

Nissim “Nace” Treves



January 5, 1939: Nace onboard the *Giulio Cesare* headed to Cape Town.

Nissim “Nace” Treves was born on September 8, 1923. He was the son of Victoria (née Cohen) and Joseph Treves. His brother was Raphael “Alexandro.”

Nace went to the *Alliance Israelite Universelle* for 7 years, then the *Liceo Italiano* school for 3 years. He attended school in Pisa, Italy, for 11 months, but because of his Jewish race, he was not allowed to continue. Nace left Italy to be with his family in Rhodes. At that time, he witnessed the anti-Jewish laws and public demonstrations. The Italians held public demonstrations to enlist the Jews in joining the fascist groups (“*camicia nera*”); those who objected had their heads shaved with an Italian flag painted on it and were paraded to the streets, which happened to Nace’s cousin. After obtaining documents to facilitate his departure from Rhodes, he left for Africa. He traveled from Rhodes to Genoa, then boarded the Italian ship *S.S. Giulio Cesare* to Cape Town. He lived and worked in various parts of the Belgian Congo for 7 years.

At 22, he came to the United States in 1946. He married Sarah Notrica in 1948 and they lived in Los Angeles. (1st Interview with Aron Hasson, December 19, 1996).

The transcript of Nace Treves' 2nd interview, March 16, 1998, Los Angeles:

Interviewer: What school did you go to?

Interviewee: I went to the *Alliance* school, next to my home.

Interviewer: And how often did you go to the synagogue in Rhodes?

Interviewee: Friday night and Saturday morning. And the Jewish celebrations like *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, *Purim*, *Selihot*. And other times with my father.

Interviewer: Which *kehila* (synagogue) did you go to?

Interviewee: The *Kehila Grande*.

Interviewer: Was it near your home?

Interviewee: 500 feet away from my home.

Interviewer: And most of your family was in Rhodes or other places?

Interviewee: We came to Rhodes after I was born. I was born in Izmir. We came to Rhodes after the Izmir fire; during the Armenian and Turkish war. My father lost everything in Izmir. We traveled to Rhodes on a French warship because my father was a French citizen.

Interviewer: How old were you?

Interviewee: 5 days old. I was taken to Rhodes after 5 days. My birth wasn't registered in Izmir because there was a war. When we went to Rhodes, I was registered as if I was born on the Island of Rhodes. All my documents and passports say I was born in Rhodes.

Interviewer: After your family left Izmir and moved back to Rhodes, what business was your family doing in Rhodes?

Interviewee: My father started working for a company, a clothing seller. He came back because my father had been with his brothers in America for many years.

Interviewer: In which city?

Interviewee: In Montgomery, Alabama. He was living with his brothers. He had 4 brothers, and all of them were in America.

Interviewer: And why did you leave Rhodes? Where did you go?

Interviewee: I left Rhodes because we weren't happy with the situation with the Italians and Germans. We took the last steamboat leaving Rhodes; that was our steamboat, where I was at. And then I went to Africa.



Albert Almeleh and Nace Treves

My brother *Alexandro* was in the Belgian Congo. And he sent me the documents I needed to go to Africa.

Interviewer: How long did you take by boat from Rhodes to the port in Africa? And by train from Cape Town to Katanga? How many people were with you?

Interviewee: It was 2 days from Rhodes to Genoa, 2 or 3 days. We were in Genoa for 2 days. And after Genoa, we went to Cape Town, South Africa, and it took 22 days. We took the train from Cape Town and went to *Katanga Elizabethville* (Belgian Congo), which took 5 days.

On the train were my cousin *Mashika*, my aunt *Rivka*, *Flor Danon*, the mother, and *Alberto Almeleh*. We had two more girls, a *Surmani*, next to her, about 7 or 8 people on the train. The ones who wanted to be with her went to *Bulawayo* (Rhodesia). Alberto wanted to be with her. The brother-in-law, married to *Rachel Almeleh*, Alberto's sister, came to take him. Because he didn't have the documents needed, the English said no. So, Alberto kept going to Congo. He had cousins in Congo, and they came to welcome him at the train station. He was allowed to enter. And it was the same thing with me. They checked my documents, and they let me enter.



Nace holding a drink with a group of men in the Belgian Congo

Interviewer: How much money did you have when you left Rhodes?

Interviewee: I think I had \$2.00. It could 18 Italian liras, 18 or 20 liras. That was everything I had.

Interviewer: When you left, how old were you?

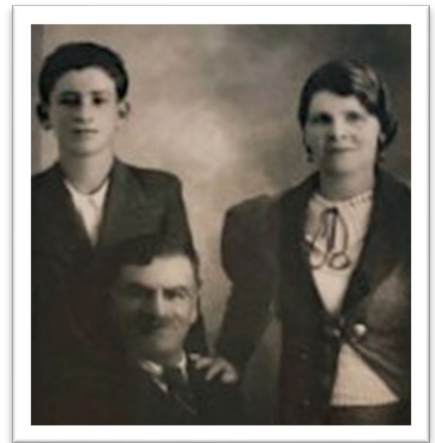
Interviewee: I left Rhodes in December 1939*. I was 16 years old and 4 months.

Interviewer: When you left Rhodes for Africa, what was going through your mind? Did you plan to return to Rhodes? Or did you think you'd never go back to your family's home?

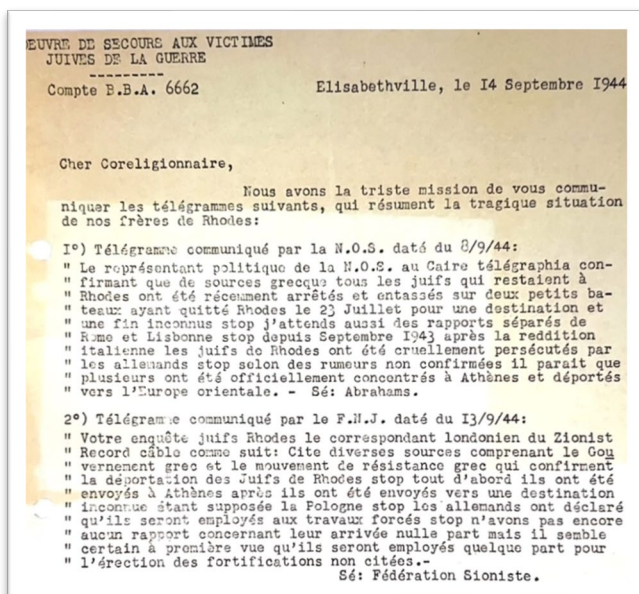
Interviewee: When I left Rhodes, I was some kind of – I was under stress.

I was sad for leaving behind my father and mother; this was the most important thing for me to adapt at that time, leaving behind my father and mother. This was very difficult for me. But I didn't have any other choice. My idea was going to Congo and stay there for a few years, and then go back to Rhodes with my father and mother. And I can remember I told my father and mother, *"Dad, don't think about it. In a few years, we'll be back, and we all will be living together again. Don't think about it. Let this dark age in Europe go away. And then we'll be back. Don't think about it. Alexandro and I will be back."*

But unfortunately, that didn't happen. War continued for a long time. And in 1944, when the war ended, I knew my father and mother were taken to a concentration camp, and they were killed over there. My father and mother didn't want to leave Rhodes. My brother Alexandro sent some tickets for my father and mother to come to Congo. They refused to come because my father said, *"We're not richer over there. We're not young. We're old."*



Nace with his parents,
Joseph and Victoria



September 14, 1944: Telegrams were sent to Elisabethville summarizing the tragic situation in Rhodes.

And they weren't that old. During that time, maybe my father was 56 years old, and my mother was 44 years old. We sent them tickets to come to Congo, and they refused it. My brother Alexandro had a good friend; he was Greek. And he had a big house in Cyprus. He suggested to my brother, *"Why don't they go to Cyprus and stay at my home; I can give them that house."* We sent them tickets to go to Cyprus. And my father and mother said, *"No, we don't know anyone over there. We don't know who they are. Nothing will happen to us here. We'll be fine."* And then— [End of Audio].

Body of Help for the
Jewish Victims of the War

No. B.B.A. 6662

Elizabethville (Lubumbashi), the 14th of September 1944

Dear Coreligionist,

We have the sad task of communicating the following telegrams which summarizes the tragic situation of our brothers of Rhodes.

1st) Telegram sent by the N.O.S. dated 8/9/44:

The political representative of the N.O.S. at Cairo telegraph confirming the Greek sources that all the Jews that stayed in Rhodes were recently arrested and thrown on to two small boats which left Rhodes, 23rd of July for a destination and an end unknown STOP I am also waiting for separate reports from Rome and Lisbon STOP Since September 1943 after the Italian retreat the Jews of Rhodes were cruelly persecuted by the Germans STOP according to unconfirmed rumors it seems that several were officially contained in Athens and deported towards East Europe. By: Abrahams.

2nd) Telegram sent by the F.N.J. dated 13/9/44:

Your inquiry of Jewish Rhodesis the London correspondent of Zionist Record cable as such: Citing diverse sources including the Greek government and the Greek resistance movement which confirms the deportation of the Jews of Rhodes STOP First of all they were sent to Athens afterwards they were sent towards an unknown destination which we supposed was Poland STOP The Germans stated that they would be employed at the labor camps STOP Haven't yet a single report concerning their arrival anywhere but it seems certain at first sight that they will be employed somewhere for the erection of fortifying our cities. By: Sionist Federation.

Translated telegrams summarizing the tragic events in Rhodes

**Nace's Italian passport was set to expire on March 6, 1939; he likely left Rhodes in December 1938 and was on the ship Giulio Cesare bound for Africa with a photo dated January 5, 1939. In the interview with Albert Almeleh, he left Rhodes in December 1938. Nace and Albert were on the same trip from Rhodes to the Belgian Congo.*

Sources:

- Treves, Nace. Interviews by Aron Hasson, December 19, 1996 and March 16, 1998. Rhodes Jewish Historical Foundation
- Almeleh, Albert. Interview by Aron Hasson, June 27, 1996. Rhodes Jewish Historical Foundation
- Photographs of Nace Treves, Albert Almeleh, and the group of men in the Belgian Congo. Courtesy of Nace and Sarah Treves, and Joe Treves
- Photograph of Nace with Joseph and Victoria. Courtesy of Alan Treves
- Copy of the telegrams sent to Elizabethville about the tragic events in Rhodes with English translation. Rhodes Jewish Historical Foundation
- Aron Hasson. (2014, August 2). *Nissim Treves speaking in June 2002 at the Kahal Shalom in Rhodes*. [Video]. YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AtW7jMWrvI0>
- Aron Hasson. (2014, August 2). *Albert Almeleh speaking in June 2002 at the Kahal Shalom in Rhodes*. [Video]. YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwahDID-oRA>
- Rhodes Jewish Museum. *Holocaust*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rhodesjewishmuseum.org/history/holocaust/>

Compiled and edited by the RJHF Archives