was Christos Matis. We later took his brother, too, Stergios his name was. And all that was done because Sophia was our mother's maid.

When our uncles died, the business passed from our uncles' to our hands. Even though they were four or five years apart in age, they died within a year. One of them died in July 1983. Daniel, the poor guy, died in the toilet, alone. He had a difficult time; he was old. Neither his wife nor his children were in the house. Only a woman that was looking after him was there. It was Sunday and everyone had gone out to eat at the tavern. The woman called me up, urging me, 'Mr. Miko come quickly, Mr. Daniel, I think he is dying!' I went around and found him sitting there.

Later Solomon died, too. He wasn't married and he lived in a hotel. He used to live in Villa Ridge when Vila Ridge was still a hotel. Later he rented at the Mediterranean Hotel [one of the best known and most luxurious hotels in Thessaloniki]. After the earthquake, when the Mediterranean Hotel was ruined, he went to Macedonia Palace Hotel. He had a room there paying by the month. It wasn't strange that he lived in a hotel. He was on his own. Otherwise he would have needed to find a house and an escort to look after him. He was very stingy - tight, he thought that it was cheaper to live in a hotel and eat out. Solomon donated to charities the 20 percent of the business that he owned.

My brother and I went on and created a share holding company, SA [Société Anonyme] in order to be able to take decisions by majority, so we kept the business unhindered. We used to say, 'If we don't have an SA we will break up.' We created the SA Company around 1970. It used to be a privately owned [personal] company and we transformed it to an SA. We both used to say: "When we will be left alone, and our relative partners will die, we want to know that we will be the bosses."

In the meantime we had hired our cousin Nico, the son of Daniel, who was married to the daughter of Amarillo and worked initially for them at SIDMA, which was his father-in-law's business. Later on, when his own children grew up and the business wasn't going so well, they fired him - with a good compensation, of course, as he was the son-in-law. So we told him, 'Come to the shop, too.' It was a bad move because he was an engineer and he should have continued his work. He joined the business and took his father's share. His father had 22-23 percent. In the end he was the one who kept the business.

After the war the business was doing really well. It began not to do so well just before we were going to retire. The competition was too high. Especially from the ones who were selling domestic products and were buying in very big quantities and selling at lower prices. I could see that the business wasn't going so well, and since my daughter was not interested, and Danny's children were in Canada, I thought: why should we wait? It is best we leave.

We never thought of expanding our business further. My uncles never thought of it. They were old and they had no reason to expand. Our cousin didn't have a business brain at all. My brother and I could both see that it was going under. So we thought of selling it. We didn't want to get in new sectors that we were not familiar with.

When we decided to leave and get our pension, we said to Nico, 'We should sell the business.' We will sell it, and we will make a very good profit.' There was a big demand for such businesses. It

was just after we became a member of the European Union. They weren't looking for very profitable companies. The foreigners, in order to buy, they were looking for two things: clientele and a good name in the market. We had both. We had around 1,000 wholesale clients, all over Greece. We had a really good name with the banks and we could sell at a very high price.

Our cousin didn't agree so we proposed, 'If you don't want to sell it, then you should buy our shares.' We didn't want to have a share in a company where we weren't working anymore. So he bought it and we got our pension. In the end we all lost.

My brother and I got out of the business in 1991 and retired. I worked for 46 years and so did my brother. And everyone used to say, 'Don't go into retirement, you will be bored, you won't know what to do.' I don't have enough time, that's the strange thing. There are so many things that I still want to do, but I don't have the time.

For two or three years I was the president of the metal ware merchants' association. We only had one or two meetings every year. A couple of times, when we had problems, we would get together and make a decision. We would forward our requests to the Ministry or the Chamber of Commerce. I wasn't very active there. I became the president because the others wanted me to. This was due to the fact that I had great relations with everyone and they proposed to me because we had such a good name in the market. Initially Yannis Yessios was voted. But the smaller companies didn't want him and preferred me.

I was on good terms with everybody. We were never competitive with the others in the business. We knew each other, especially Bacatselos [one of the most known merchant and businessman in the post war period in Thessaloniki]. Our relationships were over the business. First of all we had prohibited our staff to say anything negative about the other providers, when they would be talking to customers. To say, for example, 'Don't go to him, he is not good,' or anything along these lines. It was prohibited.

With Bacatselos we had a personal relationship and helped each other. We had been sharing the same brand name, 'STANDARD,' which had the best porcelain. In the beginning it was only us and them, there was no one else in Thessaloniki. For the time when it was just the two of us in the market, we would arrange together the prices. We would have one pricelist, normal prices, that we would both sell at.

Maybe one would give a customer a lower price, according to how good and regular the customer was, but we never faced this thing that is happening today that one wants to gouge out the other's eyes, and force them to close the business.

Then, if he would have some item missing from the stock, he would call and say, for example, 'Can you give me a green wash basin and I will give you a pink one?' 'Ok, send it.' That's how we worked with a double stock, because we could also use Bacatselos's stock. We didn't face any problems because we were Jews, on the contrary. We had very good relationships with both our customers and our competitors. The only one, who had a big mouth, was Economidis.

Later another president was elected for the association of the metal ware merchants and they placed me in the 50-member Council of the Chamber of Commerce. The Merchants' Association and the Chamber of Commerce founded the Bank of Macedonia & Thrace, and we used to say: 'We

will have a pure Northern Greece bank.' And indeed all the businessmen put some money in, everyone got some shares; we and everybody in the shop got about 1,500 shares each.

The shares were going down all the time, because the government had put its hand in it as well as the Post Office saving's bank. While it started as a private Northern Greek bank, the government put its hands in, too. And the shares really weren't doing well. I had enough in the end with all those intrigues so I sold mine. We had bought them at around 1,000 drachmas each and we sold them at around 850 drachmas taking a 15 percent loss.

• Married life

Before Mari, I had some other relationships. The girls we would go out with would join us at the Sailing Club. Later on, we didn't go to the Sailing Club anymore. After the war, some of us, in our company of friends, lived around the Analipsi area and used to be members of the Sailing Club.

Together we founded the 'Friends of the Sea Club.' I am one of the founders of this club. We made a shed where we put our sailing boats. Cutters, boats and other things. It was located on a big piece of land.

At some point I used to be the cashier, because I used to cover up for any shortages. We had hired a guard, and slowly the club developed. At that time the club was very small. Everyone used to come there, our girlfriends, too.

After the war, I had a small cutter and my friend Freddy Assael and I would take it and embark into the sea. I also had a second degree cousin of mine, a Saltiel, whom I knew from school, too. Our fathers were first degree cousins.

He had gone to Athens University to study medicine and served in the army, too. At the time, the first women school for officers, nurses etc. had been founded in Chalkida. From the first lot that graduated they had sent here three girls, to the 424 Military Hospital.

He knew them so he brought them for company on the cutter. We would go round on the boat. On Sundays we would leave in the morning and go to Peraia. [Editor's note: One of the best known sea front settlements on the Eastern part of the resort area of Thessaloniki during the interwar and after the post liberation period.] We would have a difficult way there but on the way back the wind was on our side.

I remember the time when we went to Moudania [town on the Chalkidiki peninsula, 60 km east of Thessaloniki] together on an excursion, men and women, on a boat all together. I had the jeep, too, and we would really enjoy the company. The three of them and the two of us. The three girls were Christians so things were a bit more difficult. All three of them were really nice girls. I didn't flirt with any of them, it just didn't happen. It was pure friendship, nothing more. Sometimes we would go out at night, dancing etc., but nothing more, we were just friends. I think they came mostly for the ride in the boat.

I got married when I was 28. That was the age that people were getting married at back then. I wasn't thinking of getting married. If I hadn't met Mari, I don't know if I would have gotten married. Meeting Mari was what made me marry. I knew that I was going to have a family, but I had never

defined it or had set myself a goal along the lines of: 'When I will be this age, I will get married.' The plan was that I would whenever I would get the chance.

I never gave it a thought whether I would get married to a Jew or a Christian. And unfortunately my parents were not alive to stop me. I wasn't preoccupied with things like that. If there had been a Christian girl that I would get attached to, I would marry her. Of course if she was a Jew, things would have been easier, smarter and more convenient.

Before I got married, when I was in Thessaloniki, no one from the family was interested in whether I would get married or not. Maybe I was influenced by my brother's wedding which was completely unexpected. My brother had gone to Tel Aviv to arrange some business issues that we had with my uncle. They arranged a meeting with him and his first wife. My brother liked her and things moved on quite quickly. He went there in September 1950 and at Christmas time the wedding took place.

Suddenly he returned home, the place where I still lived with my grandmother. He says to me, 'I got engaged in Israel and I will get married before Christmas.' His wife was still serving in the Israeli army. Her name was Sarah Romano, but everyone called her Rita. Her parents were from Thessaloniki and had left after the occupation as we had done, too. They went and stayed in Israel and didn't come back. They had relatives there and relatives in Izmir. By that time, her father was quite old to go back and start a new business, so they stayed there.

Mari's father was called Moshe Benveniste. Before the war he had a cashmere shop at Agiou Mina Street, where the tram used to take the turn. He was a well known trader and he worked together with his father, Abraham Benveniste, who was from Izmir. Many came from Izmir at the time and settled in Thessaloniki. Abraham Benveniste came before 1922. He was a fanatic fan of Venizelos. He had the picture of Venizelos in the lounge. I don't know why he came here. Mari's father, who was born in Izmir and later came here, went to the same school as Onassis [Aristotle (1906?-1975): Turkish-born Greek financier and shipping magnate who pioneered the use of oil supertankers]. While his brother, Mari's uncle, who was younger than him, was born in Thessaloniki.

Mari's mother was called Bertha, and she was of the Salmona family. They were from here, from Thessaloniki. Moshe Benveniste met Bertha here in Thessaloniki. She was a very elegant lady. She died around 2000-2001, at the age of 98. Her husband had already died in 1978. Initially, she lived in Athens on her own. Then she fell in the theater once and started not feeling so well. We forced her to come here, but she didn't want to come. She lived alone in her apartment in Falirou. My father-in-law had bought this apartment from his winnings at card games.

Bertha and Maurice Benveniste were in Athens. They left during the occupation. My father-in-law was smart enough to hire a truck after the Germans came in. He put all his goods on the truck - cashmere doesn't take up so much space - and took them down to Athens. He stored them in a warehouse. Later he found a shop on Leoforos Street and he opened a shop there which he kept until his last days. He had one employee only and kept his shop until he died.

Before the war I didn't know the family of Abraham Benveniste and Bertha Salmona. The Salmona family we didn't know at all. Abraham Benveniste, the grandfather of Mari, him I remember. When we were small children we used to go swimming in the sea together at the bay. We had a boatman with a small boat who would take us swimming, and after our swim we would go fishing. We would eat and we would fish. I remember that Abraham used to come to the same spot where we were

fishing and would fish there, too. Mari used to tell me that he loved fishing. We knew that his name was Benveniste. We would see him at the Sailing Club, too. He had his boat anchored at the Sailing Club. He would come and pick it up from there. He had a tent and sometimes he had a friend accompanying him.

Mari was 18 years old then. We have a ten-year age difference. She had just finished her studies in Switzerland. She was in an English boarding school there. She finished both Gymnasium and Lyceum studies in Switzerland. And she had come to Athens where her parents lived. She worked in a trading agency, because she wanted to earn some pocket money. In fact, I think that her parents wanted to marry her off to her boss's son, but in the end I married her.

Here is how I met Mari. Aunt Lily lived in Athens and was friends with Mari's parents. They played cards together a few times a week. Lily must have known Mari's parents from Thessaloniki. I was really close with Aunt Lily. When I was in Athens I wouldn't stay in a hotel, I would stay in her house. I had a room there in which she would accommodate me.

One time after the war, around 1949-1950, I was on a journey outside the country, in Europe. It was the first time that I had gone to Paris. Coming back from there, I passed through Athens. Aunt Lily had a daughter, Rosa. She had her friends there; I was alone in Athens, just passing by. Rosa tells me one day, 'Tonight I'm going out with my friends.' All her friends were Christian. 'You can come, too, if you want.' And she had also invited, without a certain reason in her mind, Mari. That's how we met. We went out. I stayed for two or three days, and we went out with her one more time.

Then they came to Thessaloniki for Easter: Mari's mother with Mari and another girl of Benrubi, the daughter of the one that has the glass business here. They brought their daughters here because they knew that there were potential grooms here. After that we started writing to each other more often. We went out a few times before we got engaged. Not many though, because we were not together.

Mari got my attention from the first moment I met her. She was a beautiful girl. We started chatting and found out that we agreed on many issues. She was a bit different from the girls that we knew here. She had acquired more of a European flair. She was different. We started chatting about books and poems etc. We wrote to each other for a few months and I went to Athens many times. Other friends of mine had met girls who they were interested in, and they were in Athens, too. At the time I had bought a jeep. I would take all the friends and we would drive to Athens.

I got engaged to Mari a short time after I met her. We met at the beginning of January and we got engaged in May. I don't remember if I proposed to her to get engaged. I remember that we were chatting and we decided it. We got engaged in Athens. The only family that I had here was Uncle Daniel and Roula, I didn't have any others. In the meantime Grandmother Mathilde had moved to Canada. She went to be close to Daisy. After we got engaged I used to go to Athens every weekend. They already knew me at the TAE aviation company [the first Greek aviation company]. The air hostess would see me and say, 'Ah, you are going to your fiancée in Athens.'

What did we use to call flirting at the time? Well, at the beginning chatting and compliments on both sides. A little romance, but we wouldn't go further. Later I got engaged to Mari and when I was going to see her we would sit in her room, Bertha would ask the maid every now and again to come and open the door so she can see what we are doing. What I mean is that it was hard to go further

even when you were engaged. It was only kissing and cuddling, nothing more. Especially when it was a girl from a family you knew.

We got married in 1951. I had gone to Athens. It was April, a nice season. Mari and I went out that night, we went to eat somewhere and we decided to get married. We went back to the house and waited for her parents to come, in order to tell them. We waited and waited but they were playing cards and wouldn't finish before two or three in the morning. We thought, well, never mind, we will tell them tomorrow.

So next day I went there and of course they were pleased. They were a bit upset that we hadn't asked for their permission first, but they had no objection. Because they knew my family well and my father had such a good name in the market. Mari's family wasn't as well known as ours was. As I mentioned earlier, Benveniste had a cashmere shop. They weren't the first ones; there were many shops that were bigger than theirs.

I got engaged to a girl whose family was not as well known as mine was. But economically we had lost all our fortune. The only things that we had left were the shop that we set up again and some real estate property, which wasn't even completely ours. Only parts were ours. So there was no social difference. Mari's father didn't believe in real estate property at all. He started believing in it only when he bought the apartment in which he was living. After that he bought another one. But until then he didn't believe in real estate at all, he only believed in trade.

We got married on 1st July 1951. My brother was due to leave for Canada because his wife was pregnant. And we wanted to get married before he had to leave. Otherwise, who knows, maybe we would have delayed it.

We had our wedding in the synagogue in Athens. The relatives from Thessaloniki came, Daniel and Solomon. We had a very simple marriage. The synagogue here in Thessaloniki is different than in Athens. We didn't even have a celebration dinner, nothing, and the relatives from here were upset. We had rented a room in Ekali [an upper-class suburb of Athens], at a hotel there, and that's where we went after the wedding. I had the jeep and we stayed in Athens.

For our honeymoon we went to Rhodes, to 'The Hotel of the Roses.' We stayed in Athens for two nights because there was a strike at the air company and one could only go to Rhodes by boat. So we had to wait for the date that a flight was scheduled. We had a great time in Rhodes, because there were strikes and thus there weren't so many people there. Rhodes wasn't very developed back then. Apart from the hotel, which was really nice, we went to the Valley of the Butterflies and around all the sights. We had a taxi driver who had a small Morris car. We would arrange with him to come to the hotel and pick us up every day, take us where we wanted and bring us back afterwards.

After our honeymoon we came back here. It wasn't a whole month; it was more like 15 days. We came back to Thessaloniki and settled in the house on Papakyriazi Street, on the top floor, because on the ground floor we still had refugees living. We started to get them out one by one and started planning. We called Karazisis, who was an interior decorator. I knew him from the camp and had really good relations with him and his wife. We made the plans and changed the house quite a lot and also put in central heating and radiators which was a novelty.

At the time we hardly spoke about the war. No one did. Everyone wanted to get it out of their minds. They were very sad memories. Even with my Jewish friends I spoke very rarely about it. I was friends with many Jews but very rarely spoke about the occupation and things like that. With Mari, of course, I spoke about it. Because when we went to the house where we would later live, I would tell her, 'This was my parents' room, this was Danny's room, and this was my sister's room.' She told me her story of how they survived, and I told her all my misfortunes and how they took our house etc.

I've been married for 55 years; we've had a very good marriage. Of course, as we get older, our personalities change. So as the years go by, instead of thinking in the same way, we react to problems in different ways. We sometimes talk about someone, for example, and Mari would say to me angrily, 'See what he did?' And I would say, 'It's alright. What do we care? Don't worry about it.'

We didn't have any conflicts all the time we were married. First of all we had our friends and our jobs, because Mari was working, too. She had a shop on Mitropoleos Street. Together with Danny's wife Rita they formed a partnership with a sanitary articles business from Athens, Amarilio, which was very well known. They had a shop on Mitropoleos Street just opposite the Metropolitan Church. We opened it around 1972. In fact, I founded this shop. There wasn't any other shop with these products in the area. Later on, some more shops of this kind opened.

We created this shop because Mari liked these products. She likes anything that has to do with the house, household etc. and she has a great taste. The Athenian guy offered us the business, because in our shop we had only average and low-priced goods. He had luxury goods. And there wasn't a similar shop in Thessaloniki yet. He came and offered us to do it in partnership and we agreed.

However, we created a separate company and our uncles never forgave us for the fact that we opened a shop without them. So I told them, 'We didn't open it, our wives did.' I encouraged Mari to open it. First of all I thought that it was a great idea to open a shop with this kind of luxury goods. In fact, the best customers were not from Thessaloniki but from the provinces. Because in the provinces there is great competition about who has the best house.

Mari liked the job very much. She didn't spend all day at the shop, she would go there at around 10am. And they used to work only until 3pm.

We would go together to visit the exhibitions and then choose new products. There was an annual exhibition in Bologna, specializing in toilet products and accessories, tiles and porcelain. Every year we would find something better to bring. We went to Bologna every year; I didn't always go but Mari would. There was no competition between the shops since we sold different products. We were selling useful products at low prices, while she was selling luxury goods.

The shop did very well. After Rita's death, Mari kept it on her own with one employee for a few years. This employee later left and opened his own business. He opened a shop right opposite ours. He was the manager of our shop, and he went and opened a new shop with his children. Finally, four or five years later, Mari got bored and we sold it to Amarilio. He kept it for three or four years and later sold it to this other guy.

After we got married Mari didn't work. She got really bored because she didn't know people from Thessaloniki and our Jewish friends then were quite a bit older than her and she didn't enjoy it. Later we met more people of our age.

The first people we spent time with were Clio Natsi and George, her husband, because we had land right next to each other, near the 'Farm School.' We hadn't bought this land, but my father had, during the occupation, from Varlamidis. After the liberation, Varlamidis came with his family, we made an agreement, paid the difference and it was settled. The front part was the property of the National Bank of Greece. We bought the front part, too, in order to have the land starting from the road, all the way down. Clio Natsi and George had the land next to that which went all the way down to the sea. When the road was widened they had to get compensation from the Ministry of Public Works.

George studied at the Polytechnic school and was taking exams at the same time as my brother did, and that's when we had first met. One day he came up to me and says, 'I have this and they have that. Would you like to take action together?' So I reply, 'Of course, why not?' We called a lawyer. His brother-in-law, his wife's brother, was a lawyer. So we handed the matter over to him. We realized that we were the same age.

So one day we said, 'Why don't we all go out together, you with your wife and me with mine...' So we all went out one night and Mari and Clio got on very well. I can say that we were the best of friends. Our best friends were the Natsi couple. We went on very nice excursions together. We went on long journeys in our car because they didn't have a car.

After the war I managed to vacate the whole house. In the beginning we lived upstairs. But in the end we managed to get out all the refugees without taking any of them to court. In fact, we gave them work afterwards. One of them was a carpenter, Mr. Nicos. He made all the shelves for the shops and later we introduced him to a friend of ours and he made all the cupboards for her house. We gave their daughter, Vassoula, who was a very nice girl, a job in our shop. We had her working as a cashier for three or four years.

Around 1953, we moved to the ground floor, while we had some general repairs made in the apartment on the top floor and then rented it out. When we were repairing it an old lady came. She was just passing by; she rang the bell and asked us, 'I see that you are repairing the apartment on the top floor. Are you by any chance thinking of renting it out?' 'Of course,' I replied. 'Oh,' she says, 'look, we are big family and I'd be interested in renting it for my son. Could you please give us a ring when it is ready?' It turned out she was Grandmother Kazazis from the well known Kazazis family who owned the factory. Kazazis was a partner with Angel.

A month later the apartment was ready. We called her and her daughter-in-law, Sophia Kazazis, came to see it. She liked it very much, we agreed on a price and we rented it to them. They stayed in the house for thirteen years. We became very good friends. In the winter they would come down very often because we had a fireplace downstairs. They would come, we would light a fire, have a cup of tea, and we really enjoyed each other's company.

Later we introduced them to the Natsis. They all had the same way of thinking. These two groups of friends then became a bigger one. They had other acquaintances that also came. So one would invite the others, once in one house and then in somebody else's house. We would eat, have

feasts, celebrations, and we also danced very much.

In the period after the war we went to the cinema a lot. We would go to concerts when there was something good on and to the theater every now and then, but mainly to the cinema. We didn't have any subscriptions anywhere, for example, at the National Theater of Northern Greece, where you could go and watch all the plays. When we were interested in a play we would just go. But with these friends we would get together many times in our houses. Or we would go out and eat together in a tavern.

As I said before, Mari and I got married in 1951. The adoption took place in 1964, thirteen years later. My brother, who had married around the same time, had already three children. Mari would be very upset that she would see my brother with his wife having three children and us not being able to have any. We went to Israel and underwent some medical tests, because in Jerusalem there was a very good gynecologist, very well known. He was doing tests for artificial insemination, but it didn't work.

We both wanted to have a child. In fact, we both wanted to have a girl. I wasn't very interested in the continuity of our name. I thought that a girl is closer to her parents. So we decided to go for an adoption, even though adoption at the time was considered as a great taboo. There would be adoptions but with tricks from the doctors who would declare the baby to be someone else's: the other would put a pillow on her tummy to appear as if she was pregnant, or they would buy babies, too. I wanted to adopt two together, but Mari didn't.

Mari's parents didn't really approve of it, they were against it. 'Why do you want to get into all this trouble?' They had a completely different mentality than us. They regarded children as trouble: 'They don't allow you to live your life as you want it.' That's why they didn't live with Mari for very long. Only the first years of her life until she was in the first grade of the Gymnasium, she was living with her parents. When she was young, she lived three or four years in a boarding school in Jerusalem. Later they sent her to Switzerland. She came back when she was around 17 and she got married when she was 18. She had spent very little time with them.

That's when Mari started getting involved with the Municipal Foundling Hospital, having in her mind that if we found a baby girl, we would be able to adopt her. There was the Council of the Friends of the Foundling Hospital. Mari was in the committee, too, and she went very often to help the nurses. They had many babies then, around 70 to 80 babies. All the staff loved her very much.

One day Mari comes back home and announces to me, 'I've found our child.' 'How did you find a child?' 'This morning,' she replied, 'in the incubator.' 'Today they left us a baby and as soon as I saw it, it conquered my heart.'

There were many foster families, who, without adopting the child, would take it to their house and raise it. We thought we would take a baby as a foster family. But it was obligatory that if the federal nursery would ask for it to be returned, one had to return it. We accepted those terms.

Later on, after we had had the baby for a while we thought of going for the adoption. When you said that you'd like to adopt a baby, normally the procedure was that they would send a social worker around the house to come and check out the family, and the house, where the baby would live in and the living conditions in general. When this social worker came around after the second

meeting with Mari, they became very good friends. Because she saw the environment that we lived in and she also saw the family, and that we had a very good name in the city, she reported back very quickly with the best comments about us. So then we decided to go for the procedure.

Adoption was being arranged in court. For the adoption to be absolutely valid you had to go to get the approval of the court. That was a silly law at the time that later on was abolished. It said that if one was younger than fifty years, one wasn't allowed to adopt in case any sexual relationships would develop. Because even the judges thought that it was a silly law, they didn't ask you for your identification card to see your age but instead they would ask you to present some witnesses.

We had a professor at the Lycée, Pelopidas Papadopoulos was his name, who was teaching for the first time. He had just graduated from university. And because we were around the same age, we became very good friends, not only he and I, but with the whole class. He would come around the shop after the war and have a coffee with us, as a friend. I asked him, 'Can you come as a witness and say that I am over 50 years old?' 'Of course I will come, and I will even tell them that you were a student of mine.'

When the first court hearing took place he came, and I had put some face- powder on his hair to make it look whiter etc. Our social worker didn't come because there was one that was assigned from the Ministry that came. She had to come in support of the baby's side in order to say, 'I consent.' Because the judge would ask, 'Do you consent?' and she had to reply, 'I consent.'

The social worker was from the Department of Welfare and posted to the Municipal Foundling Hospital. When they found out that there would be a court case, the Welfare had instructed her to not agree. 'You won't agree because the Bishop of Mitilini does not agree etc.' There was an organization at the time called 'The Christian Light' or something like that. 'You won't agree because otherwise we will fire you.' So she came and told us before the court, 'I am really sorry, but I cannot agree because if I do, I will lose my job.' So our lawyer says to us, 'Since things are not going our way, maybe we should not appear in court.'

When I gathered that they were going to take the child back, I said to Mari, 'I wasn't afraid to leave and hide from the Germans. I will take the child and let them come and find me.' I had a very good friend and lawyer, Mr. Athanasiadis, Sakis. When he heard that - he had a very liberal mind - he got very angry. 'You will see what I will do to them. I will sort them out.' He was a very well known lawyer and a friend of the judges. So he goes to the manager of the District Attorney who was a friend of his and tells him what had happened. 'Don't worry,' he replies, 'because the court has assigned this woman, this social worker. I will stop her.' He issued an order and turned her away, and in her place he put the assistant of my lawyer to say, 'I consent.' The assistant was not in the Department of Welfare, but the head of the District Attorney had assigned him as a guardian of the child.

So the court hearing eventually took place. Professor Papadopoulos comes and says, 'I know him, he is an old student of mine and I know that this is his correct age.' 'Do you consent?' they ask the lawyer's assistant. 'I consent,' he replies. The funny thing is that all the lawyers that were in court, waiting for their court cases to start, were all gathered there and they shouted all together, 'We all consent.' All the lawyers together. Because they understood that it was for the benefit of the child. And the verdict was positive, and no one could bother us anymore.

But at the time I was the only one who adopted the child as Mari couldn't due to her young age. So we went through the same procedure again later. The second time we didn't face any problems. The law had changed and they did this really nice thing for us in the registry office. The law had changed and the records had been erased that the child was from the Foundling Hospital and in the registry office they naturally wrote that it was our child.

All our friends took it really well. When we brought her back to the house as her foster family, they all came to pay us a visit with presents. At the time, as I have mentioned before, 98 percent of our friends were Christians. And, in fact, Clio Natsi was the godmother of the child.

We opened a new road for adoption and everybody started adopting. Adoption used to be a great taboo. It was a great shame if you couldn't have children. But when they saw us..... Five more couples went for adoptions, all Christian. They probably thought: if Alvo could do it, why can't we? They forced us from the Foundling Hospital to baptize her while we were still the foster family. They said, 'If you don't baptize her, we will take her back,' because they had instructed them to do so.

They used to have a very good manager at the time. Every now and again he would call us and say, 'Here is what you should do. I got this new court order today. I am telling you to warn you. Make your move, do what you can.' This man helped us so much. Later I gave a donation to the Foundling Hospital. I gave them bathrooms for the babies.

Didi, our daughter, was baptized before the court hearing for the official adoption took place and she remained baptized. We thought, 'why should we change it?' If she gets married to a Jew she will change her religion anyway. If she gets married to a Christian Orthodox, she will be ready and she won't face any problems. And that's what happened. In her first marriage, Didi got married to a Christian Orthodox from Thessaloniki.

We named Didi, Constantina. We had to give her a Christian name, but we also called her Adina which was the name of my mother. And it fitted very well, Constantina, Adina. The decision was mutual. Mari never got on so well with her mother, so she didn't want to name her daughter after her anyway. And I, on the other hand, I had one more reason to do so because I had lost my mother.

The grandparents didn't accept the fact that the child was baptized, especially Mari's mother: 'Why do you want a child that is not yours, not knowing what will come out of it?' The same with Grandfather. But later on, when we visited them and Didi would come with us and would cuddle him, he would go crazy over her.

Maybe the fact that Didi was baptized was a spark for many conversations in the Jewish circles. We didn't get involved at all, because I wasn't even in the Community and we hardly had Jewish friends. We had acquaintances but not real friends, not like our Orthodox friends.

In the first years, our life changed a great deal because of Didi. We were nearly separated from our friends. We didn't go out anymore. We couldn't follow them in celebrations like we used to, because we stayed at home. We were very attached to the child.

I think that if someone adopts a child he feels even more for it than if it was his own. Besides, sometimes one may have a child that one doesn't necessarily desire, but when one adopts a child one wants it consciously. Especially in our case, when we had to face so much trouble, we got

really attached. She turned out to be a great person. The funny thing is that especially when she was young she looked like me. She had my characteristics, she was blond and white.

Before Didi went to school, I was very busy. My life was like that: I would leave the house in the morning and go to the shop. I would come home in the afternoon for lunch and then return to the shop until 8 o'clock at night, and then go back home. We also worked on Saturdays. When she was young, by the time I came home in the afternoon, she usually would have eaten already and would be asleep. Later she would sit with us. When I had a little bit of time I would take her out.

Mari brought her up. She had to take her out every day. She would take her out even when it was very cold. She would wrap her up, put her on a carriage and take her out. We had a garden and that helped very much, too. She would take her out in the garden and she wouldn't worry. Because we had a garden, the children of the neighborhood would come and play with her.

Initially we had a maid to take care of her. Later on we brought a maid from France, when Didi was around two or three years old. We didn't pay this maid. She simply lived with us, so we provided her with food and shelter. The French one stayed for two years and this is how Didi learned French really well. After the French girl left we got a girl that had just graduated from the kindergarten teacher's school in Ioannina. She lived in the house for two years.

Didi went to the YMCA kindergarten, because it was opposite our shop's warehouse. Mari would take her there in the morning and the employee from the shop would go and pick her up in the afternoon. She would take her to the warehouse and in the afternoon, after I shut the shop, I would go and pick her up from there.

Later on we took her to school. The first school that she went to was the Pedagogiki Academia [the school of the Teachers' Academy]. It would have been better if she had gone to the Rigas Feraios School, because it was a better school. But the Pedagogiki Academia was regarded then as the best school and there would be a draw to get in. While we had registered her at the Rigas Feraios, they rang us and said, 'You know, you have been drawn and you can send your daughter here.' She had a great time there but she would have got a better education in Rigas Feraios. Rigas Feraios was then regarded as the best school.

We had a piece of land right next to the sea, opposite the Military Academy. It was called the Varlamidis land. I had planted around 1000 fruit-bearing trees there. I would come back home around 2pm and the shop reopened at 5pm, so I had some time in between to go to the field. Many times she would tell me, 'Take me with you, daddy.' And because she didn't have to study all that much then, I would take her with me.

Didi went to the Calamarie high school [87](#). We wanted her to learn French. The gymnasium at the time was for girls only. She was an average student and she needed a little push, especially in mathematics. Until the Lyceum she studied on her own. Didi was of the generation that had to take exams to enter the gymnasium. To get into Lyceum again she had to take exams. Thankfully, she passed her exams.

We had really good relationships with the teachers, too. In the end though, in the last two years of school, the mathematician would come to our house and give her some private tutoring. She was a smart girl though, because later on she was working for an airline company and she excelled in

computers.

When Didi was a teenager, we faced the change, as all parents do. She was not as difficult as Alexandra, my granddaughter. It was very easy for her to make friends. We found it reasonable that Didi had an affair and was going out. The customs had changed. It wasn't like the first time when we went to South Africa, where we thought that we were in heaven.

She had a friend who was a very nice guy. His name was Stavros and he used to come around the house, too. He had a motorbike and he would come and pick her up from the house. One time we were going to Panorama and a motorbike passes us, and we see Didi was seated at the back. When I saw that, I panicked. From then on, when he would come around the house on his motorbike, I would tell him, 'You came with your motorbike alright? Now that you will go out with Didi, take the key of my BMW, go out and when you get back, you can take your bike back.' That was when she was in Lyceum.

When Didi had graduated, I don't know how, but we got the idea that she should go and study hotel management in Switzerland. There is a very good international school there at Glion, which is near Lausanne. It wasn't the same thing, but you were being taught how to behave towards strangers. You see, with Didi there was no hope that she would enter university. She didn't want to and she wasn't interested. She was more interested in this school. I understood that it wouldn't happen. We knew the situation really well. We knew that the child had potential. So why should we set our mind on something that would just not happen? Same with Alexandra now, she doesn't even want to take exams to enter university. Alexandra does not even want to try. She has a different way of thinking.

Didi stayed in Switzerland for a year and a half. She came back and started working at airline companies. Her school certificate helped her to work there. She started working for Yugoslav Airlines which later closed down. In the meantime Didi had married and gone to Athens. Nicos, her husband, was an aircraft-engineer. He worked at the Greek Aircraft Industry. She still wanted to work in an airline company. She applied and went to work for Pan American.

We never tried to convert Didi. We thought that it wasn't correct. She went to church-events at school. Since we knew that she was Christian Orthodox, we knew that she would go. We didn't want to do things in an unacceptable way. She never expressed the wish to be more religious, to read or say a prayer before she went to bed. We never thought that it would happen, because we weren't religious with regards to Judaism either.

Didi knew when it was a Jewish holiday. For example, at Passover, the family would come and we would have dinner together and she participated, too, but nothing more than that. It was more of a social event rather than a religious one. We still keep gathering at Passover and Socrates and his children come, too, and we read through the Exodus. Socrates has been living with Didi for many years now. He has two children, a boy and a girl. They all live together but he and Didi are not married.

Didi would ask us about our lives. Sometimes we would have conversations like that. We told her about the concentration camps from a very young age. We had conversations about it when she was in Lyceum. Later when she had come back from Switzerland, where she studied, we didn't have a lot of spare time. Lately, she has been thinking of converting to Judaism. After all these

events took place and the Holocaust issue became a movie subject and popular talk, we talked a lot about it. She is a member of the Council of the Association Greece-Israel and everybody there loves her very much. She is very active.

We weren't the first ones to tell Didi that she was adopted. Her cousin told her. We told her when she was really young but she erased it from her mind. She learned it by accident and that harmed her. She heard it from my brother's son when he came to visit and they were chatting. This took place when she was at the 1st or 2nd grade of Lyceum. We were at the neighbors' and Robert was here and they were chatting. And I don't know how, it slipped out of his mouth. He says, 'We are not blood related.' 'How come?' Didi asks. So he understood his mistake.

She called us to come back from the neighbors, and we came straight back. Of course it was a shock for Didi. We were talking about it from eleven o'clock until the next morning. She got over it in a week.

Didi has a really good approach to various things. All the time that she worked for the airline company, she knew many languages and everyone loved her very much. The customers would bring her presents. Especially because she could speak Spanish, French and Italian and she would speak to them in their mother-tongue.

As Didi was growing up she learned Greek, French and English. She learned English at school. Spanish she learned by speaking to her grandparents. Mari's parents were speaking Spanish, so she learned it, too.

We would visit Mari's parents when we went to Athens. When her parents lived there we went to Athens quite often. We had the shop there and Mari wanted to visit her father with whom she was really close. He was crazy about Didi. He would get up late in the morning and have his breakfast in bed. When we were in Athens, Didi would go to his bedside and have breakfast with him. He didn't have any hair, he was bald, and Didi would stroke him on his head.

In the summers, when we had Didi we would all go to the countryside together. We went to Ai Giannis very often. Sometimes we went to the islands. We went to Mitilini, Limnos and two or three times we went around Athens. We went to Zakynthos once where a friend of hers with her parents came. She was already quite a bit older then. When Didi was in school and she had a three-month summer break, she would spend all this time in Thessaloniki with us. I could leave the shop for 15 days. We would close the shop for 15 days and we would go.

We never left Didi without at least one of us staying with her. We kept her very close to us, so either Mari would go, or I would go. Two or three times in her life we both had to leave and we left her with her grandparents. Thankfully, she is very close to us, too. She is the queen of daughters. She calls me 'Daddy.' I think that if she hadn't been adopted we wouldn't have been so close. Of course, there is great response from us, we love her very much and we give her anything she can wish for.

Daisy is still Christian even though in her second marriage she got married to a Jew in Corfu. He didn't even say that he was Jewish. His name was Besso and he immigrated to Egypt. There he opened a big knitting and dying factory. When Nasser [88](#) came to power, he managed to take his fortune and go to Montreal and open a factory there. My aunt Daisy was in Athens. Her husband

had a very good friend in Athens who was a refugee. He was a fabric trader, an importer and he knew Besso because of the business, so he met them. It was at a time when he wanted to leave for Canada and he didn't want to leave on his own, so he got married. In the meantime she had split up with Demis. They split after the occupation because Demis had many girlfriends etc.

Rosa Modiano got married to an American marine. He was a captain in the navy. He was here and was working on the establishment of AHEPA Hospital. He stayed in Athens and in Thessaloniki for two years. That's how they met. I don't know how he met Rosa. They got married and left for America. They traveled a lot because of his job in the navy. They stayed in Iraq for four or five years and the same in Brazil. Wherever the Americans helped with hospitals, they would send him.

Later when he stopped traveling and stayed in America permanently, Daisy got a job. They had taken her on to read the newspapers and the magazines and wherever they wrote something about America she would separate those articles and write an interpretation, because she knew many different languages. She learned Farsi which is Iraq's local language. She learned Spanish better than Ladino. She also learned Portuguese when she was in Brazil.

Danny thought of going back to university to study. He decided it because he really had many advantages. He was very good at studying and taking exams. He had decided that before he would get married, he would finish his studies. He had decided to do so. I don't know why, he changed his mind in the last minute. I think he started dating a girl and that's why he didn't want to leave afterwards. I didn't think of going to university at all. We couldn't both go. We used to say that at least one of us should go. Our uncles supported that idea but for their own benefit, because they thought it would be better to be two against one.

Danny left for Canada in 1951. He invited me to go over there afterwards. I had the right to go and immigrate to Canada but I didn't use this right. At the time you couldn't go to Canada just like that, only if someone invited you there. Danny was invited by Daisy and her husband. He had opened a factory there and he told her, 'I will invite him because I need him for work.'

Danny stayed in Canada for 20 years. His job didn't go well there, he was getting very tired there and he came back. He didn't have much luck here.

In 1970 he came back and around eight years later, he lost his wife. The strange thing was that his second wife, who was the sister of his first one, died of the same disease that her sister had died of. This was our fear, that it might be something hereditary. His son died from the disease, too. The only difference was that his first wife died when she was 40 years old, while his second died when she was 70. Danny's first son died when he was 52 years old.

Danny had three children. One was the one that died. The second one, Jack, lives in Toronto and has three children with his wife. He is married to a German, which is strange. I asked Danny, 'How did you face each other when you first met her parents?' He replied, 'At the beginning it was a bit weird.' His third son, Robert, married a French-Canadian. They have a daughter together. They split up afterwards, but he sees her every now and then.

From the moment that Danny returned to Greece in 1970 he came to work in the business. For me it was a great relief because I had to face our uncles all alone until then. He had a very organizing spirit. He was great in organizing. That's why he didn't succeed there. He had a retail shop there

which he couldn't manage.

Danny was taking part in the Community's committee for welfare and the summer camp for the young. He was also in the old people's home committee and he worked really hard there. When he went out on a pension, he spent his time there and arranged all the salaries etc.

Danny and I had a good relationship. Up to the age of seven we used to fight a lot. We would beat each other up. The funny thing was that our mother would come and she never asked whose fault it was, she would just slap both of us and that would be it. After this age we had a great relationship. We didn't even exchange one bad word with each other. Not even with regards to financial issues or anything like that at all. Our relationship was fair. Grandfather used to tell us, thinking the way they used to think to at his time, 'You should respect your older brother.' Even though we only had one year age difference.

I had a great relationship with my granddaughter. She has distanced herself a little bit now, but she is close to her grandmother. When she was a baby, I used to take her out for walks etc. We had her around our house very often. She had her own room; I would take her for walks, to see the ducks and the dogs... Now she has distanced herself a little bit. I do mind a little bit, but what to do?

Alexandra never asks us about our lives, or our experiences. I tried telling her a couple of times but she didn't want to listen, not for the time being at least. Not even when it comes to Didi. She never asked about her mother. She is too busy with her own problems.

We kept the three main religious holidays very systematically when Didi was a child: Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah and Pesach. Didi found it completely natural. I mainly like tradition but I don't like all these silly things. You will not eat this or you will not eat the other. I find these things very silly. They say you shouldn't use the phone on Saturdays. Well, what kind of silly things are these? All these things that rabbis did to empower themselves, I really detest them.

I didn't get involved in sports at all, not even football or basketball. I never watched football at all. I only went once when Doxa Dramas was playing because one of our employees was a player there. It was raining very much and we got soaked, but our team won that match. I don't like football. I like basketball very much but I watch it only on TV.

• **Post-war events in Israel and Greece**

After the war, we followed all the events that were taking place in Israel, especially during the Six-Day-War [89](#) and the Yom Kippur War [90](#).

When Israel was founded in 1948 [91](#), we were very afraid, because 200 million Arabs wanted to fight against 3 million Israelis. We were afraid of what was going to happen. I was pleased when it became a state, because a state had to be created. We knew from the start that not all the Jews were going to live there, because it was very small and this was impossible.

Nevertheless, it was important that a state be created and we then were very proud about the fact that they managed against 200 million and the others got scared and left. They left on their own, no one kicked them out, they just left.

The Diaspora Jews were secretly sending money to Israel. Everyone was contributing some money and the government knew it and tolerated it because they didn't want to cause any problems. I contributed some money, personally, too.

Not only did I give some money, but I was also one of the people who were collecting the money. At the time of the war everyone gave something because things didn't look well at all. We were wondering whether Israel would survive. Wherever you went you would have conversations about it with the other Jews. We talked about it with other traders from our neighborhood, too.

At the beginning, just after the war, we heard about the situation in Israel via the radio. We talked about it with other Jews but not with Christians because they were all pro-Palestinian. They thought that we went there and kicked them out of their state. Our friends never said things like that to us, or at least when they would talk about it with us they wouldn't say such things.

Generally, the country was in favor of the Arabs. That happened because there were many Greeks living in Arab states and they didn't want to put them in an awkward position. That was the main reason.

We were scared during the Yom Kippur War. When the Six-Day-War happened we didn't have enough time to be afraid. It happened in an instant. We were scared before though.

To tell you the truth, I didn't like the way that the Israelis treated the Arabs, that is, in this very arrogant way. That harmed Israel very much. This has been my opinion for years now. That time especially with Sharon when this thing happened in Lebanon. It wasn't Sharon, who did it, but surely he should have intervened and stopped them and things would have been very different. Because in that case the Palestinians would have him..., while he remained cold-blooded, in my opinion, and allowed this to happen.

He didn't interfere, when he had the responsibility to do so. I am talking about the attack of the refugee army camps in Beirut, at Sabra and Shatila [92](#). I had enough of him then, I mean I never liked Sharon after this. Even when he became the Prime Minister, I didn't like him at all.

We didn't have any business relationships with Israel at all. After the liberation I went to Israel a couple of times. I can't say that I was impressed the first time that I went there. I didn't like the Israelis either, to tell you the truth, because they were rude.

They had this pride and arrogance: 'You see, we fought this war and we won.' And they regarded everyone below them. Because they were saying things like, 'You sit there and while we are fighting all you want to do is make money.' Alright I agree, but could you have done it without the help of others?

I went with Mari to Haifa on a holiday once. We went up to the Carmel [93](#), to a very nice hotel. We could see the sea, the city etc. There were many others there on holiday, too. When they found out that we weren't Israelis but... and we nevertheless talked, but they had this very arrogant look. That really bothered us.

After the war, the first time when elections took place [94](#), they had all the Jews vote together in the same polling-station at Halceon Street. And the Jews did not vote. Later on it became an issue because the communists had not voted either. So the security police would tell you, 'Let me see

your booklet, have you voted? You didn't vote. Why didn't you vote?' And we replied, 'Because they had us all vote at the same place. They should have provided separate polling-stations and we would have voted.' It would take them some time to understand that and in the meantime they would list you as a communist.

Until the Colonels' Junta interfered, the Jewish Community's management was really in the hands of people who were taking advantage of it in a terrible way. All the people that were righteous didn't want to get involved because they would say, 'They are all thieves in there, trying to see who can get more in his pocket.' We were very busy, too. When you have to go to the shop in the morning and the evening you don't have time to get involved in other things such as communal affairs. We had good friends and great friends. I can say that most of them were Christian.

When the colonels came [95](#) there was one of them that must have been a Jew who had left the army by then and was in the same class with Papadopoulos. He was from Yiannena [city in the region of Epirus, 370 km west of Thessaloniki] or Chalkida, I don't remember exactly which one.

The colonels, when they were about to get involved in the Community - because they put their hands into everything - asked him,: 'Who do you think should we put in charge there in order to have a good management?' He gave them a few names, mine was among them. Suddenly I get a notice saying that I am assigned to be a member of this committee for the Community. That's when I started getting involved with public affairs, and I have been since then and up until today.

At the beginning I was a member of the Landed Property Committee, together with three or four others, all of them business people. We did quite a good management not only with the Community's landed property, but we also looked for the landed property that was not yet in our possession, which we owned but which hadn't been regained yet.

We had two lawyers who were involved solely with these issues. We managed to find quite a few. Things were quite confusing but we managed to clear them up. I stayed there from 1970 to 1972.

When the colonels left and we had elections, the electoral body chose 20 members for the general assembly of the Community. Elections take place every four years. At some point after the communal general assembly, I was assigned a post as advisor of the Community Council which consisted of five people. I was the cashier. Later, after four years, I was elected president of the General Assembly.

Around 1990 I became a member of the Landed Property Committee. I served as its president for eight years. I wasn't working anymore so I had the possibility of going around every day, looking into the problems, the issues of the day, and to try to solve them if possible.

During these eight years, and I am not trying to boast, I managed to triple the earnings. First of all because things were being handled legally. Also, because the law had changed and the moratorium for rents had been abolished. I managed because I applied my system, always handling things in a gentle way, and without ever getting into a fight with any of the tenants. Even so the earnings tripled.

In the end, when I resigned they didn't want to let me go. I didn't agree with the spirit anymore. There were now many young people in the Council. I like to discuss things with people before making decisions. They had a different attitude. And so I took my hat and left.

It is now more than ten years that I've been at the Covo Foundation. I am also at the Nissim Foundation. I think we are assigned in these committees for life. They would replace us in case one retires or dies and then the Community suggests somebody else.

There was a school on Aristotelous Square, the Alliance. Upon liberation this was the club of the gendarme officers, their association. Later, when they left, the arcade was built. [Editor's note: The interviewee is referring to the Hirsch arcade in which the offices of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki are located today.] When the Community got compensation from the Germans - because the Community did get some compensation - there were two claims.

One claim was by the Alliance for the landed property there. The other one was from the Jews of Thessaloniki that stayed in Israel and never came back. They considered that since they were also from Thessaloniki they had the same rights. Finally, they got part of the compensation.

The bigger claim was the Alliance's, for the land there. From the time of the Turks one couldn't own land, if one wasn't a Turkish citizen. That was the law. That's why the Alliance had to buy this land in the name of the Community. Later, when the Community built on it, they claimed it. They said, 'This land was ours.' They managed to block the money that the German government was about to give to the Jewish Community. The Community couldn't collect the money. In the end the Community and Alliance came to an agreement: 'From the money that we will get, we will give you half of it now and the rest we will slowly return to you.'

The Community took the money, but they said... In fact, someone who was really involved was again a Greek, Nahmias. He had come here and visited us, especially in order to claim the money from the Community. The president at the time was Dick Benveniste, who was completely against it. 'These thieves stopped us and didn't allow us to take our money etc.' After Dick died, I was at the Community Council at the time too, I told them, 'Guys, what we are doing is not fair.'

Don't forget what we owe to the Alliance. We promised them some things and we will keep our promise.' And that's how things happened in the end. While I was still there, we paid them back. We owed them a few last payments, which we gave them.

The first time that the Community was subsidized was after the earthquakes. I was in the council then so I know. When the big earthquake took place the Community's offices were seriously damaged and especially the main synagogue. So they said that we should repair it because it had become very dangerous. One couldn't get in.

The Minister of Public Works was a guy from Thessaloniki whom I knew very well because he used to be a customer of the shop. The Community didn't have much money at the time. So two members from the committee, I and another guy, went to ask him for a loan so we could repair the synagogue. He looks at us and says, 'You must be kidding, the Ministry will repair it!' And so it happened. They did the whole repair without asking for one penny from the Community. He was an old resident of Thessaloniki, and knew the Community. Nevertheless it really impressed us. It was the first and maybe the last time the Community was subsidized by the state.

After the war, and after the State of Israel was founded, there was no pressure in the community, nor any preaching on behalf of Israel in the synagogue. They never talked about such issues in the synagogue. They wouldn't mess with politics. The only thing they would do is that one week after

the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust, there would be the commemoration of the day of the foundation of the state of Israel. That was the only thing.

On the anniversary of the State of Israel there would first be a ceremony, a Kaddish, for the ones that died fighting for the state. That was the first thing. Then, someone would hold a speech about how it happened, how it started etc. Every time it was a different person. The ceremony would finish with the two national anthems, the Greek and the Israeli one. Unfortunately not many people participated, and most of them were the elder ones. Even today there aren't many young people that participate.

They have been celebrating the Remembrance Day [the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust] in Thessaloniki for many years now. All the authorities would come, the representative of the Metropolitan Church, of the 3rd Army Force, of the Navy, the Police Force, the Fire Department and many others. The synagogue is full, I must say. There is not enough space either on the ground floor or on the balcony.

This is what used to happen at the first anniversaries after the war. There were some authority representatives but not as many as there are today. But we always had some people representing the authorities. At least the municipality would always send someone. On the Day of Remembrance they first recite a Kaddish for the 65,000 local Jews that were killed. Then we light the six candles for the six million that got killed, one candle for each million. It is usually someone that was in the concentration camps that lights them up. Then someone holds a speech. Most of the times a Christian Orthodox holds the speech. In the evening they go to the cemetery and they put flowers on the monument.

One of the first people that comes to attend the Day of Remembrance is the German Consul. I He always comes to the cemetery, too. What I can see is that as time goes by we have more non-Jewish people from the authorities coming than we have Jews.

In the beginning they completely ignored the role the Jews in Thessaloniki had played in the city. They didn't even say that they existed. People don't know about it. They ask me, 'Alvo, where do you come from?' So I reply, 'Maybe your father came from Drama, while my ancestors have been here for 500 years.'

I didn't go to the synagogue so often after the war. Now, that I have to go every day for the whole week for my brother, because we do a memorial service every day, I find it very hard. I get bored. You sit there, they read, without you even understanding what they are reading; it is silly. The ceremonies in the synagogue are very repetitive. They say the same thing ten times, over and over again.

I never got involved in politics. Initially, most of the Jews here voted for ERE [96](#) and later for N.D., New Democracy [97](#). I think that the son of the Head of the Police, Evert, played an important role in that. Rumor had it that it was the Jews who had voted for him. He had protected many people by publishing fake identity cards etc. One cannot say that 100 percent was voting for the right. They started to vote for the Center, too.

I turned to ERE initially because I was a trader and they seemed good. After the war and the partisans, we had suffered a great deal and we were very afraid. That's why Danny had left for

Canada. We were afraid that they might prevail and the land would then turn to the Communist Block. I had more liberal ideas.

While I was initially voting for ERE, later, in the 1960s, I chose to vote for the Center Party. I started voting Enosis Kendrou [98](#), because they [ERE, the rightist party in power] had started to shift a lot towards the rightists and we didn't like it. They were becoming extremists. All these doings such as when they were after the leftists and forcing them to sign repentances etc. were events that I really disliked. They would take you down to the police station, for really minor things, you know!

They never took us to the police station to check our political beliefs, but I know many people, ours too, that they would drag there because they had been up on the mountain with the partisans. Where should they have been? Should they have been sitting at the table with the Germans?! And they would drag them around after the war as leftists, just because they had been up on the mountain.

The fact that after the war there was a restraining climate with a great emphasis on the Orthodox Church and Christianity, Greek nationalism, for me being a Jew from Thessaloniki, I cannot say that it really bothered me. When there were national holidays or the mayors were elected or some of the officials that would talk at the International Fair and they would speak about Greece or Thessaloniki, the Byzantine and Christian, we would not say to ourselves, 'I have been here for the last 500 years.' No, we never thought about it, we would listen and be completely indifferent.

After the political change from the Junta, I voted for N.D. It happened that later I voted for Synaspismos [99](#). I went a few times to listen to Kirkos. I listened to him a couple of times in Aristotelous Square and I thought, 'Why shouldn't I vote him?' So I did. Not out of conviction but because I liked what he was saying. I voted for PASOK [100] a couple of times in the past few years. I liked the former Prime Minister, Simitis. The others could say so many things about this political party, but not about Simitis. About Simitis they couldn't say anything.

I was never a member of a political party; I was a simple voter. Sometimes they would send us some coupons. We would buy coupons from the one, and we would buy from the other, too. That was before and after the dictatorship. They keep sending us some, without me being registered anywhere; they still send us things home or sometimes they call. They inform us about meetings or gatherings, but I never go.

I never participated in pre-election assemblies before the dictatorship. I didn't have any spare time to go. I went to listen to Kirkos a couple of times. I went to some others a couple of times, too, just to listen to what they had to say. We heard them on the radio.

I read the paper. I used to buy the 'Makedonia.' Sometimes we would buy the Athenian papers. When I used to buy them, which was a long time ago, I would either buy the 'Kathimerini' or the 'Vima' in order to have a wider opinion poll. Now I buy only the local paper and only on Sundays, because you read the local news, who died and whose memorial service will take place. I would buy foreign news magazines. Not the French ones, I would get the English-language 'Newsweek.'

• 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 Aksion or Accion

Judeo-Spanish daily newspaper printed in Rashi script, published from 1929 to 1940. Originally it had Socialist and assimilationist tendencies, but later it embraced Zionism. [Source: Rafael Frezis: *O evraikos typos stin Ellada, Volos, 1999, pp.151-152*].

3 Fez

Ottoman headgear. As part of the Imperial Prescript of Gulhane (a westernizing campaign) of Sultan Mahmud II (1839-1876) the traditional Ottoman dressing code was abolished in 1839. The fez, resembling the hat of the Europeans at the time, was introduced and widely used by the Ottoman population, regardless of religious affiliation. In the Turkish Republic it was considered backward and outlawed in 1925 by the Head Law. In the Balkan countries the fez was regarded an Ottoman (Turkish) symbol and was dropped after gaining independence.

4 Synagogues in Thessaloniki

Before WWII there were 19 synagogues in Thessaloniki, all of which were blown up by the Germans a short time before the liberation. Already the big fire of 1917 had destroyed most of the synagogues and certainly all the historic synagogues, that is those built before 1680. Historian Rena Molho accounts that before the big fire there were about a hundred synagogues out of which 32 were recognized by the chief rabbi, 65 private small synagogues belonging to well known families and 17 small public synagogues. [Source: 1. R. Molho, 'The Jews of Thessaloniki. 1856-

1919 A special community,' Ed. Themelio, Athens 2001, pp.65, 121. and 2. Helias V. Messinas, 'The Synagogues of Salonica and Veroia,' Ed. Gavrielides, Athens 1997]

5 The Fire of Thessaloniki

In the night of 18th August 1917, an enormous fire, fed by the famous Vardar wind, destroyed the city centre where most of the Jews lived. It was a region of 227 hectares, where 15,000 families lived, 10,000 of them were Jewish families which were deprived of their homes. The Jews were hit the hardest, since more than two thirds of the property destroyed by the fire was Jewish and only a tenth of that immense fortune was insured. Nearly all the schools, 32 synagogues, 50 oratories, all the cultural centers, libraries, clubs, etc. were annihilated. Despite of the aid of a sum of 40,000 golden pounds collected from all over the world, the community never recovered from that disaster. The Jewish face of the city that had been there for more than five centuries was wiped out in 36 hours. 25,000, out of 53,000 of the stricken Jews that belonged mostly to the lower and middle class, were forced to live in the working-class districts that were hastily built in a rudimentary fashion. [Source: Rena Molho, 'Jewish Working-Class Neighborhoods established in Salonica Following the 1890 and the 1917 Fires,' in Rena Molho, 'Salonica and Istanbul: Social, Political and Cultural Aspects of Jewish Life,' The Isis Press, Istanbul, 2005, pp.107-126.]

6 White Tower of Thessaloniki

a monument and museum on the waterfront of the city of Thessaloniki. Originally constructed by the Ottomans to fortify the city's harbour, it became a notorious prison and scene of mass executions during the period of Ottoman rule. It was substantially remodeled and its exterior was whitewashed after Greece gained control of the city in 1912. It has been adopted as the symbol of the city. [Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Tower_of_Thessaloniki]

7 Alliance Israelite Universelle

An international Jewish organization based in France. It was founded in Paris in 1860 by Adolphe Gremieux, as a response to the Damascus Affair, with the goal to protect human rights of Jews as citizens of the countries where they live. The organization was created to combine the ideals of self defense and self sufficiency through education and professional development among Jews around the world. In addition, the organization operated a number of Jewish day schools and has done a lot to standardize the Ladino language. The Alliance schools were organized in network with their Central Committee in Paris. The teaching body was usually the alumni trained in France. The schools emphasized modern sciences and history in their curriculum; nevertheless Hebrew and religion were also taught. The Alliance Israelite Universelle ideology consisted in teaching the local language to Jews so they could be integrated to their country's culture. This was part of the modernization of the Jews. Most Ottoman Jews, however, did not take up the Turkish language (because it was optional), and as a result a new generation of Ottoman Jews grew up that was more familiar with France and the West than with the surrounding society. In the Balkans the first school was opened in Greece (Volos) in 1865, then in the Ottoman Empire in Adrianople in 1867, Shumla (Shumen) in 1870 and in Istanbul, Smyrna (Izmir), and Salonika in 1870s. In 1870, Carl Netter of the AIU received a tract of land from the Ottoman Empire as a gift and started an agricultural school, Mikveh Israel, the first modern Jewish agricultural settlement in the Land of Israel. The modernist Jewish elite and intelligentsia of the late 19th-century Ottoman Empire was

known for having graduated from Alliance schools; they were closely attached to the Young Turk circles, and after 1908 three of them (Carasso, Farraggi, and Masliah) were members of the new Ottoman Chamber of Deputies.

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

9 B'nai B'rith

(Hebrew for 'Sons of the Covenant') Network of Jewish organizations modeled upon Masonic lodges, its members being the elites of the Jewish nation. Its statutory goal was caring for the 'preservation and renewal of the Jewish soul,' which in practice meant welfare and educational activities. Founded in New York in 1843. In 1911, the voyage to the Orient of Siegmund Bergel of Berlin was a catalyst for the order. While traveling southward, Bergel founded lodges at Belgrade, Sofia, Adrianople, Constantinople, Salonica, Smyrna, Alexandria, and Cairo, and on returning he founded lodges at Zichron-Jacob and at Beyrouth. The common language of the lodges was French.

10 Herzl, Theodor (1860-1904)

Hungarian-born Jewish playwright, journalist and founder of the World Zionist Organization (WZO). His thought of realizing the idea of political Zionism was inspired by among other things the so-called Dreyfus affair. In the polemical essay The Jewish State (Der Judenstaat, 1896) he declares that Jews aren't only a community of believers, but also a nation with the right to its own territory and state. He was of the opinion that in the anti-Jewish mood extant in Europe, it was not possible to solve the Jewish question via either civic emancipation or cultural assimilation. After a significant diplomatic effort he succeeded in the calling of the 1st International Jewish Congress in Basel on 29-31st August 1897. The congress accepted the "Basel Program" and elected Herzl as its first president. Herzl wasn't the first to long for the return of the Jews to Palestine. He was, however, able to not only support the idea, but also to promote it politically; without his efforts the creation of the new state of Israel in the Palestine on 14th May 1948 would not have been possible. Theodor Herzl died in 1904 at the age of 44 and was buried in a Jewish cemetery in Vienna. In 1949 his remains were transported to Jerusalem, where they were laid to rest on a mountain that today

carries his name (Mount Herzl).

11 Mission Laique Francaise

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

12 Amar Bank

Bank of Jewish interests founded in 1920. It collaborated with the Financial House Saoul from Paris. [Source: Hekimoglou Evangelos, Trapezes ke Thessaloniki, 1900-1936. Opseis litourgias ke to problima tis horothetissis, Thessaloniki 1987)].

13 Romaniotes

a Jewish population who have lived in the territory of today's Greece and neighboring areas with large Greek populations for more than 2,000 years. Their language is Greek and they derive their name from the old name for the people of the Byzantine Empire, Rhomaioi. Large communities were located in Thebes, Ioannina, Chalcis, Corfu, Arta, Corinth and on the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Rhodes and Cyprus, among others. The Romaniotes are historically distinct from the Sephardim, who settled in Greece after the 1492 expulsion of the Jews from Spain. [Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romaniotes>]

14 Greek resistance

During the Nazi occupation of Greece, veterans and young Jewish males and females went to the mountains to fight against the occupation forces or serve in various ways in the several Greek resistance movements, primarily EAM. [Source: Steven Bowman, Jewish resistance in wartime Greece (Middlesex 2006)]

15 Melissa Orphanage for Girls

During the interwar period its building was situated on Queen Olga's Street.

16 Beit Saoul Synagogue

It was set up in ca. 1898 on 43 Vassilissis Olgas Street by Fakima Idda Modiano in memory of her husband Saoul Jacob Modiano.

17 Tsaldaris Panaghis (1868-1936)

. Leader of the Populist Party and political opponent of Eleftherios Venizelos. After the execution of Dimitros Gounaris in 1922 he became the de facto leader of the anti- Venizelist Populist Party. He became Prime Minister in 1932. An honest politician and staunch parliamentarian, his moderate position placed him at odds both with the Venizelist and royalist extremists. [Source: Thanos Veremis, Mark Dragoumis, Historical Dictionary of Greece (London 1995), pp. 172-173]

18 L' Indépendant

Jewish daily evening newspaper published in French, one of the most important and long lived newspapers published between 1909- 1941, when it was closed down by the Germans in April 1941. It did not endorse any political views and defended vehemently the rights of the Jews. [Source: Repf. Frezis: O evraikos typos stin Ellada, in Greek Volos, 1999 pp. 107-108].

19 Le Progrès

One of the 7 French-Jewish newspapers published in Salonica up until 1941.

20 Venizelos, Eleftherios (1864 - 1936)

an eminent Greek revolutionary, a prominent and illustrious statesman as well as a charismatic leader in the early 20th century. Elected several times as Prime Minister of Greece and served from 1910 to 1920 and from 1928 to 1932. Venizelos had such profound influence on the internal and external affairs of Greece that he is credited with being "the maker of modern Greece." His impact on modern Greece has been such that he is still widely known as the "Ethnarch." [Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eleftherios_Venizelos]

21 Refugees (1922-1923)

The defeat of the Greek forces in Asia Minor caused a wholesale expulsion of the Greek population from Turkey. Close to 1.5 million refugees were exchanged for half-a-million Muslims and converged on Greece. The effect of this sudden influx on Greek society, economy and politics, cannot be exaggerated. Although the economy bore the strain of their settlement for decades after their arrival and their shanty neighborhoods in Athens and Thessaloniki remained in a deplorable condition throughout the interwar period, the urban settlers provided a huge working force for a growing industry and skills for the commercial sector. The addition of about 300,000 male voters to a total of 800,000 male voting population in Greece, played a decisive role in interwar politics, favoring mainly the Venizelist camp and Republican tendencies. [Source: Thanos Veremis, Mark Dragoumis, Historical Dictionary of Greece (London 1995)]

22 Makedonia

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

23 Thessaloniki Club or Cercle de Salonique

Founded under the name Cercle de Salonique in 1873, renamed Club de Thessalonique in 1914 and dissolved in 1958. Its members belonged to the cream of the high bourgeoisie in post-Ottoman Thessaloniki, with a high number of Jewish members throughout the interwar period. [Source: Rena Molho, 'Salonica and Istanbul: Social, Political and Cultural Aspects of Jewish Life,' The Isis Press, Istanbul, 2005, pp.151-164].

24 Bank of Thessaloniki (Banque de Salonique)

Founded by members of the Moise Allatini family in 1888. In 1909 the bank was under French control and its headquarters were transferred to Istanbul. The bank continued to maintain a branch

in Thessaloniki until 1940. [Source: Hekimoglou Evangelos, Trapezes ke Thessaloniki, 1900-1936. Opseis litourgias ke to problima tis horothetissis, in Greek, Thessaloniki 1987]

25 Aristotelous square

The central square of Thessaloniki. It was created according to the new city plan after the Fire of 1917.

26 Clearing

A method of international trade based on the settlement of trade accounts in kind, i.e. without the use of foreign currency. The Venizelos government had to resort to this in the spring and summer of 1932 due to an acute shortage of foreign exchange reserves. [Source: Istoría tou ellinikou ethnous (History of the Greek Nation), Volume XV]

27 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.

28 Sunday Rest

During the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century the economical sector of the city would stop completely on Saturday due to the demographic and economic dominance of the Jewish population in Thessaloniki. In 1924, however, within the frame of a policy for the assimilation of the populations of different national identity and for the benefit of the Asia Minor refugees' interests, the Greek government imposed by law the Sunday rest upon the whole population under its sovereignty, regardless of their religious denomination. This decision provoked the unanimous reaction of the Jewish population and of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, which was nevertheless forced to accept it in the end.

29 The 1936 events

in May 1936 Thessaloniki was shocked by a series of mass strikes. On 9th May violent conflicts between the army, the gendarmes and the men on strike took place in the center of the city resulting in 12 dead strikers and 32 seriously injured. [Source: Vasilis Tomanas, Chronico tis Thessalonikis, 1921-1944, in Greek, Vasilis Tomanas, Chronicle of Thessaloniki, 1921-1944 (Skopelos 1996)].

30 Association des Anciens Eleves de l' Alliance Israelite

Founded in 1897, in Thessaloniki, by the graduates of the Alliance schools. [Source: Rena Molho, I Evraioi tis Thessalonikis, 1856-1919. Mia idiaiteri koinotita, in Greek, 'The Jews of Thessaloniki, 1856-1919. A unique community.' (Athens, 2001)]

31 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.

32 Metaxas, Ioannis (1871-1941)

Greek General and Prime Minister of Greece from 1936 until his death. A staunch monarchist, he supported Constantine I and opposed Greek entry into WWI. Metaxas left Greece with the king, neither returning until 1920. When the monarchy was displaced in 1922, Metaxas moved into politics and founded the Party of Free Opinion in 1923. After a disputed plebiscite George II, son of Constantine I, returned to take the throne in 1935. The elections of 1936 produced a deadlock between Panagis Tsaldaris and Themistoklis Sophoulis. The political situation was further polarized by the gains made by the Communist Party of Greece (KKE). Disliking the Communists and fearing a coup, George II appointed Metaxas, 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.

33 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]

34 3E (Ethniki Enosi Ellados)

lit. National Union of Greece, a fascist nationalist organization, founded in 1929 by George Kosmidis. It had about 2000 members, of whom the majority was immigrants. [Source: J. Hondros, 'Occupation and Resistance: the Greek Agony,' New York, 1983]

35 Nikos Fardis

Editor in chief of the newspaper Makedonia. In June 1931 his anti-Semitic articles played a crucial role in aggravating the tension between the Greek Christians and Jews and in encouraging the violent actions of the extremist nationalist groups resulting in the burning of the Campbell area on the night of 29th June 1931.

36 Thessaloniki International Trade Fair

Taking place every September since its foundation in 1926, it has always been a very important economic as well as cultural city event. For the last few years the Fair has been a pole of attraction and the "place" where the political program of the government is being presented and assessed.

37 Asylo tou Paidiou [Children's Asylum]

Philanthropic union founded in 1919. Its aim was the guarding and care of the city's working parents' children in Thessaloniki and the surrounding area. The founder of the Children's' asylum was Eli Adosidou together with the distinguished ladies of Thessaloniki. Since its foundation it started working in Vasileos Georgiou street as an infants' care of the city home, a maternity clinic, a dentistry studio, an outpatients medical office, a kindergarten, a primary school, and a school for nurses specializing on baby care.

38 Merimna

a distinguished philanthropic association of Thessaloniki.

39 Hariseio

old age-home in Thessaloniki. It was founded around 1890 by a donation of the Greek Orthodox tradesman from Thessaloniki, Demetrios Harisis.

40 Matanot Laevionim

Matanot Laevionim was created in February 1901 with the objective of offering free meals to orphans and other poor students of the schools of the Jewish Community. It operated with funds from the community, the help of Alliance Israelite Universelle and other serious legacies left by the founding members or their wives when they became widows. These funds were used in order to acquire a building in the suburb of Eksohi. In 1912, Matanot Laevionim offered approximately four hundred free meals a day, while after the big fire of Thessaloniki in 1917 it extended its activities and set up one cook house in each neighborhood. During the occupation it offered great services to the community, as with the assistance of the Greek and the International Red Cross it managed to distribute daily 'popular meals' and half a liter of milk to 5.500 children. [Source: R. Molho, 'The Jews of Thessaloniki 1856-1919. A Unique Community,' Ed. Themelio, Athens 2001, pp.104-106]

41 '151'

After the Fire of 1917, the Jewish Community acquired the large No. 151 hospital, which belonged to the Italian army and was located east of the Thessaloniki. 75 wooden structures and many brick and cement structures were subsequently built to house the fire-stricken Jewish population.

42 Agios Stylianos

The Foundling Hospital "Agios Stylianos" was established in 1912 under the name of Foundling Hospital of the Orthodox Community of Thessaloniki Agios Stylianos. In 1913 it became autonomous and its supervision was undertaken by female volunteers who showed a particular zeal, while in 1938 it was placed under the authority of the Municipality of Thessaloniki. From 1941 until today it is sheltered in a building owned by the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki.

43 The Smyrna Campaign

In the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, Greece was granted West and East Thrace and a mandate to occupy Smyrna (Izmir) (1920). The landing of Greek troops in Asia Minor in 1919, the defeat of Venizelos by the royalists in the elections of 1920, and a protracted campaign against the nationalist forces of Kemal Ataturk (the father of modern Turkey) led to defeat and the expulsion of 1,300,000 Greeks from Turkey in 1922. These destitute refugees descended upon a Greece of barely five million and became the foremost consideration of all interwar Greek governments [Source: Thanos Veremis, Mark Dragoumis, Historical Dictionary of Greece (London 1995)].

44 Karaiskakis, Georgios (1780 or 1782 - 1827)

a famous Greek klepht, armatolos, military commander, and a hero of the Greek War of Independence. He was killed in action on his Greek name day, 23rd April 1827, after being fatally wounded by a rifle shell in battle. Karaiskaki Stadium in Neo Faliro, Piraeus is named after him as he was mortally wounded in the area. [Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgios_Karaiskakis]

45 Feraios, Rigas (1757-1798)

a Greek writer and revolutionary, an eminent figure of Greek Enlightenment, remembered as a Greek national hero, the first victim of the uprising against the Ottoman Empire and a forerunner of the Greek War of Independence. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rigas_Feraios)

46 Jewish Neighborhood No

'6': Between 1917 and 1920, the municipal authorities constructed the No. 6 quarter near the tramway, after acquiring the French army's hospital. Fire-stricken Jews were the principal inhabitants of this quarter.

47 Rashi alphabet

A Hebrew alphabet traditionally used for Rashi (Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac, 1040-1105) commentaries of the Bible and the Talmud, it is also the traditional alphabet of Judeo-Spanish. The Judeo-Spanish alphabet also used certain characters to denote the Spanish sounds that are alien to the Hebrew phonetics. Judeo-Spanish religious as well as secular texts were written in Rashi letters up until the introduction of the Latin alphabet, first by Alliance Israelite Universelle after 1860.

48 Mission Laïque Française

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

49 Ecole des Freres de Saint Vincent de Paul

School founded in the late Ottoman Empire from the homonymous religious mission.

50 German School

It was founded in 1888. It was a mixed school which accepted students from all kinds of ethnicities.

51 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.

52 American Farm School of Thessaloniki

It was founded in 1906 in a deserted area in the eastern part of Thessaloniki.

53 EON

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

54 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.

55 Betar

Brith Trumpledor (Hebrew) meaning Trumpledor Society; right-wing Revisionist Jewish youth movement. It was founded in 1923 in Riga by Vladimir Jabotinsky, in memory of J. Trumpledor, one of the first fighters to be killed in Palestine, and the fortress Betar, which was heroically defended for many months during the Bar Kohba uprising. Its aim was to propagate the program of the revisionists and prepare young people to fight and live in Palestine. It organized emigration through both legal and illegal channels. It was a paramilitary organization; its members wore uniforms. They supported the idea to create a Jewish legion in order to liberate Palestine. From 1936-39 the popularity of Betar diminished. During WWII many of its members formed guerrilla groups.

56 Association des Jeunes Juifs

Zionist association formed in 1916 on the initiative of Avraam Recanati. The association mainly campaigned against the Alliance assimilationists [Source: Molho, Rena, Salonica and Istanbul: social, political and cultural aspects of Jewish Life (Istanbul, 2005)].

57 Croix-de-Feu (Cross of Fire)

a French far right league of the Interwar period, led by Colonel François de la Rocque (1885-1946). After it was dissolved, as were all other far right leagues during the Popular Front period (1936-38), de la Rocque replaced it with the 'Parti social français' (PSF). [Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croix-de-Feu>].

58 Anti-Semitism in Italy

Anti-Semitism was not part of the Fascist movement's ideology in Italy. Italy's Jewish population was small, numbering just 56,000 Jews. Furthermore, some leading Fascists were Jewish and almost 30% of Italian Jews were members of the Fascist party. However, in 1938 Mussolini introduced a series of anti-Semitic laws, primarily because of pressure from Hitler: a) Jews were banned from the professions, business and the army; b) All Jews who arrived in Italy after 1919 were to leave within six months; c) Marriage between Italians and Jews was forbidden.

59 Opera Nazionale Balilla (ONB)

an Italian Fascist youth organization functioning, as an addition to school education, between 1926 and 1937 (the year it was absorbed into the Gioventù Italiana del Littorio, GIL, a youth section of the National Fascist Party) [Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opera_Nazionale_Balilla]

60 Hercules

One of the three largest athletic associations in Thessaloniki, founded in 1908.

61 Aris

One of the three largest football associations in Thessaloniki, founded in 1914.

62 PAOK

One of the three largest football associations, founded in 1926 by the Istanbul refugees in Thessaloniki.

63 : Vembo, Sophia (1910-1978)

a leading Greek singer and actress whose artistic activity took place between the interwar and the post liberation period and lasted until the 1950s. She was dubbed "The Victory Singer," due to the nationalistic songs that she interpreted during the Greek-Italian war in 1940.

64 Maginot Line

named after French minister of defense André Maginot; a line of concrete fortifications, tank obstacles, machine gun posts and other defenses which France constructed along its borders with Germany in the wake of WWI. The WWII German invasion plan of 1940 was designed to deal with the Line. A decoy force sat opposite the Line while a second Army Group cut through the Low Countries of Belgium and the Netherlands, as well as through the Ardennes Forest which lay north of the main French defenses. Thus the Germans were able to avoid assaulting the Maginot Line directly. Attacking from 10th May 1940 German forces were well into France within five days and they continued to advance until 24th May 1940 when they stopped near Dunkirk. By early June the German forces had cut off the Line from the rest of France and the French government was making overtures for an armistice, which was signed on 22nd June 1940 in Compiègne. [Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maginot_Line]

65 Colonel Mordechai Frizis (1893-1940)

He graduated in law from the Athens University, his parents believed he would one day be a lawyer. However, the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 installed a sense of patriotism in young Mordechai. In 1916, he entered as an officer in training in Euboea. Athens. In the Turkish-Greek war of 1921-1922, Lieutenant Mordechai and his soldiers were captured by the Turks. As a non-Christian officer he was offered his freedom. Mordechai refused, enduring eleven months of captivity with his Greek soldiers. The Greco-Italian War started on 28th October 1940. By now Mordechai was a Major in the Greek army, based out of Ioannina in Epirus, Greece, commanding the Independent Division, his orders to stop Italian attacks from Albania and through the narrow valleys and ravines of Northern Greece. Ioannina. On 4th December 1940 Major Frizis and his men encountered the Italians for the first time. Mordechai never left his men during fighting and always thought of their interests; first earning him the strong loyalty of his soldiers he would call them his "boys," they in turn gave themselves the nickname the "Frizaens" or Frizis's boys. His troops would be the first to be captured by Italian soldiers. During the crossing of the Vistritsa River, mounted as always on his horse, Mordechai, led his troops against the Italians and was fatally wounded but refused to dismount, choosing instead to rally his soldiers with the now famous battle cry 'Ayeras' (Courage in

Greek). Not having a Rabbi near a priest was brought over. He placed his hand on Mordechai's head and prayed: "Hear, O Israel, the lord our God, the Lord is one." Colonel Mordechai Frizis, was the first officer in the Greek Army to be killed in World War II. A memorial to him has been erected outside the National Military Museum in Athens. In 2002 the remains of Mordechai Frizis were returned to Greece. They are buried in Thessaloniki's Jewish cemetery today.

66 Koritsa

City in Southern Albania with a concentration of Greek population. It was occupied by the Greek army on 22nd November 1940.

67 Agioi Saranta

Southern Albanian harbor with a concentration of Greek population. It was occupied by the Greek Army on 6th December 1940.

68 "Fanela tou Stratiotou" or The Soldier's Undershirt

During the Greek- Italian war the civilians supported the war effort by also supplying, among other things, clothing for the soldiers. This initiative was organized by the national authorities and was named 'The Soldier's Undershirt.'

69 Allatini flour mill

Rich Jewish families coming from abroad contributed immensely to the economic and cultural revival of the Jewry of Thessaloniki. The Allatini family, a rich Jewish family from Italy, settled in Thessaloniki and established the first flour mill in the city in 1898.

70 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)]

71 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 conditions 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]

72 "Pavlou Mela" Barracks

Army camp in eastern Thessaloniki, which was used by the Nazis as a prison and torture space.

73 Papanaooum, Laskaris

One of the main collaborators of the Germans in Thessaloniki. He played a leading part in the seizing and the distribution of Jewish property.

74 8th February 1943

On this date, the Nazi authorities in Thessaloniki put in effect a set of measures in compliance with orders from Berlin. Jews were forbidden to use vehicles of any kind, to circulate on central roads after 5pm, had to wear the Yellow Star, and were obliged to live exclusively in a prescribed area of the city or ghetto. [Source: Rena Molho, 'Salonica and Istanbul: Social, Political and Cultural Aspects of Jewish Life' (The Isis Press, Istanbul, 2005), p. 65]

75 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]

76 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]

77 EDES (National Republican Greek League)

one of the major resistance groups formed during the Axis Occupation of Greece during World War II. The largest of the non-communist resistance groups, it concentrated its military activities in Epirus. From 1943 onwards, came into confrontation with the Communist-led National Liberation Front, beginning a series of civil conflicts that would lead to the Greek Civil War. [Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Republican_Greek_League]

78 Deportations of Greek Jews

The Jewish population of Thessaloniki started being deported to Baron Hirsch camp as of 25th February 1943. The first train that took away Salonican Jews left the city on 15th March 1943 and arrived in Auschwitz on 20th March 1943. One deportation followed another and by 18th August 1943, a total of 19 convoys with 48.533 people had left the city. [Source: Rena Molho, 'Salonica and Istanbul: Social, Political and Cultural Aspects of Jewish Life' (The Isis Press, Istanbul, 2005), p.

66]

79 Greek government in exile

the official government of Greece, headed by King George II, which evacuated from Athens in April 1941, after the German invasion of the country, first to the island of Crete and then to Cairo in Egypt. Hence it is also referred to as the 'Cairo Government.' It remained there until the German occupying forces withdrew from the country on 17th October 1944. Closely controlled by the British, it was the internationally recognized Greek government, although its authority inside the country itself was minimal. There, alongside the Axis-controlled collaborationist governments, a vigorous Resistance movement developed, spearheaded by the communist-controlled EAM/ELAS, which established a de facto separate administration, formalized in March 1944 after elections in both occupied and liberated territories, as the Political Committee of National Liberation (PEEA). [Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_government_in_exile]

80 Bergen-Belsen

Concentration camp located in northern Germany. Bergen- Belsen was established in April 1943 as a detention camp for prisoners who were to be exchanged with Germans imprisoned in Allied countries. Bergen- Belsen was liberated by the British army on 15th April, 1945. The soldiers were shocked at what they found, including 60,000 prisoners in the camp, many on the brink of death, and thousands of unburied bodies lying about. [Source: Rozett R. - Spector S.: Encyclopedia of the Holocaust, Facts on File, G.G. The Jerusalem Publishing House Ltd. 2000, pg. 139 -141]

81 The only arm of the Greek military that had escaped from the Germans largely intact was the navy

In March 1943 and in July 1943 with the support of the British, the Greek government-in-exile cleansed sections of the Greek army and navy from leftist officers and soldiers. In 1944 the formation of an alternative EAM-led government in Greece provided the leftists with an impetus for action. In April 1944 mutinies erupted in the military forces stationed in the Middle East as men clamored for the formation of a government of national unity which would carry the fight to Greece. All mutinies were suppressed by the British and those who participated were driven to concentration camps in Ethiopia. [Source: Thomas W. Gallant, Modern Greece (London, 2001)].

82 Tsouderos, Emmanouil (1882-1956)

political and financial figure of modern Greece, serving as Prime Minister-in-exile during World War II. In 1941, Tsouderos succeeded Alexandros Korizis as Prime Minister of Greece. Korizis committed suicide as the German Army advanced towards Athens. After assuming power, Tsouderos fled with King George to Crete where he organised Greek forces to face the coming German invasion. Tsouderos fled again during the Battle of Crete. He went to the Middle East and later Egypt. Tsouderos headed the Greek government in exile until 1944. This government was initially located in London and subsequently moved to Cairo. He served in the subsequent government in exile under Sophoklis Venizelos and, after the end of World War II, Tsouderos served in different capacities until his death in Genoa, Italy. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emmanouil_Tsouderos

83 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.

84 Affidavits of repentance

During the Civil War left political prisoners would sign declarations of repentance, in which the detainees recanted their political beliefs and the Communist Party. Such a declaration would stop the torture or open the way for their release. [Source: Polymeris Voglis 'Between negation and self-negation: political prisoners in Greece, 1945-1950,' in Mark Mazower (ed.), 'After the War was Over. Reconstructing the family, nation, and state in Greece, 1943-1960' (New Jersey 2000), pp. 75-76]

85 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]

86 Mussolini, Benito (1883-1945)

Italian political and state activist, leader (duce) of the Italian fascist party and of the Italian government from October 1922 until June 1943. After 1943 he was the head of a puppet government in the part of Italy that was occupied by the Germans. He was captured and executed by Italian partisans.

87 Calamarie Gymnasium

Was founded in the late Ottoman Empire period by the nuns of St. Vincent de Paul under the name of "Ecole des Filles dirigée par des Seurs de Saint Vincent de Paul". It is working until today as a private school under the name of Calamarie. [88](#) Nasser, Gamal Abdel (1918 - 1970): second President of Egypt from 1956 until his death in 1970. He led the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, which removed King Farouk I and heralded a new period of industrialization in Egypt, together with a profound advancement of Arab nationalism, including a short-lived union with Syria. Nasser inspired anti-colonial and pan-Arab revolutions in Algeria, Libya, Iraq and Yemen, and played a

major role in founding the Palestine Liberation Organization, in 1964, and the international Non-Aligned Movement. Nasser is seen as one of the most important political figures in both modern Arab history and Developing World politics of the 20th century. He is well-known for his nationalist policies and version of pan-Arabism, also referred to as Nasserism, which won a great following in the Arab World during the 1950s and 1960s. Although his status as "leader of the Arabs" was severely tarnished by the Israeli victory over the Arab armies in the Six Day War, many in the general Arab populace still view Nasser as a symbol of Arab dignity and freedom. [Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gamal_Abdel_Nasser]

89 Six-Day-War

(Hebrew: Milhemet Sheshet Hayamim), also known as the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Six Days War, or June War, was fought between Israel and its Arab neighbors Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. It began when Israel launched a preemptive war on its Arab neighbors; by its end Israel controlled the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. The results of the war affect the geopolitics of the region to this day.

90 Yom Kippur War (1973 Arab-Israeli War)

(Hebrew: Milchemet Yom HaKipurim), also known as the October War, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, and the Ramadan War, was fought from 6th October (the day of Yom Kippur) to 24th October 1973, between Israel and a coalition of Egypt and Syria. The war began when Egypt and Syria launched a surprise joint attack in the Sinai and Golan Heights, respectively, both of which had been captured by Israel during the Six-Day-War six years earlier. The war had far-reaching implications for many nations. The Arab world, which had been humiliated by the lopsided defeat of the Egyptian-Syrian-Jordanian alliance during the Six-Day-War, felt psychologically vindicated by its string of victories early in the conflict. This vindication, in many ways, cleared the way for the peace process which followed the war. The Camp David Accords, which came soon after, led to normalized relations between Egypt and Israel - the first time any Arab country had recognized the Israeli state. Egypt, which had already been drifting away from the Soviet Union, then left the Soviet sphere of influence almost entirely.

91 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.

92 Sabra and Shatila massacre

carried out in September 1982 by Lebanese Maronite Christian militias against Palestinian refugee camps. The Maronite forces stood under the direct command of Elie Hobeika, who would later become a long-time Lebanese parliament member and in the 1990s also a cabinet minister. The number of victims of the massacre is estimated at 700- 3,500. The camps were externally surrounded by Israeli soldiers throughout the incident, although the Israeli military personnel who were there claimed they had no idea of what was going on inside. The degree to which the Israeli military was involved in the incident is a matter of controversy. The massacre provoked outrage around the world. On 16th December 1982, the United Nations General Assembly condemned the massacre and declared it to be an act of genocide. On 28th September 1982, the Israeli Government resolved to establish a Commission of Inquiry, which was led by former Supreme Court Justice Kahan. The report included evidence from Israeli army personnel, as well as political figures and Phalangist officers. In the report, published in the spring of 1983, the Kahan Commission stated that there was no evidence that Israeli units took direct part in the massacre and that it was the "direct responsibility of Phalangists." However, the Commission recorded that Israeli military personnel were aware that a massacre was in progress without taking serious steps to stop it, and that reports of a massacre in progress were made to senior Israeli officers and even to an Israeli cabinet minister; it therefore regarded Israel as bearing part of the "indirect responsibility." Among those it considered to bear a part of this indirect responsibility, the commission found that Ariel Sharon "bears personal responsibility" and recommended his dismissal from the post of Defense Minister; it also recommended the dismissal of Director of Military Intelligence Yehoshua Saguy, and the effective demotion of Division Commander Amos Yaron for at least three years. These recommendations were carried out [Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabra_and_Shatila_massacre].

93 Mount Carmel is a coastal mountain range in Israel overlooking the Mediterranean Sea

Its name is derived from the Hebrew 'Karem El' which means 'vineyards of God.' In ancient times it was covered by vineyards and was at all times famous for its fertility. Mount Carmel is widely recognized as a sacred mountain directly related, in its origins, to Judaism and Christianity. [Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Carmel]

94 Postwar elections in Greece

At the first elections in Greece after WWII, on 31st March 1946, the Communist Party of Greece abstained in protest against the wave of persecutions against its members. The Greek Jews of Thessaloniki also abstained, because the state's authorities had appointed one election sector for all the Jews to vote there, abolishing in this way the secrecy of vote. [Source: Albertos Nar, 'Across the Sea Side, Studies and Articles for the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki' (Thessaloniki 1997), p 269-270]

95 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.

96 ERE (Etniki Rizospastiki Enosis)

National Radical Union, founded (in 1955) and led by Constantinos 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' 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 1995)]

97 Nea Dimokratia [N

D.]: in English: New Democracy. Founded and led by Constantinos Karamanlis, one of the most influential figures in post-war Greek politics after the change of regime in 1974. Karamanlis and his new party won both the 1974 and 1977 elections. In spite of New Democracy's efforts to modernize its stance from paternalistic conservatism to moderate liberalism, the elections of 1981 proved that PASOK was the more successful of the two in appealing to centrist voters. [Source: Thanos Veremis, Mark Dragoumis, Historical Dictionary of Greece (London 1995)]

98 Center Union Party

Moderate party founded by Georgios Papandreou (1888-1968) in 1963. Although Papandreou's main task was to defeat Constantinos Karamanlis' 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 1995)]

99 Synaspismos

The Coalition of the Left of Movements and Ecology (Greek: Synaspismós t's Aristerás t'n Kin?mát?n kai t's Oikologías) is a Greek political party of the radical new left. It is commonly known simply as Synaspismos (Greek: "Coalition") and abbreviated to SYN. Until 2003, it was called the Coalition of the Left and Progress. SYN is the largest party of a left-wing political coalition formed in 2004 and named SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left). On 10th February 2008 engineer Alexis Tsipras was elected party president, replacing Alekos Alavanos, who stepped down citing private reasons. Since Tsipras isn't holding a parliamentary seat, Alavanos is still the parliamentary leader of the coalition. [Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synaspism%C3%B3s>]

[100] PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement)

founded in 1974 by Andreas Papandreou (1919-1996), a charismatic politician who remained the

undisputed leader of the party 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. His successor, Costas Simitis, drew the party 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 1995)]