

Yvonne Capuano-Molho

Yvonne Capuano-Molho

Athens

Greece

Interviewer: Vivian Karagouni

Date of interview: May 2006

Mrs. Yvonne Capuano is a particularly intelligent and active woman. She is a microbiologist and her private practice is located on the same floor as the apartment she is living in.

It is located in the center of Athens, at the "Pedio tou Areos" and there she lived for many years with her husband, who passed away in 2003, and her son, who now is married. Today she is living in this apartment with a lady-companion - a house manager.

Mrs. Yvonne Capuano is a tall, impressive and chic lady who obviously is taking good care of herself. She is a modern lady with many abilities.

On top of being a successful professional, she possesses a wider education and high intellect. Her home is decorated by herself with an impressive classic taste.

Among other things in her home one can find framed embroidery, knitted by Mrs. Capuano herself, and even chairs the upholstery of which has also been knitted by her in complex and particularly difficult designs.

She is very polite and attentive and kept on asking me if I was feeling alright or if I needed anything. When we were looking at old photographs I was very impressed with the difficulty and effort she was putting in because as she said, "These are not photographs but cemeteries."

- [My family background](#)
- [Growing up](#)
- [During the war](#)
- [After the war and later years](#)
- [Glossary](#)

• My family background

I am descended from the Spanish Jewish families that came to Thessaloniki in 1492 following their expulsion by Isabella and Ferdinand [1](#). This was Isabella the Catholic, who was full of hatred and this is why the expulsion started in Spain and continued in Portugal and other countries.

Our Jewish race has always been persecuted. I believe that in every period there is a thorn, every time there is a different excuse, they will always find something. It does not matter, we fly away



and we are always back, we are here and we will always be.

I don't know any stories of myths about my ancestors, what I know is that when they arrived in Greece, which was part of the Ottoman Empire at that period, they adapted to the Turkish way of life.

When the Jews went to Kastoria, which was a big fur center, they learned all about furs; it is said that the treatment of furs first came to Thessaloniki with the Jews. Many of them established their shops in the Copper place, and learned from the local craftsmen the processing of copper-braze.

They also say that when the Jews went to Istanbul to serve the sultan, as accountants, lawyers, doctors etc., the sultan said, 'I considered Ferdinand and Isabella intelligent and couldn't imagine that they would expel such an element from their country.'

My fathers' father, Joseph Molho, worked for the Turks. He was responsible of a big agricultural exploitation [tsiflikas]. The same applied to my father, Raphael Molho. When my grandfather was working for the Turks he was buying a lot of jewelry for my grandmother Esther, nee Ergas.

They even told me that when Grandfather Molho died, my grandmother, who had six sons said, 'Whichever bride will give birth to the young Joseph will have all my jewelry.' Well my mother had two daughters, my aunt four daughters, the next aunt two daughters, the other aunt one - only daughters. It was the youngest of all, Uncle Alberto, when he returned from the concentration camps, who got married and had a son, and young Joseph was born. But Joseph came too late.

I remember my grandfather being dressed in beautiful European clothes. He was wearing a frock-coat. Grandmother Esther was also wearing European clothes, I remember she had the lobe of her ear torn because once, as she was wearing earrings a young Turk grabbed it and ran away, and thus her ear was torn.

I don't know to which school my grandfather Molho went but he spoke French, I don't know whether he also knew how to write it.

One of my grandfather's brothers was a very educated man. He had attended the rabbinical school [yeshivah] in Istanbul and, I think, also in Vienna. Later he became the rabbi of Kavala.

When the first racist legislation against the Jews was ordered by the Nazis, as there were also Bulgarians and Germans [2](#) there, they shouted for the Jews to come out and sweep the city. This uncle, the rabbi, was the first that took a broom and started sweeping.

My grandfather had many brothers, but I was very young at the time. I knew some of them but I don't remember anything else about them.

My grandparents of the Molho side of the family, since my grandfather worked for the Turks, were always living in Turkish houses. The house I remember was located close to 'Kamara,' the Arch of Galerius, where many Turkish houses were situated. It had running water and a fountain in the yard, exactly as the Turks used to have.

Within the yard was a heart-shaped pond and water was coming out of it. It also had the Turkish balcony which is a covered balcony extending out of the house. That is where the women were sitting. They were not going out of the house but sitting around on this balcony where they could

see what was going on in the street without being seen.

The house had two stories and I remember a big iron door at the entrance. Inside the floor was made of big marble slabs and the furniture was heavy and massive. It had also many square tables with heavy legs and many sideboards. That was what the furniture looked like in that period. I found the same kind of furniture in the house of my mother-in-law too.

These Turkish houses had the hall and the dining room in one piece and all around were the bedrooms. When a son got married, he didn't leave the house. He was given a bedroom of his own, and this is how the brides were living in the same house with their mothers-in-law.

My mother was living with her parents, but I remember one aunt that was living with my Molho grandparents. The other aunt was not living with her mother because her parents had left for Israel, then still Palestine.

I don't remember if the Molho grandparents ever left Thessaloniki to go on vacation or to travel. I remember them already old. All of their children were married and had their own families.

When my grandfather Molho died in 1930, my grandmother with her daughter, Gracia, and her son-in-law went to live in an apartment in the center of the city, on Pavlou Mela Street. They were staying on the third floor; next to the place the Moskov family [3](#) was living.

My mother's parents were Leon Moshe and Bienvenida, nee Florentin. My grandmother's name means 'welcome' in Spanish. There were many names like that at that time.

These grandparents were also living in Thessaloniki, but they were traveling a lot. It was due to my grandfather's job. I heard that in the beginning he had a factory producing wooden door frames, but later, because he got tired, he got a big shop selling wood and stopped producing it. It wasn't construction wood but a specialist shop selling wood for furniture, and part of his job was to travel and visit exhibitions.

Despite the fact that he had no formal education he was very avant-garde. He was telling us that when he was young he went to school at the synagogue where they were taught to read and write not Hebrew but Ladino [4](#), or Judeo-Espanol, and writing in Rashi [5](#). I call this type of writing 'little pieces of wood.' At that period all the people in Thessaloniki were speaking Judeo-Espanol, it was our mother tongue.

My grandmother also knew how to write in Rashi, not with the European alphabet. When her daughter, Sylvia, went to live with her husband in Spain – they got married in 1927 and left in 1930 – my grandmother forced herself to learn also the Latin alphabet in order to be able to write letters to her daughter, who was of course speaking Judeo-Espanol, but didn't know the Rashi writing.

My grandfather, Leon Moshe, didn't come from a rich family, but he was a hard working man. He was telling me that when he was a boy he did many jobs and he also worked at the railways [6](#). I don't know what exactly he was doing there, I never understood.

Anyhow, his supervisor was an Italian and Grandfather learned very well the Italian language. After that, and knowing Italian, he worked in a wooden frames factory belonging to an Italian and this is how he learned this business. At that period Thessaloniki was an 'open port,' a free trading zone,

and many different nationalities were gathered there with many Italian and French businessmen.

This grandfather was fat when he was young but later this changed. I remember his eyes... When he looked at you, you were finished...

He was always dressed elegantly. He wore European clothes and so did my grandmother. She was very coquette and fatty as was in fashion at the time. Her dresses were all embroidered and her hats had feathers. My grandfather was wearing a bow-tie and later he walked with a walking-stick. All my family wore European clothes as they were rather progressive. The only person I remember wearing traditional clothes when she left the house was the mother-in-law of the brother of my grandmother, who was visiting wearing a Kofya, a traditional headgear for Jewish women, which was all knitted with pearls.

What my mother told me is that when she was young every Passover, Pesach, and every New Year's Eve, Rosh Hashanah, my grandfather bought for each of the kids a fez [7](#). Thessaloniki was the last city to be liberated from the Turks in 1913. When I see on television the recent Turkish series' and when I visit Turkey I hear many Turkish words that I am familiar with. Words I heard from my grandfather and my father because they lived in the Ottoman Empire. For example, the word 'kavgas' which means fight, I thought it was a Hebrew word and recently I realized it is Turkish.

My grandfather Leon Moshe was very hard working and extremely strict. Jews were men dedicated to their family. My grandfather was the leader of his, a real 'pater familias.' I was watching this Turkish series on television and saying to myself, 'This is Memik? That's the name of the strict traditional grandfather in the series. Well, that's my grandfather.' Oh, he was really strict.

My grandmother Bienvenida was very good and open-hearted but also collected in front of the strict grandfather, yet it is impressive how she always managed to do what she herself wanted. My mother would say, 'Grandmother asked to go to Spain to see Aunt Sylvia. Grandfather will never say yes.' But of course they went to visit Sylvia in Spain.

Also, every year they went to France. You know, Thessaloniki was a cosmopolitan city, a small Paris, and it was also the Jews that were offering a particular flair to it. All Jews were civilized people; they had not lived in villages. Since they had no country of their own, as Israel didn't exist then, they always lived in big cities. They had the particular radiation of the big cities.

- [Growing up](#)

I always happen to hear from friends, co-students etc., 'I will go to my village.' My village! Thessaloniki and later Athens were the only places I knew. And the Jews in Thessaloniki were more numerous compared to the Christian Greeks, a balance, which, of course, later changed. Thessaloniki was a city that shone. For example my grandfather and my grandmother would never go to Athens; they would go to Paris or to Vienna.

My aunt Sylvia, my mother's sister, suffered from poliomyelitis and was handicapped. My grandfather would do whatever the doctors would tell him. One of them said, 'Go, early in the morning, to the slaughter house and get the gall-bladder of a cow that's just been slaughtered.

Bring it home and put the foot of the girl in it.' They thought that this would make the nerves to operate again. And so Grandfather would take his carriage with the horses, bring the gall-bladder and put it, as a compress, on his daughter's foot. Later, in 1914, he took her to Vienna to be treated, imagine, to Vienna in that period!

Even grandmother would go for her gynecological problems to Paris every year. Also, Grandfather would always be the first to go to the wood fairs, to Paris, to Germany etc.; he would also take my mother with him since she spoke French.

In our house, all the tapestry had been ordered by grandfather in Vienna. First came the fabric and then the walls were painted in the same color with golden leaves in blue enamel paint.

None of my grandfathers had gone to the army. It was the Turkish army and neither the Jews nor the Christians would go to the Turkish army. They would even tell the following anecdote: When children were born they would say to the local priest, 'Father, the child is born; shall I declare it younger or older?

If I declare it older it will be too old and will not be taken to the army, if I declare it to young it will be too young to be taken to the army.' 'And why don't declare the exact birth?' 'Is that true, can I do that?'

Or, if necessary, they would let the boys attend, for a couple of months, a priest school so that they wouldn't be called to the army. This, of course, was valid for the Christians only, not for us. Anyhow, neither my grandfathers nor my father went to the army.

The number of Jews in Thessaloniki was quite high, sixty thousands. Jewish people were quite closely connected among themselves. During the very old days, the ones when I didn't exist yet, the Jews were quite isolated and kept all the religious traditions, despite the fact that they were in the Diaspora. When they left Spain they locked their houses and took the key with them, as they thought they would return.

When Juan Carlos [8](#) came to Thessaloniki, the president of the Jewish community welcomed him in Spanish and said, 'We speak your language, which we carried from that time and we still have our keys of those houses of ours in Spain.'

['Hablamos vuestra lingua que trajimos con mosotros cuanto mos huimos de España, i dainda tenemos las llaves de muestras cazas ay.'] Even today in Spain there are many names like our Jewish names as we also brought them with us from there.

Before the war, it was a world somehow secluded. Not that we didn't have contacts with the Christians. On the contrary. You could see partnerships with one Jewish and on Christian name, and at school we were all together. In conclusion, it was a perfect adaptation.

They would even tell me, 'Yvonne, you know our festivities better than us, and they would add, 'Dominique, who knows when her name day may be?' And I would answer, 'On the 8th of January.'

Schools were closed during the Christian festivities and not ours. In conclusion, the assimilation was exceptionally high. Not that I forgot our own religion, not at all. Even if I wanted to there were my father, my mother, my grandmother etc.

- **During the war**

In that period there were many synagogues [9](#) in Thessaloniki. I remember our synagogue, the Beit Saoul [10](#). It was located one bus stop away from home. It was a very beautiful synagogue on the main street, but to enter it you had to walk a long narrow yard with trees and flowers on the left and on the right side of it, and when you reached the end of this yard you entered the synagogue.

All these synagogues were destroyed during the war and now there is only one synagogue left, the 'big synagogue' as we call it, the 'Monastirioton' [11](#). It is the only one that wasn't destroyed as it became a Red Cross depot. Today, this synagogue, the 'big synagogue' opens only for special events, however in the Modiano market there is the 'small synagogue' [the 'Yad Lezicaron'] which operates normally every day.

Before the war there were many Jewish organizations. I remember the Mizrahi Club [12](#), which was opposite our house on Cyprus Street. They even had a football team. In its localities they organized marriages, bar mitzvahs and it operated during the big festivities.

I remember the brides, the poor ones, coming, and upon the arrival of the bride by car, and while the people were waiting, one would say, 'Aide take the bride for another ride with the car, for who knows when will be her next use of a car.' You see, they were poor girls, servants etc.

Marriages were also held at the Matanot Laevionim [13](#), which means 'presents for the poor.' This was a charitable center that had been erected by my uncle Jacques, my mother's brother. In the basement they were offering, every day, free meals to the poor children, on the first floor marriages were held.

At this place the engagement ceremony as well as the marriage of my uncle Jacques took place. A very nice marriage with live music, an orchestra and all kind of things...

I don't know what this place is used for today. However, I remember that even during the occupation, they were offering free meals to the poor people. It was close to the Mizrahi Club. During that time there also existed a mikveh but I cannot recall where it was.

There were also many Jewish schools. There was the Alliance [14](#), the Talmud Torah for the less wealthy, I think, and also there were the 'Lycée' and the private Jewish schools of Altzeh, Gatenio, and Madame Yehode. The Jews were also going to the American College [15](#), the German school and the Greek private schools of Schina and Valagianni. I don't remember any other schools.

There was the 'Association des Anciens Elèves de l' Alliance Francaise Universelle.'

Also there were many Jewish women welfare organizations because we had a lot of poverty. There were big areas of the city occupied by poor, very poor families. Usually our servants, who were sleeping in our house, came from those areas.

We were very many Jews living in the city, spread all over it. There were no exclusive Jewish quarters. Only the very poor neighborhoods were exclusively Jewish like the '151' [16](#), the '7'... The '151' was located higher than Harilaou, the other was close to the First Army Camps that is higher than Vasilissis Olgas, which was a central avenue.

On top of it was the Army Avenue and higher was an area called 'koulibas,' which means huts. Then there was another area next to the railway station [the Baron Hirsch], which during the occupation became the transport center for the trains that took the Jews to Auschwitz. In conclusion, there were many poor Jewish neighborhoods.

One poor Jewish neighborhood called 'Campbell' [where approximately 220 poor Jewish families lived] had been attacked by the 'EEE' or '3E' [17](#). I remember that all were scared and it was the only subject of discussion. It was a wave of anti-Semitism.

When Venizelos [18](#) came, he brought with him anti-Semitism to Thessaloniki. The organization 'EEE,' which stands for National Union Hellas, had set the neighborhood on fire [19](#). They all said that Venizelos was behind it.

I don't know, but I think that in a country and city where Jews live, giving them an element of civilization, they normally should be well taken care of. Hate is not good. Hate creates hate and violence brings violence. Being soft and good with people brings positive results.

If you behave well towards someone, he will certainly behave well towards you too. We are all together in it. When people are shouting, and someone wants to say something, if he speaks in low tone, immediately the others get silent in order to listen to him. What I mean to say is that people are copying and mimicking what the majority is doing.

The Jews of Thessaloniki covered all possible professions. Many were merchants, others tanners. They were so honest among themselves that it was said they were not asking for receipts. Their word was the receipt. This was said to me by an acquaintance, Mr. Noah, who was a merchant of cotton and wool.

Until once arrived someone who cheated him a big sum, and following this negative experience, he started asking for receipts. He said, 'I didn't want to take receipts, it was the others that forced me to.'

Also the Jews were the ones operating the port of Thessaloniki. They worked as porters, loaders, unloaders, etc. and these are the same people that set up the operation of the Haifa port. They had a particular pack-saddle on which they loaded what they transported. They were divided in different specializations. Specialists for carrying strong boxes, others for lighter loads, and specialists for weights over a hundred and fifty kilograms

I have seen pictures of these porters in the book of Yiannis Megas, 'Memories of the life of Jewish community of Thessaloniki 1897-1917, editions Capon, Athens 1993.' There you can see this particular saddle they were wearing, as also the traditional dress they used [antari]. I also remember house removals executed by using a long thin cart, very big. All the house furniture was loaded on this cart and it was pulled by one or two work-horses.

I remember that there were a number of cars in the city, not many private cars as compared to the taxis. Many taxis. And tram also, for public transport. And many cobbled streets. The big avenue, Vassilisis Olgas, was cobbled. And as the tram was passing on it, it made a huge noise. There were many other cobbled streets as well as many with earth and mud.

My father, Raphael Molho, was the first of ten siblings. Second was Saoul, who was very intelligent and had a lot of humor. When there was an engagement or marriage they would all gather at the grandparents' house. Saoul was the clown of the family.

He survived Auschwitz because he behaved the same way with the Germans. He might have said to them, "Count on me on whatever you want," etc. He was very funny. He would say to his mother, 'Mama sew me a button, please.' 'Amen, I will sew it, go and get married.' 'Mother, should I get married for a single button?' Saoul got married but left his wife and child in Auschwitz. When he returned to Thessaloniki he remarried.

Then there was Gracia who died in Auschwitz, and so did her husband. They had no children.

The fourth child was Jacques. Jacques got married before the war, to a very beautiful girl called Daisy, and went to live in France. He worked in Grenoble, and they had a daughter.

Then there was Charles who lived in Belgium before World War II. He survived Auschwitz and returned to Belgium. He had no children.

The sixth child was Dario who stayed in Thessaloniki, and was deported and murdered in Auschwitz.

Then came the twins, Lisa and Bella. Lisa died in Auschwitz with her two children, while Bella had left earlier for Israel, then Palestine. She died there in 1980.

The youngest brother, Alberto, survived Auschwitz but left there his wife and two daughters. When he returned he remarried and had a son called Joseph.

There was also Mois, who had committed suicide for romantic reasons, but I know nothing more about him.

Both my father and his brothers and sisters graduated from the German School of Thessaloniki, which was a private school. Out of my uncles four came back from the concentration camps in Germany, because they knew the German language.

Before the war, the Jews of Thessaloniki were very fond of Germany. Most families would get a 'Schwester,' that is, a sister/governess, in their houses from Germany. Of course this changed later....

My mother is Erietta, nee Moshe. In her family there were two sisters and two brothers, Jacques, Mario, Erietta and Sylvia. One of my uncles, Jacques Moshe, was very well known as he was the best engineer in Greece. My grandfather had brought to his home a 'Schwester' – Gelda was her name I believe – whose husband had died in World War I in 1914, and she was the teacher of the children at my mother's house.

If there is a reason that my mother got out of the Haidari camp, a prison in Athens – because she was caught – as well as my grandfather, my grandmother and Uncle Jacques, it was because of the knowledge of the German language.

My mother had gone to school at the Alliance. I think that schooling lasted three years at the time. They were taught sewing, housekeeping, and then they arranged to get them married.

My mother was friends with the twin sisters of my father, Lisa and Bella. This is how she got to know my father. My father was working with his own father, and he also had his own big land, 'tsiflic,' from the Turks.

My grandfather constructed for my mother's marriage in 1917 a set of very good furniture. And then came the big fire of Thessaloniki in 1917 [20](#) and all was burned. Of course the marriage wasn't postponed. So after the marriage my grandfather made new furniture for his daughter.

When they got married they first bought an apartment overlooking the sea like in Venice. Right in front of it, the waters were deep, so my mother used to put us in a rowboat and we were going opposite to Alexander the Great, where the waters were shallow and people were swimming, and we would also swim with our mother.

I was born in the month of June and when I was two months old, Mother must have taken me into the sea to swim. Later both my sister and myself, when we had whooping cough, and as they said that the sea would be good for us, my mother kept on taking us swimming with the boat. At this particular house there was a common yard that we shared with the apartment next door. Jews, very good people. They do not exist any more.

Also, on the other side lived Sonia Petridou, whose origins were from Russia, divorced with two children, who wasn't on speaking terms with us. I'm not sure whether she was divorced or not, but we never saw a husband. One evening she was very sick, so her daughter Milia, who was the same age as my sister, came to us and called in the night, 'Mrs. Errieti, Mrs. Errieti, please come.'

And my mother called the doctor and stayed next to her continuously for two days until she got well. After that Sonia told her, 'I never thought that you Jews were like that.' She came from Russia and it seems they had anti-Semitism there. Anyhow, after that incident they became good friends.

We left this house when I was six years old because it was very cold and my mother suffered from rheumatism. I remember we didn't have parquet, that is wooden flooring but tarpaulin, and as the wind, the northern wind of Thessaloniki called Vardaris, was blowing, we could see the tarpaulin pieces moving. So we left that place and went to live at my grandmother's.

Their house was also close to the sea. First there was the sea, then Queen Olga Avenue, and right after it was Cyprus Street and the Archaeological Museum Street perpendicular to Cyprus Street and Queen Olga Avenue.

The street where we lived started at Archaeological Museum Street and ended at Karaiskaki Street. The area was called 'Pate - Phaliro' and where it was situated, I could get out of the house, on the balcony, and see the sea right in front of me.

Cyprus Street was not a big street. It was a residential street. It had nine or ten houses, and in every house on each floor lived one family. In the house next door, which had three floors, lived three families. Only in our house, on two floors, it was just us, while normally it could have accommodated two families. We stayed in this house quite a long time, almost all our life.

The house was facing Cyprus Street, but its back part, the garage where Uncle Jacques was parking his car, was facing the street in the back, Broufa Street. In the front was the good big door, which was the door we used to enter.

However, there was another door, a smaller one, with a corridor that led to the kitchen. This is the door that the grocer used when he was bringing us our shopping.

A characteristic of this house was the quantity of honeysuckle. Honeysuckle covered the two pillars on which the door was hanging, and there was so much that sometimes we had difficulties to fully open this door. The house was dubbed 'the house with the honeysuckle.' In the morning, when I was leaving for school, it smelled so intensely and from such a distance that I kept its smell in my nostrils all day long.

Upon entering there was a straight surface, on the left a small garden and the marble escalator with its handrail covered with honeysuckle. The house was full of its smell. One bedroom was facing this small garden and the other two bedrooms were looking at the back port. The kitchen was facing the yard where there was also honeysuckle.

Next to the garage there was a house where some friends of ours lived. They were Jews that lived in the city of Kavala. The father was a tobacco merchant and they would come for a few days and stay at his mother's house in Thessaloniki. I met these people later in Athens and we became good friends.

With the older brother of this family – he does not live anymore – we were playing together. He died in a car accident. Back then we were playing ball. It was not usual at all, playing ball from balcony to balcony, we could have broken window-panes, of course, so the parents would shout at us, but it was fun.

Also, this home of ours shared a common wall with the home of my grandmother's brother, which was also a two-story house. Inside our house on the wall, next to the escalator, we had opened a big hole in the wall, like a door, and we could come and go from our home to the home of my mother's uncle and aunt.

The uncle was called Jacob Florentin, but we called him 'Pasha,' which is a Turkish word, because he was very handsome. His wife was Aunt Esterina and they had five children, two boys and three girls. The oldest one, Sylvia got married at the age of 14 in Paris. She only died three years ago.

I loved her very much. The oldest son, Mevo, went to the army and the other son, Leon, was sent to Israel [then Palestine] when he was very young, to the first farm school, during the British Mandate, that was around 1933.

The second daughter, Jeanne, was the same age as my older sister. They were also sharing the same milk as both mothers took turns in breast feeding the two girls. The youngest one, Dolly, was two or three years younger than me, so we were growing up all together.

Each Sunday we were playing 'tombola.' I still remember the pieces and when it was piece 22 my uncle would shout, 'Ducklings, suckling,' and when it was the 11, 'Wood nails, wood nails.' Wood nails were those small thin wooden nails used to repair high quality shoes.

I remember my mother and Mrs. Soli and Mrs. Regina playing cards in the afternoons. Mother had many friends, who she knew through Grandmother, as Grandmother also liked to play cards and they were gathering at her place to play. Father didn't know and never played cards. Neither did Grandfather. But Grandmother did, she liked it. She was a gambler.

Our house was a family home. Of course, with the many brothers my father had, we organized big dinners on the holidays. It was a custom at those dinners to have 'uevos enchaminados,' eggs cooked in the oven. We put them in the oven all night, as today we do with a casserole.

We cover the bottom of the casserole with dry onion leaves, tea, coffee, pepper and salt and then we put a layer of eggs and then again onions etc. and again add some olive oil and we let them boil for six or seven hours.

These eggs come out brown on the outside, and brownish like marble inside and have a special taste. These eggs were normally prepared on the high holidays such as Pesach, Rosh Hashanah, but even on ordinary days, as to some they are irresistible.

Another custom we had on Pesach and Rosh Hashanah was to exchange visits. My father would visit all the family and all the relatives would visit us with their children and we exchanged eggs. We would visit the other homes and return with eggs in our pockets. This was the custom.

I also remember that on Yom Kippur we were supposed to fast. My mother would bring us chestnuts, as it was their season, and would say, 'Children, if you get hungry eat the chestnuts but do it in secret.' So my friends Mendi Hassid, myself and Dolly from the next house would sit secretly together, clean the chestnuts, powder them with sugar and eat them. We would call them 'the grandfather.' I can't remember why.

At home the language we were speaking was Spanish, or Judeo-Espanol, but also French and Greek. My parents, however, when they wanted to share a secret would use German, which we didn't understand.

We also had a servant at home, to help with the housework. The only thing she never did was to cook, as this was the job of my mother and my grandmother. The ladies would cook as they didn't do much more. They didn't go out either; they would cook in big stoves like fireplaces with the ash falling down.

In the bathroom we had a water-heater operating with wood and in the winter we would heat the rooms with beautiful wood burning porcelain stoves, which were manufactured in Vienna. We had two such stoves, one of them was very big and you could lift the cover to heat cheese pies and other things.

At that time we would eat mostly pies. The traditional meal, even on Friday evening, was a pie. Cheese pie, eggplant pie, etc. One of these two stoves is now at my niece's house.

When I was young I was taken care of by my grandmother and my mother. My father was very good but rather strict. As for me, I was very energetic, a monster!

The Jews of Thessaloniki were good husbands and family men. Even now I hear Christians saying, 'I would very much like a Jew as husband for my daughter.' The importance of family was highly appreciated by the Jews of Thessaloniki. The men would become good husbands and the women good mothers.

Now, of course, things have changed, as there has been a lot more elastic attitudes, but in that period we were living all together; my grandmother Molho, for example, would certainly pay a visit

to our place at least twice a week.

In that period there was no telephone. It is worth mentioning that when Grandmother wanted to pay a visit to a relative, we would have to send a person, usually the grocer who was carrying our shopping, to pass the news for the forthcoming visit. There was no other way.

We installed our telephone at home in 1934. I remember once we called from Thessaloniki to Athens, as my uncle, Jacques, the engineer, also had an office in Athens and was traveling a lot. He had many construction sites in Thessaloniki like the Macedonian Studies building, the Mediterranean Hotel and others, many, many. So once we called Athens – via a telephone center and an operator, of course.

I was eight years old at the time and I remember that all the adults were very impressed. My mother and grandmother would say to everyone, 'We did it, we talked with Athens.' The also wrote about this news to Aunt Sylvia in Spain.

What a celebration! At that time, the most someone could do was to send a telegram, and the telegram was mostly used in order to inform people unexpected – of sudden news, like a death, an engagement, etc.

My father, I remember, would read French books. My mother didn't read very much. They would both go to the Mizrachi club which was opposite our house and would be open for example on Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah. As for myself I wouldn't go with them to the synagogue, we didn't go very often. I remember going many times to the Beit Saoul synagogue for marriages though.

My parents were not involved with political parties as politics didn't enter our house. Of course they always were conservatives, never leftists. I believe the only club my father would go is Alliance and this is, by itself, impressive as he had graduated from the German school.

When I was a kid I played a lot. Always with boys. We used to play 'thieves and policemen' for example, in our second home on Cyprus Street. I was always playing the policeman and of course my knees were continuously wounded. At the Hirsch Hospital [21](#), now it's called the Hippocratio Hospital, they knew me very well as I was a frequent visitor, once to have the one leg stitched, next time the other etc.

In that period we were frequently going to Aidipsos for baths, since the hot springs there were considered very healthy. We would first go by boat to Volos. The boat would stop at the Volos port for loading and we would go for a walk, using a small train, and then we would return to the boat, when it was loaded, and it would then take us to Aidipsos. There was no other way of going there at that time. Upon arrival there, the porter would come to carry our belongings and we would walk to the hotel.

In Thessaloniki we didn't go to restaurants, we would normally stay at home, while my parents would rarely go the movies or to an evening party organized by an uncle. It was a rather conservative family life and there were almost no restaurants. I remember one restaurant called 'Olympus-Naoussa.'

To the movies we were going quite frequently in Thessaloniki. Many cinemas, after the film, would also have theatrical performances. There was the Apollo [at the eastern port of the city], the

Alexander the Great [a music hall – night club by the sea at 62, Queen Olga Avenue]. I only remember these two.

I remember my mother saying to everyone that she would go to the theater to see ‘Dybbuk’ by An-ski [22](#), and she went to see it twice with my father.

Alexander the Great was by the sea, where we were going to swim. As there was no mixed swimming then, boys were swimming with boys and girls with girls. During the summer, Alexander the Great had also a stage.

Many famous actors and actresses, all the big names, would come to perform, like Hero Hatza and others whose names I don’t remember. When I grew up and came to live in Athens, when I saw them, in local theater performances, I recognized them, as I had seen them before in Thessaloniki, but had not kept their names in mind. Hero Hatzas, [Kyriacos] Mavreas, and many others.

They played ‘Les deux orphelines,’ [by A. Ph. Dennery, 1897]. I was insistent, asking my mother continuously, to take me to see it but she refused. Finally she gave in and took me to see it, and I was crying throughout the duration of the play, as I remember.

In Thessaloniki at that time there were no theatrical groups or actors, but theatrical companies would visit the city as part of their tour. This is happening today too, theatrical tours to Thessaloniki. Mesologgitis would come to play and he would make us laugh very much. I don’t remember other theaters, only these two.

I also remember, Palace [23](#), at the old quay, which was a cinema, and so was Ilysia. There was also the Pathé, which was very close to where we lived in Phaliron and Constantinidi Street. The street has this name as earlier the Constantinides School was located there. Today the School of the Blind and a baby nursery are in its place.

Very close was also the French nursery school called ‘The children of the Lycée.’ I went there for a year because it was very close to our house at the Constantinidis bus station.

For elementary school I went to the Jewish school in order to acquire the principles. We had various lessons, religion too. We learned about Ruth, the sacrifice of Abraham, the fat and the thin cows. Everything was taught in the Greek language, but two hours a week we also had Hebrew. We also had French every day as this language was spoken as frequently as Greek.

Out of my teachers I remember Miss Paula who was teaching us Greek. Later, when I was in the third or fourth grade, she was appointed by the state and left. We also had house keeping, needlecraft, drawing, painting, things like that. We also had history of the Greek Revolution, Composition and all the other lessons.

Only in the morning we would say our own prayer, ‘Shema Israel.’ I remember our Hebrew teacher, who had a wooden ruler, and when he asked something we didn’t know he hit us with the ruler straight on the nail.

After the elementary school I took exams to go to the gymnasium, the secondary school.

I went to the 2nd Girls’ Gymnasium which was a public school. It was a very good school, not only in terms of teaching. There were many girls from good families, but also poor girls like the

daughters of the launderers and others... We had classmates from all sort of origins.

I was a good student and never had problems with my professors. After Rika Coulandrou, I was the second of my class with regards to my academic excellence. Rika is also a microbiologist and now lives in Psychiko. Her marital name is now Constandinidou.

After many years she told me that while at school she had felt anxiety that I would surpass her, because we were almost equal in performance.

I had another classmate, Kate Palaisti, who was a niece of the great singer Marica Palaisti; I remember her very well as she always had a runny nose. This Kate I met many, many years later in New York through my nephew Laki Reccanati, who lives there. It is a long story... And I met some other classmates again too, like Danai, whom I found quite recently, and it was a happy occasion as I remembered the past.

I also remember best friend Vouli, who got married to Bassias, a radiologist in Thessaloniki. Another friend of mine is the daughter of the doorkeeper, not a close friend but a friend. She also got married to a very good doctor in Heracleio Athens, or South Patissia.

We talk on the phone from time to time. This is the right thing to do, that is, to keep in touch and be on rided neither in your thinking nor on your judgment.

I have to admit that as a trained doctor I never took notice getting into a poor or rich house. I never made a distinction. I always looked at the person, what he or she was never mattered and was left out, and this is how things should be. I did the same thing with my son, exactly as I had been taught by my grandfather.

I remember in first and second grade of the gymnasium we went to the parade. We went next to the beach, where there's a street for cars now, while at that time it was only for walking - 25th March Street.

We had a pass for the bus, paying half the fare, we would pay for a semester or a whole year, so that we didn't have to carry money for transport but just had to show our pass to the bus-driver.

Opposite our school was the 5th Gymnasium for Boys and there were many handsome boys there. As for me, I was rather young, but we had the intelligent ones, the 'vivid' as we called them. What vivid, it is crap. They were only looking in the eyes, this was the vividness. So as we were passing in front of the boys' gymnasium and going towards the waterfront the boys would call us, 'One two, one two. Chest out, the first one, chest out.'

Except for school I was also attending the music school and the English institute. The institute was at Aristotelous Place, where we were going by tram and when we finished we were together going to Flocaki, a patisserie which started in Thessaloniki and today is a chain all over Greece, to eat a pastry. Back then there was the Flocas and the little Floca, the Flocaki as we called it, which was located in a small street, Agiou Minas Street, in the center of Thessaloniki.

remember some particular pastries called 'Plaisir des Dames' which were round. Actually it was a roll with chocolate outside and cream chocolate filling. The sweets at Flocas were rather small as compared to other more popular sweet-makers whose sweets were huge.

I was very impressed when I went to the United States, to Astoria, the Greek center, where I got into a pastry shop called 'The White Tower.' It reminded me very much those neighborhood pastry shops with pastries as big as a plate, while at Flocas pastries were small and elegant.

The music school was at the grounds of the International Fair of Thessaloniki [24](#). It was easy to go there on foot. I recall that when I started going there, my mother knew every detail of what I was doing there and I kept wondering how my mother managed to learn everything in detail.

Once, while visiting my Molho grandmother, I saw Aunt Gracia talking to Mr. Karantsis, who was the director of the music school. He was living next to my grandmother and aunt, and then I knew how my mother was so well informed. I was about nine years old at that time. Those years were very good, I also had friends from the music school and my teacher there was Mrs. Emily, who was a Jew.

And later I was a member of the mixed chorus of Mr. Floros and once we sang at the Palace theater house that song which says 'Alleluia.' Kaufman sang solo the 'Ave Maria' and we accompanied her. At that time there were two piano schools; one was Margarite's and the other Kaufman's, who was a German Jew. The Kaufman that sang solo was his daughter. The performance was very beautiful, and I still have vivid memories of it.

We even got an award. Where is this award? Well, we left [during the Holocaust] and what did we find afterwards? Nothing! We had given things to people to hide for us, and when we returned my mother would see the same things at their houses but they would say, 'There is nothing left, they took everything from us.' What to say.

The best of all was that we were girl scouts. Every Saturday we gathered at the YMCA. The place where recently, in September 2005, there was a big fire. I was a girl scout and we were all divided in four groups, the leader and the deputy leader. The group I was in was called 'Amarantos.' We were six girl scouts and our chief was Lena Zanna, the mother of Samaras, a Greek politician and granddaughter of Delta [25](#).

How much did I wish for Saturday to arrive. We did a lot of things. We played detection games; we did our good deed every month, carrying flour and sugar to a poor family. Small things, but they wanted to teach to us how to help, to offer help to our fellow humans.

My clover-leaf had the number 124. 124, I was on the second team that Mrs. Zanna, the daughter of Mrs. Delta, was the trustee of and so was Mrs. Syndika. I was always carrying this clover-leaf with me, for it to bring me good luck, in all my examinations at university. The clover-leaf and a teddy bear.

As I mentioned before, my father was strict. My parents didn't permit me to go to parties. Right opposite our house was 'Radio Tsiggiridi.' This was the first radio station in Thessaloniki, once I was invited to a party there by the son of the Tsiggiridi family.

My father refused to give me permission. This same son, Tsiggiridi, I met a few years ago in Athens, at a tea party he had at his place. That's when I remembered this little episode.

My father also didn't give me permission to go for an excursion with the girl scouts. They had planned to go to Lake Doirani. I went to bed early and left the blinds open so that the morning sun

would wake me up.

However, my father came in at night and shut the blinds. That's how I woke up late and missed the excursion. You see, we were not going on big excursion at school, so I had been looking forward to this one with very high expectations.

At school we were going for walks, to Aretsou. Once with the girl scouts we even went to Perea. I spent long hours in the sun and got sunburned, I returned home red from the sunburn. I was a very energetic child, a monster; if I had been in my father's place, I would have been as strict as him.

However, I was permitted to go to the movies. Uncle Dario, who later died in Auschwitz, had a cinema of his own. So he gave me a permit, a 'passe partout,' to get in the cinema free of charge.

This way I would take with me a friend and we would get in without paying. At 2 o'clock the screening started. When I could, I would go at 4 o'clock, that is from 4 to 6, but my mother always knew. I had her permission as at that time I was only 14 years old.

I didn't graduate from the gymnasium in Thessaloniki, as it closed during the war and I came here, to Athens. After the schools opened we covered three school years in three months so that we wouldn't lose out on time. I really was 'illiterate,' all those lessons I read later on my own, and following those three months of schooling I got into the medical school in 1943.

At the declaration of the war with the Italians [26](#) we were in Thessaloniki. I remember that despite the fact that I was a young girl, I went to the hospital and asked to work there as a volunteer. As I had won the first award of the girl scouts in first aid I had the impression to have won the entire world.

When the doctor saw me, a girl that young, well, what could he tell me? He said, 'We want volunteers, but for the time being we are not that desperate and when we will really need you we will inform you.' And I was left in deep sorrow to return home.

I said to myself, now with the schools closed, unemployment etc. what can I do? So I learned how to knit and started going to the rabbi's wife with another 15 ladies to knit pullovers for the army. In the beginning I knitted straight but later I also learned to knit with five needles for gloves and seamless socks, so that they would be smooth to the skin.

When the Italians declared the war, bombings started. Our houses, which were made of stone, were not that strongly built and couldn't survive a bombing. So we decided to build an air raid shelter. This shelter was on the lower floor.

It was a corridor that led from the servant's room to the kitchen, and this door we closed, my uncle put reinforced concrete cement and I don't know what else. The people living next door were also coming to this shelter. In order to deal with our fear my parents would say, 'We have no fear because if the bomb falls at the front side of the shelter we will come out from the back side.' I really think that had a bomb fell upon us everything would have come down. My aunt would not come, as she had moved to a house in front of the sea.

With the bombings we decided to come to Athens in 1941. My grandfather, my mother and myself. Especially since during the summer, while we were at Aidipsos, happened the incident with the

navy ship 'Elli,' which was bombed and sunk.

My grandmother was already in Athens, at my uncle Mario's, as she had decided not to go to Paris for her yearly gynecological treatment, but chose Athens instead. She had even taken my sister with her. This way we all met here, in Athens.

When we left for Athens from Thessaloniki, it was during the Albanian war, and the trains were carrying the army, so we took a bus. It was grandfather, my mother and myself. It was an old bus with 16 seats, and we got into it, twenty persons, Jews as well as Christians.

The Germans had not arrived yet. We left early one Tuesday morning in March, and we arrived in Athens on Friday in the afternoon. It took us over three days for such a short trip.

It was then that a small earthquake shook Larissa and our driver almost fell asleep on the steering wheel. They would wake him up and shout at him, so that he wouldn't fall asleep, but they insisted that he wouldn't stop at Larissa due to the tremor. Thursday night we slept in Thiva, in a hotel full of bugs and fleas.

Early on Friday morning we heard the sirens as the city was bombarded, and we left and it took us five hours to reach Athens. Can you imagine it, five hours to Athens from Thiva? At the end of our trip we saw the Acropolis and couldn't believe it in our joy.

And another thing: we had paid four or five golden sovereigns per person for the whole trip, and all during this trip I was traveling on my mother's knees. I don't remember how many 'kokorakia, small roosters' I swallowed during this trip – this was the word we used for aspirins.

When we arrived in Athens, we were accommodated at my Uncle Mario's place, who lived on Ploutarchou Street in Kolonaki, from March to September. Uncle Jacques was staying on the top floor, the penthouse, on Kriezotou Street, but it was a very small place. In April the Germans entered and occupied Athens, and they set up camp on Ploutarchou Street.

At that point in time the racist legislation had not been passed yet, so we had no problem. We even talked on the phone with my father in Thessaloniki. He wouldn't come to Athens. He would say, 'I have my job to take care of, my brothers too, we will see, I will come later.'

We stayed here, in Athens, and made two big efforts to arrange for my father to come here: once with a boat owner and once with the help of a policeman. Unfortunately he was arrested in a roadblock two hours before departing for Athens. He was taken to Auschwitz and never came back.

In April we rented a furnished apartment at Ypsilantou 41 and Marasli Street, which was very close to my uncle Mario's on Ploutarchou and Ypsilandou Street. It was a small apartment with an entrance, a bathroom to the right and the sitting room and a dining room.

The kitchen could be shut out and didn't look like kitchen. It was the first time that I saw such a thing, like a sliding cupboard that would shut the kitchen out. The bedroom that my grandparents were using had a balcony looking out on Ypsilantou Street.

We were the only ones that also had a stove and when it was very cold the neighbors would come to warm up. On the floors there were carpets. In front of my grandparents' room was a storage space under the floor, where we would put our suitcases etc. In this storage space I was saved

later.

My sister had been hiding with the Karounidis family, who were ship-owners, while I went to a house in Pangrati to baby-sit a child. However, I didn't stay as the man of the family behaved with what we describe today as sexual harassment, and this is why I left within a week and returned home. After I left, I stayed at my aunt's so that I could be with my cousin May.

This is when my uncle learned about the new racist legislation, so we left and hid in Agia Paraskevi. There, there was a farm, but as we were afraid that the local people had understood that we were hiding, we left and went to stay at Tavros. The house was owned by the aunt of Koula, the Christina fiancée of the son of Nissim, who lived in Paris.

But even there, my uncle recognized somebody working at a neighboring farm, who used to work at a grocery shop in Kolonaki, and so we were forced to move from there too. I went back to our apartment, my uncle hid close to the Acropolis and my aunt with her daughter May, who had finished German studies in Dresden, Germany, found a job as an in-house teacher of German for the child of some lady. As for myself, I once again had to find a place to hide.

My uncle Mario had a friend called Aristotelis Stamatiadis, who was working at the Ionian Popular Bank. He sent me to a friend of his in Ekali, I remember I went in the morning to the bank wearing a scarf and looking down so that nobody would recognize me.

Mr. Stamatiadis took me to Mr. Telemachos Apostolopoulos, the bank manager. He died recently, at the age of 104, and he was included on the list of the Righteous Among the Nations [27](#) by Yad Vashem [28](#).

His sister, Toula, was the secretary of the National Bank manager, but she had been transferred to the office of Archbishop Damaskinos [29](#). Damaskinos was a 'shelter,' protecting whatever you could imagine: communists, New Zealanders, who had fought with Australians and Greeks against the Germans, when Germany invaded Greece, Jews etc.

My G-d how much he helped us [the interviewee starts crying]. I put myself in his position and ask myself would I risk as much as Archbishop Damaskinos did or Toula, or Memis, Telemachos. It happened because we were facing the same enemy, or maybe it is because we Greeks are great souls.

This is how I went to live in Ekali and I had with me the Physics books, as this was the only subject left from my first year's exams. The professors was Mr. Hondros, he was a special man with great courage.

On 25th March, the national holiday, when we were not in hiding yet, he had gathered a group of us, students, and we went to the Hero's Tomb to crown it, with a garland made of grass and herbs. We also sang the national anthem, and when the Italians realized what was going on they came after us and hit us in order to force us to scatter.

This house in Ekali was a three-story villa belonging to Mrs. Apostolopolou's daughter who, in order to keep away the Germans, who could have requisitioned it, somehow managed to get a medical diagnosis, saying that she was suffering from psychological neurological problems and that it was me who would be occupied as governess there. There was also a gardener and a young girl for

doing small jobs. It was good there.

Opposite there were some houses, where another Jewish family was hiding, with two children, but they weren't very smart, as every Sunday they had a party. Once I had heard the lady talking in the street to her children and saying, 'This is not possible, these kids, I am unable to get used to your new names!' That's how I knew they were Jews.

However the gardener, who at the same time was like a porter, going from one house to the other, he knew all the details and spilled them out, and he informed us about the party and what sort of meatballs the people next door cooked.

Mrs. Apostolopoulou would always say to him, 'And what do we care about all these details Kostas?' And then he informed us that the Antoniadou family were Jews in reality and their last name was Levi and this was a piece of information given to him very confidentially.

Throughout the occupation I very rarely went to see my mother. On 27th January I went to see them. When I visited I would normally sleep at Mrs. Maria Papadimouli's place, next door.

My family lived at 41 Ypsilandtou Street, while they stayed at No. 39. Mr. Papadimoulis was a pharmacist at the Evagelismos hospital, while Mrs. Maria was making orthopedic corsets. They were good people and neighbors and, as I said, when I was visiting my family I stayed for the night at their place.

On that particular night of 27th January, my mother told me, 'Yvonne, there is a party in the neighborhood tonight, there will be people coming and going and you will certainly be seen. And of course they will ask why you are here, so why go? You will stay here.'

I went to make my bed and Mother told me, 'Leave it, we will share the same bed, we will talk and hold each other.' I agreed. That was the night that the diplomatic relations between Argentina and Germany broke down. My family were Argentinean subjects but with faulty papers. At midnight the bell rang.

The sixth sense of my mother saved us. Had I been on a bed by myself, when the Germans came looking into our house, even if I had had the time to hide, a used, lukewarm bed would have given me away. This way we rushed, opened the storage space under the floor, I hid in it and my mother put the carpet on top.

My family didn't open the door immediately in order to give me time to hide my belongings. And so, when the Germans came in, who in the meantime had rung many other doorbells, they didn't find me. I stayed in this hiding place for two and a half hours, and throughout this time I was praying silently.

That night, the Germans had gone to other apartments too. First they went to Admiral Petroheilos, who was new to the block of apartments and didn't know us. Then they went to Mr. Litsos as Mr. Petroheilos sent them to him. After him they came to us: 'Are you the Moshe family? You are under arrest as the diplomatic relations between Argentina and Germany have broken down.'

They went into my grandparents' room, stepping on the top cover of the hiding place I was in, and I could hear their steps: 'Bam boom, bam boom, made their boots!' At some moment I heard my

grandmother asking, 'Where will you take us?' and he replied, 'Tonight to a palace and tomorrow to Germany.'

This 'tomorrow to Germany' was actually the Haidari concentration camp where they stayed for seven months. I also remember the Germans telling them, 'Whatever you have with you, furs, jewelry etc. take it with you as it is cold out there.'

My mother pretended to wear some gloves and as she was wearing some rings, she threw them into the gloves and saved them, and as she had also her jewelry, she was informing me, and so did my grandfather, in Spanish of what exactly they were doing. 'Yvonne, here I place some papers'...and this and that... and mother said, 'All the jewelry is in the little beige bag of mine, and I put it behind the bathtub.'

Anyhow, they took grandfather and grandmother. 'Ai, Ai,' I thought to myself, 'they are going to hit my mother.' But it was not like that. They had come with a small car, a Fiat 500, so they couldn't fit in all of them. So they left my mother with the interpreter. This Greek ruffian, the traitor who was speaking Greek!

As my mother got into the room she saw him opening the drawers of a commode. 'What are you doing there,' shouted my mother, 'you didn't come to search our place, you came to arrest us, so shut it immediately.'

Mother had her own ways, you see. And then I heard mother calling out to the neighbor, 'Mrs. Maria, the three of us are leaving, so please keep an eye on the apartment.' Mrs. Maria, of course, knew very well that I was in there. Anyhow, I waited for an hour and I heard steps on the escalator.

It was Mr. Litsos, the landlord, who was coming down ... the staircase was wooden. He was fond of Germans as he had studied in Germany and worked for the Germans. He went out to see the German stamp outside the house. Earlier I had heard my mother saying that after stamping the house, they would also cut the power.

I waited, and waited for Litsos to go and came out of my hiding place with great difficulty, as it had been stuck from the Germans walking on it. I came out like a snake and was still scared that they would see me. I got dressed in the dark, because I was afraid there might be a German guard outside the house.

Opposite our place lived a girl whose father was English and her mother was German. This way they had very good relations with both the English and the Germans. So I went to her and told her, "could I please bring you some stuff for hiding"?

My mother had a suitcase, this suitcase had been brought from Thessaloniki and it was full of things, my sister's dowry, and what not. So I took the suitcase and without opening the door, it was the basement, I got out the window with the suitcase.

Earlier the Germans had insisted to lock the door leading to the balcony as it looked onto Ypsilandou Street and my grandfather had said, 'I will do it,' and he locked it and then quickly unlocked it again and said to them, 'Now the house is properly locked and here is the key, which I give to you.' And in Spanish he added, for me to hear, 'The door is open, so you will jump from the balcony.'

So I came out of the kitchen window and went to the girl next door, who had already agreed to accept the things. I left the suitcase and went to bring more stuff and when I returned I found all my things outside, and the girl informing me that her mother was afraid that 'if the Germans would come to search they will think we are dealers of stolen goods.',

In short that they cannot accept them. So I responded OK, and took all these thing and gave them to Mrs. Maria. Well, at some point we moved from that place, Mrs. Maria never gave them back to us, what to do.

I stayed at Mrs. Maria's up to six in the morning and left. I took Ypsilandu Street, then Ploutarchou and wanted to inform my sister that the family had been caught. At Ploutarchou Street, to the right, were the 'Goblet' is now, was a bakery that had a telephone. At that period all bakers were very severe. Anyhow I informed my sister and went back to Ekali where I was usually hiding.

My sister was issued with a Christian identity card as [Angelos] Evert [30](#), the [Athens] police chief, had given to everyone false papers. I don't know how many golden sovereigns the false papers cost.

Later, when I went to the Fix family I learned details about the location of my mother and my grandparents. All these details we learned from Soeur Hélène, a nun who frequently came to the Fix family as they were helping us. They would send food to the people in hiding etc. and she had been allowed to enter the Haidari camp and this is how she learned that my mother was there.

My mother had learned about me from a friend of my sister. She arranged to escape and leave for the Middle East. Many went to the Middle East at that time. However, the guy who was paid the golden sovereigns to let them go betrayed them so they were caught, taken back to the Haidari camp and finally were sent to Auschwitz where she was killed.

Her name was Daisy Saltiel, and she was married to Carasso. When they first caught them they were taken to Haidari camp. Since Daisy was in touch with my sister, she learned what happened to me and this is how my mother learned it too.

For long months my mother would wait every midnight, when the police van would arrive and she would climb up to look out from the small window high up in her cell to see if they were unloading my sister or me. It also was from Daisy that she learned that I had come out of the hiding place under the floor and was safe.

In the neighborhood where I was staying, there was a guy called Spanopoulos, who had rented a house there and was occupied with gardening and who, during the winter, was occupied with delivering heating carbon. It seems that in February the people next door didn't have the money to pay for the carbon and he betrayed them to the Germans.

Some day in February, maybe a month after they had caught my mother, they came to knock at my door: a German, a Greek ruffian and a translator. When I opened, the Greek asked me where Spanopoulos stayed. I told him.

Normally I should have recognized the fat guy, as he was the same that had come to arrest my family at our place in Ploutarchou. However, at that moment I didn't think anything bad, I must have had some sort of peculiar reaction, hit by the February sun, and I thought of nothing bad. I

said to myself, they may want to confiscate something.

Five minutes later comes the gardener and tells me, 'Ioanna, the Germans are at the Levi's place, they are hitting them and telling them that if they betray the other Jews hiding here they will leave their children alone.' I cut him short and ask him, 'And what do I care about it, Kostas?' The Levi family didn't betray me; it was the Christian servant who had been taking care of the kids all their lives, who betrayed me.

So I leave the house and go on foot to the other side of Ekali, phoned my sister and asked her to find Apostolopoulos and inform them on what had happened. She didn't find them and upon returning I found Mrs. Maria out of control: 'Oh what did my son do to me.' And things like that and that the Germans are looking for me. I went into the room and when I tried to get out I realized she had locked me in, so I got out through the balcony.

I returned to the same grocery shop with the telephone and called again my sister who had managed to get in touch with Apostolopoulos. She informed me that I should leave immediately. I don't know where I found the courage, but I returned to the house, collected my belongings and left.

As the night was approaching and the buses were not that frequent, I went through the meadow, after that to the public road and there I asked a passing van to give me a lift to Athens where, supposedly, my sister was giving birth.

So I returned back home and once again they found me another job, not as a servant but as a slave. The husband had lost a big fortune, he was suffering from neurasthenia and he was sleeping with a bayonet in his hand. The house was also rather big, and the work there was very hard. I stayed until May. Then they found me another job as a chambermaid, cook and child minder of two kids.

On 18th May I presented myself to the Fix family, opposite Zapeio, but we immediately left to go to their farm in Magoufana [today Pefki]. I had a very nice time with them and we are still friends. They even gave me a false identity card, from the ones that Evert was issuing. My false name was Ioanna Marinopoulou.

My mother, while she was in Haidari, was a needlewoman. As she knew how to make clothes, all the girls of the Athens high society who were with the resistance, would come to my mother and say, 'Mrs. Molho, give us something to sew.' And she would give them a button here, a fastener there.

You see, in the morning, the Germans would empty the Jewish houses from clothing and in the evening they would bring these clothes to Haidari, to be repaired and then sent to Germany to be used by them.

Even my uncle Jacques Moshe was taken to Haidari and immediately made to work as an engineer. My grandfather in 1940 was 65-70 years old, I don't remember exactly. Since my uncle was an engineer he took his father to work for him as an office hand, to have him close to him as he was old. He took him as an office hand in jail too. They stayed there for seven months and were liberated on 14th September 1944.

I remember that day very clearly. It was the day of the Holy Cross, 14th September, I had taken the kids, two and four years old, to Zapeion for a walk and when I returned home Mrs. Fix told me, 'Ioanna, please sit down. Your mother and grandfather telephoned.' 'Are they alive?' 'Of course they are alive. They came out today.'

As soon as the Germans left, the gates were opened and they came out. They were all put in a van and they unloaded them at Omonia Square.' 'And where is mother?'

The house at Ypsilantou Street had been rented. However, Uncle Jacques had built a block of apartments at Academias and Amerikis Street. Starting from Omonia he went to his place at Kriezotou Street and he put up my family in an apartment in this block of apartments.

I will never forget my first visit to see them there. My mother was wearing some shoes which were not shoes, tied all over with ropes. It was very peculiar, some things here, some small pigtails. My uncle, who suffered from diabetes and while in jail couldn't keep his diet, his legs were very, very thin like straws. And they all wore short pants. My grandfather wearing short pants! I was shocked. I looked at them and did not recognize them.

The city of Athens was liberated from the Germans in October [Editor's note: Athens was liberated on 12th October 1944]. I don't know why they abandoned the Haidari camp in September; thank G-d they didn't shoot them.

After the liberation, I stayed with the Fix family for quite some time. I wanted to see where I stood. I wanted and liked to stay there, I felt as if I were at home. Later when I restarted the university I left. All my family, except for my grandmother, returned to Thessaloniki. We learned about my father, my uncles, my aunts, their children, two hundred and twenty members of my family had been murdered.

My father had stayed in Thessaloniki because he was saying, 'I have to collect things, do my job.' And uncle Jacques, a well known figure in town, arranged for a boat to go and take him. They had a meeting place, there at Phaliro, where the boat would take my father and bring him to Athens.

However, in that period Phaliro was within the limits of the ghetto and a brother of my father, Alberto Molho, with his wife and two children came to stay at our house. So my father said, 'How can I leave my brother and go?' The boat owner came to the house and my uncle would tell him that he was afraid: 'If the baby starts crying in the middle of the night what will I do with the Germans?' 'I will give him Luminal,' said my father but didn't convince him.

Another ten to fifteen days passed and we found someone else to help him escape. At that time my uncle was very close friends with the police chief and he told him, 'At six o'clock in the morning I will send a soldier to take your father, dress him like a policeman. At four o'clock in the morning there was a roadblock, the Germans caught my father and that was it.'

Later I heard from my uncle that returned from Auschwitz that my father, because he was 50 years old, too old that is, was taken directly to the crematorium.

Out of the big family of my father there was left only a sister, Bella, who lived in Israel, a brother, Charles, who lived in Brussels and survived Auschwitz, another brother, Jacques who lived in Grenoble, France, and two brothers living in Thessaloniki, Saoul and Alberto, who also survived.

That is four brothers in all.

This Uncle Jacques Molho, who was married in Grenoble, went to the concentration camp while his wife Daisy and his daughter stayed in Paris. When the command to empty Paris was issued, it applied particularly for the children who were caught. A certain Mr. and Mrs. Simon, at night, brought I don't know how many children to Spain through the Pyrenees. Now, it seems that among these children was Uncle Jacques's child.

When my uncle Jacques returned from the camp his wife had died, from a heart attack, and they said that the child had been brought to Spain. So he took a bicycle and went all over Spain looking for his child in all the monasteries, because it is more than certain that the kids were brought to a monastery. He never managed to find his daughter; he returned and got married again, to a very good lady. They both aren't alive anymore.

Uncle Alberto was the brother of my father who didn't want to go with the boat owner. He left for the concentration camp with his wife and two children. He was the only one of his family to survive.

Uncle Saoul lost his wife and daughter. She was like a doll, while his daughter was an angel. Aunt Gracia and Aunt Lisa with her two children also died in Auschwitz.

That is where another uncle of mine, Dario, died of typhus at the very end, and next to him was his brother, Saoul, who returned and wrote about his time there. I have here the manuscripts he wrote, he said many things and among others about Uncle Dario. He said that Dario was an electrician in the concentration camp.

You see, the members of my father's family were very resourceful. They would ask them, 'Do you know how to play the piano.' 'We know,' they responded. 'Violin, do you know?' 'We know.' You see they knew everything in order to pass a bad moment!

Well, and there came a German and told him, 'I want ...' Something, I don't know what it was. And my uncle responded, 'In a moment, please wait a little and I will bring it to you.' Now, how can you say 'wait' to a German?

So they hit him hard and left him full of bruises, half dead, and his brothers took care of him, and as they didn't have compresses they put snow on his face. Uncle Saoul wrote many other things about his time there. He was so good this uncle of mine, Saoul!

Slowly we left from Academias Street and went to Kolonaki. They were hard years. It wasn't easy at all, my father hadn't returned, we didn't have facilities or conveniences but it was OK, it passed.

From 1941 my grandfather Moshe was like a father to me, and he was very, very, very strict. For example, when my sister and myself got engaged and we were going out in the evenings, he wouldn't permit the groom to enter our place upon bringing us back.

Never, ever. When as a student I was late on returning home, not engaged yet, he would ask my mother, 'Has Yannakis, little John, come home yet?' Little John was me; my grandfather was very humorous too.

When I decided to go to medical school to become a doctor, as I had this passion since my childhood, I told him, 'You know, Grandfather, I will go to medical school.' 'You will go with the boys

to university? I don't believe it. Why go to university? To learn? Tell me what books you need and I will buy them for you.' 'OK, Grandpa, I will tell you.'

And I went out and took part in the examinations and passed, so I went to the medical school. But it wasn't easy, at all. Grandfather was very strict and acted accordingly, in order to reinforce his position as the head of the family. But he was also just. I learned very many things from my grandfather, how to respect myself, not to tell lies, to be honest, etc. He taught me all that and most important of all, how to stand in my life.

He made all sort of difficult remarks in order to show me that he was there. For example: 'Where will you go? When will you return?' And I was rather old, eighteen or nineteen years old, but who could talk back to Grandfather?

My grandfather Memik, from the TV series, Memik. He was my teacher, he would tell me, 'You can forgive anything but never forgive the person that wants to accuse you falsely and put intrigues within your family. This person you should throw out. Out, for he/she will never change.'

My grandfather did many things. When I was studying for upcoming exams until up to four in the morning, he would get up and come to check on me, he would open the door slowly and say, 'Are you still studying? You consume a lot of electricity.'

Tomorrow is a new day.' He would shut the door and I would laugh. You see we ask the children to study more today, while my grandfather advised me not to study that much. But he just wanted to irritate me, really, to tell me, 'Here I am.'

I also remember my poor Molho grandmother. Whenever I had exams at university she would say, 'You go calmly and I will be sitting here reading prayers.' When I returned in the afternoon she would ask me, 'How did it go?' 'Fine, Grandmother.' 'Didn't I tell you? I was reading the prayers and you passed your exams!'

So because of my grandmother I was passing my exams! I still see her, she didn't have much hair, which we also inherited, and she was wearing a small hat to keep her head warm, and she was sitting there with a book in her hands, reading prayers.

I think about anti-Semitism and have the impression that from my early years there was something in the atmosphere, something anti-Semitic that I wasn't experienced enough to detect. However, in Athens, after I had attended medical school, as we were coming from a lesson, a classmate of mine, a girl called me 'dirty Jew.'

She shouldn't have said it, and I never spoke to her again. I don't even recall her name. I thought to myself that if for no real reason she said that, she is dangerous, and I cut any contact with her. This is a behavior coming directly from my grandfather.

• After the war and later years

My family returned to Thessaloniki and Mother went to collect our belongings at our house. There my sister got engaged to the man she was in love with before the war, Raoul Frances, who had survived because he joined the National Resistance in the mountains. This is why I went to Thessaloniki, for my sister's marriage in 1945.

People from the northern suburbs of the city, Menemeni, from the city of Veroia and some villagers had come to our house and lived there. Everything was in very bad condition, almost destroyed, beds, things etc. all destroyed.

The funniest thing happened to the house of my brother-in-law, Frances, which was also a two-story Turkish house with a fountain and garden. Well, the owner of a chained bear and monkey had come from Menemeni to live there!

And in the basement lived a poor woman, who had lost her husband in Yugoslavia, with her son and daughter, Vouli was her name. This Vouli stayed there for the rest of her life. My sister lived on the top floor.

The brother of my brother-in-law hadn't gone to the mountain, but stayed in Thessaloniki and got married to an Italian girl called Vetta, who was pregnant. He would go somewhere and secretly, with his friends, would listen to the radio, from London, as the Germans had officially confiscated all the radios. Somebody betrayed them and they came in and arrested them all.

As the woman was Italian she tried to save him and get him out of prison. She would send him food daily; she couldn't go herself, as she was very close to giving birth. Exactly on the day she was giving birth, the Germans had returned the food and the lady next door decided not to tell her, as she would think that her husband was taken to be executed.

However, right upon giving birth another neighbor said, 'Vetta, why is your husband's food still here?' She gave birth and immediately, maybe from the shock, died. The baby was also called Vetta.

However, her father returned from jail, and since there was no active marriage anymore with a dead wife, he was sent to the concentration camp. He died either in the train or in the camp.

After the occupation this little girl, little Vetta was taken by my sister Nina and her husband and as the Italians had been expelled from Greece, Vetta's aunt kept on sending letters, particularly when Nina had her first son, Mimis.

The Italian woman wrote, 'Now that the son has been born, things are different.' So we responded to her, 'Dear Anita, the only person to remind us that Vetta is not our daughter is you.' And that's when she stopped bothering us, and indeed we all love Vetta very much. Now she has three daughters and six grandchildren.

So my sister had Vetta, then gave birth to Mimi and this Vouli took care of her kids. She had a son of her own, from her late husband. At some stage, Vouli immigrated to Germany, but she didn't have any luck there and returned.

She also gave birth to a daughter, fathered in Germany by a Greek from Kavala, who was already married, but fortunately he recognized the child. We were the ones to take care of the marriage of this child. Vouli died 15 days after the death of my sister; she was as a member of our family.

Going back to our story: the first thing my sister did was to send away the bear, the monkey and the tambourine; she fixed the house as best as she could and set up the wooden frames factory they used to have. She had to do very many things as everything was destroyed.

The wooden frame factory had been the business of her husband before the war. It is worth noting that in the past my grandfather was a partner of his father. Later, following a conflict, they separated their activities.

Our family house wasn't easy to get back. My grandmother didn't want to return there, she would always say, 'I won't set foot in Thessaloniki. I will neither find my sister there, nor my family, nor anybody, so why go there? I will stay here, in Athens.' My grandmother was very insistent and so we stayed in Athens. Of course, I couldn't go either since I was already studying here.

When I visited Thessaloniki, I saw in our neighborhood that the houses where Jews used to live before the war now had been taken by Christians. However, the Mizrachi club, which was opposite our home, had stayed as it was.

The grandfather who was the guard didn't live any more but the son returned. I don't know if he's still alive, Solomon was his name. There were very few Jewish people left. A minimum, maybe a thousand souls all together. So I went and didn't find anyone, no friend, no cousins, no one.

Many of the ones that returned from the concentration camps, of the very few that did return, went to Israel. There was an orphanage or something like that, where they were offered free housing and this organization was helping them to go to Israel.

In reality what they did was to help them get away, transport them and leave them at a shore in Israel because they were not permitted to enter the country legally, as it was under British occupation. Of course, this wave of immigrants wasn't the first aliyah. The pioneers were the ones that had come from Russia on foot and set up the kibbutzim.

There were quite a number, that is, the survivors that left. Some distant relatives of mine went. The place where they kept them was called 'Hassara' and we went there every weekend to sing for them and entertain them as they had lost their families and were very lonely.

Do you know what they did in Thessaloniki at that time? The Greek state did something good. Whenever there were no immediate heirs, the state could acquire the buildings. So, due to the condition of the people returning from the concentration camps, which in reality was indescribable, the state decided to give to the Jewish community all the real estates, so that the community could nurse and attend to the needs of the survivors.

So what did our community do? As the first survivors arrived, they started looking for their houses, their relatives, their mothers, their brothers and sisters but did not find anyone, absolutely none. So the community immediately arranged for group marriages. This is terrifying. In order to set up their homes and their families again.

My sister got married at the Monastirioton synagogue. After the marriage we went to Phaliro for an evening dinner but the picture of Thessaloniki was already different. You see, the Jews had always offered an element of civilization, of sociability.

It was an altogether different picture because all the people from the villages around had come to the city. They had come, the bear, the monkey, Menemeni, Chortiatis and had acquired the houses. They had even come from Veroia, Naousa. Who knew them? What did they care?

Of course, the Jews were a different society altogether, they were 'people of the city.' You see, Thessaloniki was also rather 'posh,' that is, they were somehow 'stuck up' as they knew they were good. Even here in Athens they were good, but in Thessaloniki the history was also there, they were descendants for centuries, 500 years. There were many good Jews in Thessaloniki, very good families, different, more civilized.

I finished medical school and in 1954 I got married, but I had not sat my exams for my medical specialization. I became a microbiologist and I studied it at the Evagelismos Hospital. I was a Greek subject while my husband, Richard Capuano, was a Spanish subject. He belonged to one of the approximately two hundred families that were expelled from Spain by Queen Isabella, and the Greek state refused to make them Greeks.

I don't know the reason. We asked for the Greek citizenship many times. We even had a client at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and another client at the Department of the Interior and their response was: 'We cannot do anything and we don't know why.'

We applied and reapplied as my husband wanted very much to become Greek and he wanted our son to go to the army. The final result was negative and my son didn't go to the army as he is Spanish subject. There are still a number of Spanish subjects in Greece.

Of course I couldn't have a free profession, and then comes a law that says that a Greek woman can be married to a foreigner but retain her citizenship and therefore can be employed in a free profession. That made us decide to get married.

The family of my husband was known to my family from Thessaloniki. At the Jewish school there was someone who worked there whose son was married to a first cousin of my father in Israel. She was called Saltiel and her husband was Cohen.

He was the one who got me in touch with my husband-to-be. My husband was very open minded so he decided to call me on the phone and asked me to go out with him. We went out for a walk, we started to get acquainted and got to know each other, and we went out a few times and then got married.

I intended for my husband to be a Jew. Do you not see what is happening now? This has become a 'mayonnaise' these days, and with the civil marriage we don't observe these things. My daughter-in-law is Christian Orthodox; I had no objection.

However, at the time when I got married it was very difficult for someone to change religion. It wasn't only because of the parents' reaction, but also because to convert took a lot of time. Of course, you had to study, the women that converted and became Jews know about our religion much more than I do. I don't know much about religion.

My husband had many commercial representations, medicals and other things too, but most importantly, he was the first importer of cellophane in Greece. He would tell me that when he first brought cellophane to Greece he went to Flocas and asked for the owner.

He knew the family, as they also came from Thessaloniki. 'Let us have a coffee,' he proposed to Flocas. 'Yes, certainly.' 'Could you please bring some chocolates.' And he brought some, wrapped in a golden piece of paper.

My husband had a piece of cellophane in his pocket, took the chocolate and wrapped it in cellophane. 'What is this that shines?' 'Cellophane.' This is how my husband got his first order before the war.

My husband was born in Thessaloniki. His mother was from Monastir, she was born at the end of the 19th century and her name was Tzogia Beraha. His father, Moses Capuano, was of Italian origins. He was very aristocratic, came from an old family. They say that last names ending in '-no' like Capuano, Modiano, Massarano, etc. were selected families of Spanish origins.

My husband had finished the French Lycée and was very fluent in French. His father had died in 1934 and his mother in 1977. My husband, his brother Jacques and his mother, as Spanish subjects, were arrested and taken to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp [31](#). However, life in this camp was a different world compared to Auschwitz. In Auschwitz they would have roll-call in the morning, and you didn't know if you would still be alive by the end of the day.

Lina, who was the oldest child and the third boy, Rene, were collected by the Spanish Embassy here, and were transported to Spain, then sent to Egypt and then to Israel. Finally they asked to be taken to Cairo, where they stayed at the house of the other brother, the second child; the older boy called Joseph was already living there permanently. However Lina's husband was caught and never came back, while she and her two children survived and went to America. Rene was not married at that time.

My husband received compensation from the Claims Conference of Adenauer but nothing of importance. This organization paid the German compensation, that is 450 million German Marks, distributed to survivors. My husband received money twice but I cannot recall the exact sum. The last time was in 2001, but the previous one was much earlier. I don't remember. I don't know and I don't wish to know. It didn't interest me.

My husband received his pension approximately in 1980. His mother tongue was Judeo-Spanish and French but also Greek. He could speak English too.

My personal business went very well. I was a very conscious doctor. I was employed as a freelance professional. In the beginning I would work as a replacement at the hospitals Helena and Marika Heliadi in Athens. The manager, Mrs. Pangali was a close friend of mine; she is dead now. This is why I was going there from time to time but that was at the beginning of my career, later I didn't go any more.

Then I inscribed myself for a PhD, which I started in 1960 and finished in March 1962. I was then pregnant with Maick. The mark I received was 'excellent.' The subject was new then, very avant-garde. The two transaminases that have already become routine by now. They are the microbiological examinations of the liver. They control the circulation of the liver and of the heart.

The work was done at the pharmacologists' with Professor Mr. Nicolas Kleisiouni, a deputy professor, Mr. Constatinos Moiras, and teaching assistant, the next professor of pharmacology, Mr. Dionysios Veronos, who recently passed away. He was a remarkable man, I don't think there was another professor like him. We became very close friends; I would go there every day to see my rabbits!

I have an allergy to mice; I cannot even pronounce the word mouse. Despite that the professor would tell me, 'No, you must also do it with mice. We have so many mice and you spend your money on rabbits. They are white little mice, beautiful mice.' 'Professor, I can't, it is impossible for me.' 'No, you will also do one mouse.'

Finally, we had a field mouse whose blood was taken by Dionysios Veronas. This is how I managed to run various tests on them too. I have to admit that their blood cells were very strong as compared to the rabbit's red blood cells which were weaker! I have to admit that looking at the blood specimens was a great experience for me too; I was taking intravenous blood from the rabbit's ears from their capillary vessels that are extremely thin. I learned, very quickly how to do it without breaking any vessels.

When I did my doctorate thesis I was pregnant and due to a pregnancy anomaly I had to lie in bed. So I sent my assistant, in order for him to phone me and tell me to come there when the time would be approaching; it was planned for seven o'clock.

I had already prepared my black costume so that I would be very formal for the occasion, with all the medicine professors there, and he calls me at five, instead of around seven, telling me that they decided to examine me immediately. I jumped up, like crazy, put an overcoat on top and rushed to the university. Everything was messed up on that day. I had ordered a taxi and the taxi never came, so I arrived there with great agony at the last moment.

In the beginning we stayed in a neoclassic house, which belonged to my husband's family, on Rethymnon Street. My mother also stayed there, to look after the child, and we also had an in-house baby sitter for the child until the age of four. But later we left that place and came here, where it was more convenient for me and for the child.

The private practice was on the same floor and next door to this apartment. The kid would go to school in the morning and in the afternoon I didn't work in my private practice, as I wanted to be at home and I wanted the child to see his mother in the house. Whoever wanted me would call and arrange for an appointment up to two thirty or three o'clock at the latest.

My son Mike attended the Jewish school from kindergarten to the third class of elementary school. Every afternoon a French girl, a very nice girl would come to teach him French.

Every summer, after he turned four, I would take Mike to Switzerland. It was to give him the opportunity to speak French, to learn languages. As he was a good pupil, my husband would say, 'Why worry? He will learn languages. Every language is a different human being.' And he was right. First he went to Switzerland, twice, the next three summers to France, the next three or four times to England.

He went to Chantilly where there was a chateau, belonging to the Rothschild family that had given it as a donation; it was used as an orphanage for the children that lost their parents in the Holocaust. There I met the manager and the manageress, Mr. and Mrs. Simon, who were the couple that had helped the children escape from Paris to Spain.

Those orphans grew up and the orphanage closed, but for one month every year Jewish children would come from all over the world. It cost 1,000 US Dollars for the month, but the money was not a payment, it was a voluntary donation. For example, the children coming from Canada and whose

parents owned factories, gave much more.

Mike went there for three years, and it was very good. One year I went there too. In the first year he was crying. He had not yet finished the first grade of the elementary school. He went together with the oldest daughter of Vetta, my niece Sofie.

One day I called them on the phone. It was very funny. 'Why are you there at this hour of the day?' I asked and Mike said, 'We didn't go for the walk.' You see, every afternoon they went for a walk in the woods. 'And why did you not go?'

'We cannot, we want to come back home. We are crying and don't participate in order to save the money, the cost of the walk. If we don't go they won't charge us for the walk.' Charging the cost of the walk, just listen to that!

'But dear Sofi, what are you saying? You know that the return tickets are at the hands of the teacher there. What are you talking about?' And so I wrote them a letter, I was just reading it again the day before yesterday: 'We have sent you there as representatives of Greece, descendants of Kolokotronis, of Manto Mavrogenous and Bouboulina, heroes of the Greek revolution against the Turks in 1821, which eventually resulted in the creation of the first modern Greek state. You cannot humiliate us like that.'

Finally, the children were convinced and Mike also made a good friend there. This boy came from Amversa, and I even went to his bar mitzvah. His father was a jeweler. His mother was from Poland, and had gone to a concentration camp, where she had lost all her family. So they had this son, who was playing the piano exceptionally well.

The two boys got very close, and every summer Mike would go to their place and when the family would go, for example, to London, they would also take Mike with them. One summer Leon came here, to Greece, and gave three concerts: one in the Greek American Union, one at the Jewish camp and one at the 'Casa d' Italia.' At that time he was ten or eleven years old.

For the last grades of elementary school, Mike went to the private school of Andonopoulos. This is contrary to what I did as a kid; I went to public schools and this turned out to be very positive for me, so for high school I decided that my son should do the same. He went to the 5th Gymnasium and all my relatives were against me. However, I still insist that this is what I should have done, as he got in contact with all kind of people and doesn't make distinctions.

My son received all the lessons necessary for his bar mitzvah. It was held on a Saturday and the rabbi didn't give his consent to decorate the synagogue with flowers because, as he explained, the magnificence of the day is such that it cannot be beautified more with flowers.

So we introduced a novelty and offered a gardenia flower to every lady in the synagogue, at the place reserved for women only. I will not forget him taking the Sefer Torah. But, how many flower petals did we throw to him!

You see I had gone to the end of Patissia, bought very many flowers and we had pulled out the petals. The petals thrown were like snow. I have his speech recorded on a cassette, it was very good. Afterward, in the evening, what a rain, my G-d what a rain, a true flood! Due to the rain only half of the people we had invited came to the evening cocktail.

After Mike finished high school he went for a year to the Deree College [the private American College of Athens]. Unfortunately at Deree he couldn't get enough credits to get a degree and so he went to Israel. Despite the fact that he wasn't a good student he went to Israel in 1980 and didn't lose any time nor did he fail any subject.

My son studied political sciences and he also speaks seven languages: Spanish, French, English, Portuguese, Italian, Hebrew and Greek. He also worked as a simultaneous interpreter. He sent an application to the European Union and he was employed there. He worked there for four or five months, but in the end he wanted to leave because the Greek cabin, at that time, had very few translators. That was fifteen or sixteen years ago.

So he decided to quit. However, they told him that he cannot leave, as he would have to return all the benefits he had received, plane tickets etc. Mike said, 'OK.' They told him to wait, as they were in congress, and told him: 'We will call you, but we don't think that you can go.' He waited outside. After some time they called him: 'The era of slavery has been over in Europe for many years now. You are free to go.' And he left.

Before going to Israel, during the period that he was learning Hebrew here, he worked for six months at the Embassy of Uruguay. He does not only speak Spanish, not the Spanish of Spain, the Castilian, he also speaks the South American dialects. He is an impressive child. When he left for Israel I wasn't worried but I was sorry that he left, as he is my only son.

I remember a particular incident of which I am ashamed. I was at the airport, crying because he was leaving and there comes to me one of the ambassadors of Israel. She tells me, 'What is it? Why are you crying Mrs. Capuano?' Because I was a Jew, they knew me as a doctor at the embassy of Israel. 'I'm crying because my son is leaving and I lose him.' 'You won't lose your son,' she said, 'you win him as there he will acquire his personality, you will see.' And she was right.

There they leave the kids alone, so that their personality can come to the surface. To get control of themselves and become independent. And even after he returned he lived alone of course. He was no 'child of his mother.'

My son got married in 1999. His wife is called Silia Kapitsimadi. She finished the English Literature department here; she also finished another private American University on Arts and went to finish it up for two and a half years in London. She is a jeweler.

They didn't have children for a long time. Mike says they were afraid they'd 'become like him,' that is, extremely undisciplined. Now, finally, my daughter-in-law is pregnant and we are all very happy about it.

My son now has a representation office; he represents Samos wines and other drinks. He is a very good person; he was always very good with his friends that love him. They try to be with him, he is a very civilized man, open minded. To tell you the truth, when mixed marriages take place, the parents, despite their original reaction, at the end give in. I can assure you I never said a word because he is a very fine person.

They married in a civil ceremony. Silia said that when they will have children she will convert. At their home they don't celebrate the Jewish holidays, as they come here. A few days ago, on the eve of Yom Kippur, I made an eggplant pie and they ate all of it.

The Christian festivities we celebrate all together at the mother of my daughter-in-law's: Easter, New Year's Eve and Christmas. A little later my son has his own birthday and gives a party, as they all do.

Together with my husband we had many friends both from the Jewish community and outside it. We had a group of friends; one of them was an admiral. All of them were people that liked to feast. Giose, Lava, Gionis... we had very nice parties; it was unimaginable to have a party at which there wouldn't be a piano or a guitar. As I sing correctly I was singing all night. They were very good companions. All this is lost now, nothing is left as most of these people have died.

My husband was also very good at companies. When he first went to America, he went on an ocean liner where they had a dance competition and he won the first prize. And what was the prize? This old lighter, let me show you, so nothing, but he danced well. He liked the entertainment.

Then there was also the Tsatsi family; we were very close with them. Mr. Tsatis was a professor of Pharmaceutical Chemistry and an academic too, a member of the Greek Academy. We were with them when he was accepted at the academy. We went to prepare the sweets and organize the meal that followed. We were friends, brothers, and of course with them we had a whole group of professors we were frequenting like Alexandropoulos, Kascarellis, Tountas etc. All these people we were close friends with don't exist any more, they are all dead now.

Our companies were including all sort of different types of people, many friends, and we went on cruises, trips etc.

Today there aren't even relatives left. Uncle Albert, the one that returned from the concentration camp and remarried and had a son, is now dead, while his wife is in Thessaloniki and the son lives here in Athens. I see him from time to time or call him on the phone, or at the synagogue. When my husband died in 2003, he came to the funeral, the Kaddish too.

I also had a sister-in-law who lived in Cairo. Her name was Rena, she was the wife of Joseph Capuano. She was born in Cairo but her origins are from Ioannina. Her father was a pharmacist in Cairo. I loved her very much, but she also died in 2003. She had cancer, a cystitis that had not been noticed, and some day she knelt down to tie her shoes, understood there was something wrong, but it was too late.

Here in Athens, I also have a sister-in-law, the wife of Jacques. She has children etc but they are all very busy, they have their own life. So many people around. Sometimes I say to myself, 'Which friend of mine should I call on the phone and arrange to see?' And I don't know, maybe my mind stops, I don't know.

My mother has been buried in the third cemetery here. My husband too. The same applies to my father and mother-in-law. We brought the remains from Thessaloniki, as on 5th December 1942, the tombs were unearthed; the burial plaques were taken to the university which was built there, on the site of the Jewish cemetery, while the bones were here and there. Now they are all here.

At the beginning it was the first cemetery, which was relatively small as the site was also small. So it closed down. Now it is the third cemetery which will end anytime shortly, as we don't unearth the remains. All the tombs are there. I guess they will give us another branch.

My sister is buried in Thessaloniki. There it is quite special as all the tombs look the same. There are no mausoleums, a simple tombstone, the same for everyone. I made a simple tombstone for my mother, a simple tombstone like in Thessaloniki. Here at the third cemetery there are only two tombstones like that. One Carasso from Thessaloniki and my mother's.

We didn't discuss Israel or other Jewish subjects with our Christian friends. It just didn't happen. Not that we refused to talk, but they didn't share the same interests with us.

Right from the beginning we have been following up the creation of the Israeli state [32](#), its actions and its evolution. We still are well informed of what is going on there. I receive the informative newsletters of the community; it is part of our life. I am even a member of the summer camp committee at the community.

I hadn't thought of aliyah since I had my parents. I wasn't all alone in life as the others that went there to start a new life. I had my mother, my people, so why go there? The ones that left had lost everything.

I had an aunt who stayed there, in Israel, before the creation of the state, I had many relatives that went there, all very satisfied with their decision to go there.

If someone immigrates, say a Greek goes to Germany or Australia or Sweden trying to improve his life, he will always feel a foreigner. When they left from here, they found a shelter there. And of course, it was the land of their forefathers. The State of Israel was at that period in the making as it was bound to be. The ones that immigrated there didn't go to a foreign place, what they really did was go back to their home,. A home that had been occupied by others, but it was always their home, the land of their great-, great-grandfathers. That is where Israel started from.

Once, when I was in America for a health problem, I met an Israeli-German Jew. Before World War II, the German Jews didn't want to leave Germany. They would say, 'Why go?' I am more German than the Germans; I love my county more than the Germans.'

Anyhow this man told me: "When I'm finished with my treatment I'll leave." 'Where do you live?' In Israel, in Natania, where I own the best restaurant the "Henry the 4th". 'Very good and what do you do in Germany?' "Oh, I have a very big business, real estate." 'Bravo, how can you?

I cannot go to Germany, cannot even listen to German.' 'But Germany provides me with the funds to be able to live in Israel. My restaurant is in Israel but in reality it is my hobby. Germany provides me with the money to live in Israel.' I was very impressed by what he told me.

What I mean to say is that Greece is a pro-Arab country. All the time you hear, there were killed that many Palestinians, that many Palestinians, that many Palestinians. You must be very naïve to believe that in a war in Israel only Palestinians get killed.

Do you know how many young people get killed in Israel? A very high number but what do they do, mourning is not permitted, the only thing permitted is to close the windows and the shutter and not go out wearing black because in that case all Israel would be colored black.

This is why it is so important that they do not retrograde so that they will keep their morale. And here on the TV and in the newspapers they say: "That many Palestinians were killed." For G-d's

sake, no Jew has been killed? Buy 'The Times' and you'll see how many Jews were killed.

Or I call my cousins: 'What's the news?' 'Do not ask, the son of our friends XXX was killed.' But here, on TV we only see them throwing stones, they don't have guns. Or we see the wives of those killed who cry and cry and cry. They don't say, of course, that they only cry when the cameras are there.

Jewish mothers are more dignified, they do not go out in the streets to cry. Their children are hit, because it is usually the children who are the victims and they get hold of themselves so that their husband can go to work, can look after the other children. A child is hit and the whole family is destroyed. And here they say nothing about all that. They don't even refer to whole cities with hidden arms buried underneath them.

And what happened with all that money they gave to Arafat. He took all that himself and finally it ended up with his heir, his wife, since he didn't get a divorce. As politics is dirty, huge amounts of money are involved. All the big nations are sending money because they want to sell arms. This is the truth of the whole story.

I have also to mention that there the young ones are continuously in the army. It is not like, 'I went to the army and finished it.' It is not like that. They call them every now and then to do 'melouim,' that is, going to the frontiers and serve in the army for some more time.

When my son was studying, they would patrol every night, a military man with a jeep and all the others were guarding and my son, wearing a helmet, was looking for hidden bombs. They were patrolling every night.

As for myself I am Greek. My religion is Jewish but as a citizen I am Greek and very much so. Even in the cemetery here there is a monument for the Jews that died in the Albanian war.

I always respected and considered seriously both religions. Let me just tell you something. I was returning from Paris with my son and getting out of the airplane we entered the bus to take us from the plane to the airport. There was an empty seat and I thought to myself, 'Bravo, they all went to the other side and left this seat for me.'

Well, it turned out there was machine oil there and that was the reason it was empty. I try to go there and I slip, fall down with a triple crushing break of my shoulder. A whole story, the journalists came, I was taken to hospital etc.

Later we took Olympic Airlines to court. Olympic Airlines had three lawyers to say that it was raining that day and that this was the reason I slipped! My son had to search meteorological archives in order to prove that it wasn't the rain but the oil, to prove that it wasn't raining that day.

Finally the president of the court called me and said, 'Please take the oath.' And there was the New Testament, so I took the oath on the New Testament, and that moment a young lawyer jumps out and says: 'Mrs. President, Mrs. Capuano is bad willed.' 'How dare you say something like that?' said the president.

The lady is a doctor and a very respected person.' Upon that the young lawyer asked me, 'What is your religion, my lady?' 'Jewish,' I replied, and he goes, 'But you took the oath on the New

Testament. How is that possible?’ I said, ‘Mrs. President, G-d is one, his representatives differ.’

After that the examination of the case continued as nobody said anything else following that statement of mine. And this is what I really believe by the way.

Yesterday I was reading about Alois Brunner [33](#) who is in Syria. Here there is a law since 1959 that in reality abolishes the prosecution of Germans in Greece, and he killed so many people! Well this is ridiculous. If someone will steal bread they will arrest him and put him in jail.

He, who killed 56,000 people, has his prosecution finished... I’m sorry, but that I can’t understand. What does it mean that his prosecution is finished? These things happen only in Greece.

This Brunner is in Syria and they know who he is and what he did. But in Latin American countries there are all sort of peculiarities. You will see, for example, a mayor called Mr. Weinberg, many Germans who have been completely assimilated.

They changed their hair from blond to black, and they have had all sort of plastic surgeries to change their looks. And they had a lot of money, a whole lot of money. This is the reason they never invaded Switzerland, as the exchange was: we will give you our gold to guard and we will not invade.

A short while ago we visited Auschwitz, as it was the 60th celebration of the liberation. The visitors were coming from all over the world, but this particular year something new happened. The European ministries of education funded many non-Jewish schools, so that the children would have an opportunity to participate in the manifestation of memory.

There were about 30,000 people present, and as I was walking, I heard a group talking in French amongst themselves. I asked them where they were coming from and they told me Lyon, France, and when I asked them if they were Jews they said, no, that they were Catholics.

Here, the Ministry of Education gave 50.000 Euros and only 15 people were interested in coming! The rest of the money was given to schools, students etc. of our community. This is how the ones who wanted to could go. It was a gigantic manifestation, the ‘March of the Living.’ We walked three kilometers to go there and another three to return. I personally didn’t think I would be able to make it, as I have a problem with my legs. I still cannot quite believe how I managed to complete the march.

As we were going around the camps on foot I was crying and crying because it is a different thing to read about it – at home I have two shelves full of books on the Holocaust – than to see it in reality. To put yourself in their place at that moment that they would put in line one after the other in order to see how many a single bullet could kill, penetrating from one to the other etc. Well, this is a different thing all together.

You should see the ‘pieces of cotton,’ or what I thought were pieces of cotton. I asked myself, ‘why do they show these pieces of cotton? Did they take them out of a mattress? But weren’t mattresses here filled with straw?’ So I asked our group leader what those discolored pieces of cotton were all about and she told me, ‘What discolored pieces of cotton, Mrs. Capuano? Can’t you see that it is peoples’ hair?’

They found five tons of it there that were not sent to Germany. They also told me this hair is the raw material for manufacturing a very strong and light cloth that is used to make parachutes. If you do not see and live it you have seen nothing.

Many speeches were given and there came Sharon and we could see him on the big screens that had been installed. It was all very moving and the music they would play would also shake us. Before we started to walk – it was where the rail tracks were, on the spot where the trains were passing – they were giving us little cardboard badges and written on those was, ‘In the memory of my family, my parents, my uncle.’

They would pin those cardboard badges on us. And when we arrived there was a sort of esplanade because the manifestation took place in Birkenau [34](#), the march started in Auschwitz and ended in Birkenau. Of course, only Auschwitz exists now because in Birkenau there is nothing left since the Germans had the whole camp blown up before they left.

At this esplanade, we were looking at a giant screen and there spoke the prime minister of Poland, a representative of the organization of the Rights of Women and many others. However, the highlight was Sharon who said, ‘I will not speak to you about the Holocaust as what I see is enough. You must talk about it among yourselves, with your children, with your children’s children, as it must never be forgotten.’

Then came Elie Wiesel [35](#) and said, ‘I was a young child, fourteen years old.’ And I was wondering how he survived as at that young age they were not taking them in the camp, he must have looked much older. He continued, ‘I was holding hands with my father, my mother, my little brother and suddenly, I had no time, they all disappeared. My mother had no time to give me a kiss, neither my father to give me his blessing. I lost them. Why all that?’

Then came the former chief rabbi of Israel whose name is Lau and said, ‘Why did they choose us? We all see the same flowers, we all smell the same flowers. Why did they choose us?’

I went to the gas chambers and prayed my respects and it seems that the people taken in there they were suffocating and dying, but before dying they were hitting the door with their hands, and they were digging the walls with their nails and on one wall it was written ‘n-k-m’ and the rabbi said, ‘I understand it as the Hebrew word “nekama” which means “revenge.”

Certainly revenge but not with violence. Revenge is what I see today. Revenge is 30,000 people present in this manifestation today. Revenge is that they didn’t manage to achieve what they were after. Revenge is every child that is born.’

Only by visiting that place you can really understand it, live it partly, since only the people who suffered there really lived it.

Recently, in 2005, I honored Mr. Fix. I had everything prepared already some fifteen or twenty years ago, but Mrs. Fix didn’t want me to, as she told me, ‘Mr. Fix is dead. Mr. Fix hid you, I had no involvement in it, whatever we did we did it for the best and I don’t want any thank you. For whatever we did let G-d thank us.’

However, I had my dossier ready and last year was the celebration of the Holocaust in Greece for the first time and little Charles Fix, the son, calls me. ‘Ioanna,’ he says – I was called Ioanna

Marinopoulou when I lived with them – and asked me, ‘Why did you forget us?’ I told him that I hadn’t forgotten them and that I would expect him at my place the next day. So he saw that I had everything prepared and I told him, ‘Your mother didn’t want it.’ But he said, ‘I do want it.’

It took me only eight months to arrange for it. I telephoned here, I telephoned there, got in contact with Yad Vashem and with Mr. Saltiel, if I recall correctly, and this year we celebrated the sixty year anniversary.

We went to Thessaloniki, because the celebration was held in Thessaloniki. The son, Charles Fix, came as well as my son and Mr. Prokopiou, the only cousin of Charles Fix. He came especially for this occasion and left again the next day in the morning.

I had also prepared a little speech to give but I didn’t in the end, as I was very moved and was crying. And when it was over I turned my head towards Charles, he turned towards me, and we looked at each other and fell into each other’s arms. I can still hear the applause we received.

Imagine, 2.500 people clapping. And when I saw Alik Mordohai, I told her, ‘Alik, my child, I’m sorry I wasn’t able to say a few words.’ And her response was that I did very well not to talk as, ‘the embrace and the kiss said it all and it was more than enough.’

Most recently, I’ve been occupied with my autobiography. Some people told me that there wouldn’t be a high demand for these old stories. However, it will soon be published by the Gavrielides Editions. So I am very busy with it.

I don’t go to the synagogue frequently. I only go for the holidays. It does not influence me, I am what I am, whether I am in a religious place or not. When there is a big holiday I like to go there and pray. I also go to the synagogue for memorial services or when they open the temple.

Every night I say my prayer, ‘Shema Israel.’ This is the only prayer I know, I am sorry to know only this prayer, but then again this prayer says it all. There is only one ‘Shema Israel’ but even if you don’t pray, when you say, ‘oh, my G-d, please...’ it means that for you G-d exists.

Describing my life I could say that I lived a ‘bourgeois life.’

I’ve always believed that the Greek Jews but also the Greek Orthodox Christians do not have an aristocracy, there may have been some aristocrats, on the islands of Corfu, Cefallonia, Zakynthos and that it is all.

For me aristocracy is a right and honest house. People well educated, cultured. These are the people that get distinguished. Is it not so? And we do not have aristocracy like the French with the prefix ‘de’, nor dukes nor counts nor Sirs, nothing of the sort. But even if we have, the titles have in reality been bought because today titles are sold. As for me, I consider equal and fully comparable all the correct, civil families with alleged aristocracy.

• Glossary:

1 Expulsion of the Jews from Spain: In the 13th century, after a period of stimulating spiritual and cultural life, the economic development and wide-range internal autonomy obtained by the Jewish communities in the previous centuries was curtailed by anti-Jewish repression emerging from under

the aegis of the Dominican and the Franciscan orders.

There were more and more false blood libels, and the polemics, which were opportunities for interchange of views between the Christian and the Jewish intellectuals before, gradually condemned the Jews more and more, and the middle class in the rising started to be hostile with the competitor.

The Jews were gradually marginalized. Following the pogrom of Seville in 1391, thousands of Jews were massacred throughout Spain, women and children were sold as slaves, and synagogues were transformed into churches. Many Jews were forced to leave their faith.

About 100,000 Jews were forcibly converted between 1391 and 1412. The Spanish Inquisition began to operate in 1481 with the aim of exterminating the supposed heresy of new Christians, who were accused of secretly practicing the Jewish faith.

In 1492 a royal order was issued to expel resisting Jews in the hope that if old co-religionists would be removed new Christians would be strengthened in their faith.

At the end of July 1492 even the last Jews left Spain, who openly professed their faith. The number of the displaced is estimated to lie between 100,000-150,000. (Source: Jean-Christophe Attias - Esther Benbassa: Dictionnaire de civilisation juive, Paris, 1997)

2 German Occupation: in the spring of 1941, Germans defeated the Greek army and occupied Greece until October 1944. The country was divided in three zones of occupation. Thrace and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were occupied by Bulgaria, Germany occupied Macedonia including Thessaloniki, Piraeus and western Crete and Italy occupied the remaining mainland and the islands.

Now depending of where the Jews lived, defined both their future luck as also the possibilities of escape. Greek resistance groups, communists or not fought against the occupation in an effort to save Greece but also the Jews living in Greece.

Approximately 8,000 to 10,000 Greek Jews survived the Holocaust, due to the refusal, to a great extent, of the Greeks, as also the leadership of the Greek Orthodox Church, to cooperate with the Germans for the application of their plan to deport all of them. Further more, the Italian authorities up to their surrender in 1943 refused to facilitate or to permit the deportation of the Jews from the Italian zone of occupation.

(Source: www.ushmm.org/greece/nonflash/gr/intro.htm)

3 Moskov, Kostis (1939-1998): Mayor of Thessaloniki, advisor to the Ministry of Culture and Representative of the Greek Civilization foundation in the Middle East. A historian, writer, poet and journalist who had many of his works published.

4 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.

5 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.

6 Railway network of Thessaloniki: In 1871 the city of Thessaloniki was connected to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In 1888 it was connected to Belgrade and the European Railway network.

In 1894 the connection of Thessaloniki with Monastiri was completed, while in 1896 Thessaloniki was also connected with Constantinople, today's Istanbul.

7 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.

8 Thessaloniki visit of King Juan Carlos: On 27th May 1998 the Spanish Royal couple, King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia visited Thessaloniki. They were received by the Minister of Macedonia and

Trace, Philippos Petsalnikos, and he accompanied them to the Holocaust Monument where King Juan Carlos laid a wreath in honor of the memory of the Jewish martyrs.

9 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]

10 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.

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

12 Mizrachi: The word has two meanings: a) East. It designates the Jews who immigrate to Palestine from the Arab countries. Since the 1970s they make up more than half of the Israeli population. b) It is the movement of the Zionists, who firmly hold on to the Torah and the traditions.

The movement was founded in 1902 in Vilnius. The name comes from the abbreviation of the Hebrew term Merchoz Ruchoni (spiritual center). The Mizrachi wanted to build the future Jewish state by enforcing the old Jewish religious, cultural and legal regulations. They recruited followers especially in Eastern Europe and the United States.

In the year after its founding it had 200 organizations in Europe, and in 1908 it opened an office in Palestine too. The first congress of the World Movement was held in 1904 in Pozsony (today Bratislava, Slovakia), where they joined the Basel program of the Zionists, but they emphasized that the Jewish nation had to stand on the grounds of the Torah and the traditions.

The aim of the Mizrach-Mafdal movement is the same in our days too. It supports schools, youth organizations in Israel and in other countries, so that the Jewish people can learn about their religion, and it takes part in the political life of Israel, promoting by this the traditional image of the Jewish state.

(<http://www.mizrachi.org/aboutus/default.asp>; www.cionista.hu/mizrachi.htm; Magyar Zsidó Lexikon, Budapest, 1929).

13 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]

14 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.

15 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.

16 '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.

17 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]

18 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)

19 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.

Eleftherios 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]

20 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.)

21 Hirsch [Clara de] Hospital: It was inaugurated in May 4th, 1908, exactly ten years after the donation of Baroness Clara de Hirsch who had died in the meantime. Her condition for the donation of 200,000 golden francs, once off for the construction of a 100-bed hospital and 30.000 francs per year for its maintenance was that an equal amount of money would be given by the Jewish Community.

In order to cover the second part there were many public fund raising efforts and a special committee was formed in order to supervise the details of the construction. The hospital manager was Doctor Misrahee and it employed the most specialized doctors of the city.

During WWI it became a military hospital which was returned to the community in 1919. After the end of WWII the hospital was sold to the Greek State on the condition that the label with the name of Baroness de Hirsch would remain intact. This was respected only during the first decades.

Today the label cannot be seen, while some of the marble plaques where the names of other Jews donators were written, were taken out and others were covered with many layers of paint. (Source: 1. R.Molho, "The Jews of Thessaloniki 1856-1919 A special community" Ed. Themelio, Athens 2001, pp.96-101)

22 An-ski, Szymon (pen name of Szlojme Zajnwel Rapaport) (1863-1920): Writer, ethnographer, socialist activist. Born in a village near Vitebsk. In his youth he was an advocate of *haskalah*, but later joined the radical movement *Narodnaya Vola*. Under threat of arrest he left Russia in 1892 but returned there in 1905.

From 1911-14 he led an ethnographic expedition researching the folklore of the Jews of Podolye and Volhynia. During the war he organized committees bringing aid to Jewish victims of the conflict and pogroms.

In 1918 he became involved in organizing cultural life in Vilnius, as a co-founder of the Union of Jewish Writers and Journalists and the Jewish Ethnographic Society. Two years before his death he

moved to Warsaw. He is the author of the Bund party's anthem, 'Di shvue' (Yid. oath).

The participation of the Bund in the Revolution of 1905 influenced An-ski's decision to write in Yiddish. In his later work he used elements of Jewish legends collected during his ethnographic expedition and his experiences from WWI.

His most famous work is *The Dybbuk* (which to this day remains one of the most popular Yiddish works for the stage). An-ski's entire literary and scientific oeuvre was published in Warsaw in 1920-25 as a 15-volume edition.

23 Cinema Palace: The sign post at the front of the cinema was in three languages: French, Greek and Hebrew. Palace was also a theater. Performances were organized there as early as 1935.

On 2nd January 1942 the Germans confiscated it, changed its name to "Soldatenbühne" (Soldiers' Stage) and it was a theater for German soldiers only.

(Source: Costas Tomanas, "theaters in old Thessaloniki" Ed. Nisides, Thessaloniki 1994)

24 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.

25 Penelope Delta (1874-1941)

Greek writer of books for older children.

Her three major novels are: 'Trellantonis' (Crazy Anthony; 1932), which detailed her mischievous elder brother's Antonis Benakis childhood adventures in late 19th century Alexandria, 'Mangas' (1935), which was about the not dissimilar adventures of the family's fox terrier dog, and 'Ta Mystika tou Valtou' (The Secrets of the Swamp; 1937), which was set around Giannitsa Lake in the early 20th century, when the Greek struggle for Macedonia was unfolding.

She committed suicide on 27th April 1941, the very day Wehrmacht troops entered Athens.

(Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penelope_Delta)

26 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)]

27 Righteous Among the Nations: A medal and honorary title awarded to people who during the Holocaust selflessly and for humanitarian reasons helped Jews. It was instituted in 1953. Awarded by a special commission headed by a justice of the Israeli Supreme Court, which works in the Yad Vashem National Remembrance Institute in Jerusalem.

During the ceremony the persons recognized receive a diploma and a medal with the inscription "Whoever saves one life, saves the entire world" and plant a tree in the Avenue of the Righteous on the Remembrance Hill in Jerusalem, which is marked with plaques bearing their names.

Since 1985 the Righteous receive honorary citizenship of Israel. So far over 20,000 people have been distinguished with the title, including almost 6,000 Poles.

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

29 Archbishop Damaskinos Papandreou (1891-1949): Archbishop of Athens and All Greece from 1941 until his death. He was also the regent of Greece between the pull-out of the German occupation force in 1944 and the return of King Georgios II to Greece in 1946.

His rule was between the liberation of Greece from the German occupation during World War II and the Greek Civil War.

(Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archbishop_Damaskinos)

30 Evert, Angelos: Athens police chief during 1943, ordered false identification cards to be issued to all Jews requesting them.

(Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/greece/nonflash/eng/athens.htm>)

31 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)

32 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.

33 Brunner, Alois (born 1912, reports of death contested): Austrian Nazi war criminal. Brunner was Adolf Eichmann's assistant, and Eichmann referred to Brunner as his "best man." As commander of the Drancy internment camp outside Paris from June 1943 to August 1944, Alois Brunner is held responsible for sending some 140,000 European Jews to the gas chambers.

Nearly 24,000 of them were deported from the Drancy camp. He was condemned in absentia in France in 1954 to a life sentence for crimes against humanity. In 2003, The Guardian described him as "the world's highest-ranking Nazi fugitive believed still alive." Brunner was last reported to be living in Syria, where the government has so far rebuffed international efforts to locate or apprehend him.

(Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alois_Brunner)

34 Birkenau (Pol.: Brzezinka): Also known as Auschwitz II. Set up in October 1941 following a decision by Heinrich Himmler in the village of Brzezinka (Ger.: Birkenau) close to Auschwitz, as a prisoner-of-war camp. It retained this title until March 1944, although it was never used as a POW camp.

It comprised sectors of wooden sheds for different types of prisoners (women, men, Jewish families from Terezin, Roma, etc.), and continued to be expanded until the end of 1943.

From the beginning of 1942 it was an extermination camp. The Birkenau camp covered a total area of 140 ha and comprised some 300 sheds variously used as living quarters, ancillary quarters and crematoria.

Birkenau, Auschwitz I and scores of satellite camps made up the largest center for extermination of the Jews. The majority of the Jews deported here were sent straight to the gas chambers to be put to death immediately, without registration.

There were 400,000 prisoners registered there for longer periods, half of whom were Jews. The second-largest group of prisoners were Poles (140,000). Prisoners died en masse as a result of slave labor, starvation, the inhuman living conditions, beatings, torture and executions.

The bodies of those murdered were initially buried and later burned in the crematoria and on pyres in specially dug pits. Due to the efforts made by the SS to erase the evidence of their crimes and their destruction of the majority of the documentation on the prisoners, and also to the fact that the Soviet forces seized the remaining documentation, it is impossible to establish the exact number of victims of Auschwitz-Birkenau. On the basis of the fragmentary documentation available, it can be assumed that in total approx. 1.5 million prisoners were murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau, some 90% of who were Jews.

35 Wiesel, Eliezer (commonly known as Elie) (born 1928): World-renowned novelist, philosopher, humanitarian and political activist. He is the author of over forty books. In 1986, Wiesel was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Wiesel teaches at Boston University and serves as the Chairman of The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity.