

Alberto Franco



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Hayatie, Enrico and Rosetta

Alberto Franco was the son of Hizkia Franco and Sol Alhadeff. He was married to Hayatie "Victoria" Israel. Their children are Enrico and Rosetta.

In July 1944, Alberto was arrested in Cos and was taken to Athens along with the members of the Jewish Community. Due to his marriage to Hayatie who had Turkish nationality, and the courageous intervention of the Turkish Consul Selahattin Ulkumen, Alberto was not sent to Auschwitz but was further detained in Haidari Concentration Camp.

In July 1945, Alberto Franco, Albert Hasson, Albert Hasson's wife Mathilda, daughter Stella, and Allegra Levy left Athens. They rented a sailboat to return to Rhodes, but the trip lasted over a month as authorities in Rhodes refused to permit them to land and were sent away. They went from one island to another until they got permission to enter Cos and eventually to Rhodes. In 2022, Rosetta Franco Morselli donated her father's diary to the Rhodes Jewish Historical Foundation.

JULY-AUGUST 1945: ACCOUNT OF THE JOURNEYS OF ALBERTO FRANCO, ALBERT HASSON, HIS WIFE MATHILDE, THEIR DAUGHTER STELLA, AND ALLEGRA LEVY ON A SAILBOAT FROM ATHENS TO COS AFTER THEIR DETENTION IN THE HAÏDARI CONCENTRATION CAMPS

The small diary was kept by Alberto Franco and transcribed by his daughter, Rosetta Franco Morselli of Brussels

• July 5, 1945, Thursday

Around 10 AM, we leave for Rhodes. Albert Hasson, his wife Mathilde, their little girl Stella, Allegra Levy, and I are accompanied by Policeman Costa. We hope it will be a simple interrogation. After 9 hours of navigation, we arrived in Rhodes. To meet Abraham(?) Amato. We were taken to the police. Intervention by Jacques Alhadeff. Albert Hasson and I were detained(?) by the police. The women and children slept at Bohor Piha's. Thanks to Jacques Alhadeff's intervention, I explained to Major Sherman, to whom I demonstrated, that I came to the Dodecanese legally, thanks to the Patmos permit. The Major then thinks of arranging the matter but, after leaving by car and returning a few minutes later, tells me to go for Piraeus. Huge disappointment. I showed him our condition, that we were deportees but nothing to do. Towards the evening, we board the sailboat.

• July 6, Friday

In the morning, intervention of the Mufti and Vice-Mayor Hagiconstantis(?). In the afternoon, intervention of the Orthodox Metropolitan on our behalf. No result. We have not seen Jacques (?) Alhadeff again, who, however, struggled a lot for us.

• July 7, Saturday

At 9 AM, departure from Rhodes. Very rough sea, accompanied by Policeman Costa. We arrived after difficult navigation in Symi. We rested until evening. Plan to leave after midnight. We...(?) another sailboat full of passengers for Kalymnos. Stormy sea. After dangerous navigation, we arrived at C...(?); from there, we leave for Cos after an hour's stop, arrive around noon, and see the dear faces of Hati and Enrico again (wife and son of Alberto). Still, we were ordered to leave immediately without letting us take on water. Very rough sea. Very poor morale and health. We arrived at Pserimos to rest a bit. Allegra complains of appendicitis pain throughout the trip.

• July 8, Sunday

My state of health does not allow me to leave today. In the morning, the same sailboat we met in Symi passed by Pserimos. Passengers inform us that new instructions concerning us have arrived at Cos Authorities. It is a question of joining Greek territory where we will obtain a permit to return... (?)

• July 9, Monday

Coming from Pserimos, we arrived around noon in Kalymnos—no new instructions except to join Piraeus. The Police Chief telegraphs, asking if there is a new instruction. Plan to meet friends Michali Marinos and ... Zurunis. Kind regards from all friends, appalled by our odyssey.

• **July 10, Tuesday**

We were waiting for an answer on the phone from the Lt of Police asking if there are new instructions concerning us. Plan to stay with Marinos. Very kind, also all other Kalymnos friends. To meet Jewish soldier Léo Ehrenfis(?), who begins to take care of our case. Everyone is appalled to learn of our odyssey. Allegra continues to have appendix pain.

• **July 11, Wednesday**

English Chief of Police informs us that no replies to his telegram have been received. We address Commander Colyman(?), who telegraphs on his side in the morning and gets the answer in the afternoon. He lets us know that we have to reach the nearest Greek territory, namely Samos, where the English authorities, who have already been informed, will issue us the permit to return. The departure is decided for the next day. Extreme kindness of friend Marinos and others and Jewish soldier Leo Ehrenfis(?). The doctor declares Allegra's appendix intervention necessary.

• **July 12, Thursday**

After obtaining a regular permit for Samos from the English authorities and a certificate of recommendation for the Hellenic authorities of Samos from the municipality of Kalymnos, we leave for Samos around 2 PM. The sea was not very rough. Allegra stayed in Kalymnos for an appendicitis operation. Authorities inform us that they have informed Samos Authorities. We stopped at Leros because of the high fever of little Stella. I spent the evening at Manolo Iohannaneas(?).

• **July 13, Friday**

Around 8 AM, 2 officers interrogate Cap. Stefani. Albert Hasson, me, and Stefani were arrested. Around noon, we are allowed to enter the sailboat guarded by a policeman who forbids us to chat with our friends who came to see us. Around 6 PM, one of the officers comes and asks to examine the documents on board. He promised to come back in half an hour but does not reappear. Slept in the sailboat. Turbulent sea. Low health and morale.

• **July 14, Saturday**

We are held under arrest on board the sailboat. In the port itself the sea is rough and bothers us a lot. Towards the evening, thanks to the intervention of a friend and Mayor of Leros, Mr. Costaris, we get to sleep ashore and are lodged in a cafe near the customs. Very low morale and health.

• **July 15, Sunday**

Contrary to the new instructions received from the English authorities of Kalymnos, Leros authorities, to our painful surprise, ordered us to head towards Piraeus via Levitha (between Kos and Paros), etc. We are withdrawing permits for Samos. I think the Leros authorities have not telegraphed to ask if there are any new instructions...

We leave around 2 PM, with bad health and morale, and into the rough seas. Hopefully, we can arrange a permit from the first Greek territory. We arrived at Levitha around 5:45 PM after a very difficult navigation.

- **July 16, Monday**

Departure from Levitha at 4 PM for Kinaros, but we returned after a very dangerous ½ hour of navigation. Unable to travel. Good drinking water. Good people at Levitha.

- **July 17, Tuesday**

Departed Levitha at 4:20 PM for Kinaros. After a ½ hour of rather dangerous navigation due to stormy seas, we arrived at 5:50 PM in Kinaros. We are housed in a stable full of insects of all kinds.

- **July 18, Wednesday**

Storm. Unable to travel.

- **July 19, Thursday**

Departure from Kinaros 5:35 AM. Very rough sea. Very dangerous navigation of the Kinaros-Amorgos canal. Passengers and crew felt terrible because of the sea. With great difficulty, all wet to the bone, we arrived at 11:15 AM before noon in Koufonissia. Other sailboats are anchored because of the storm.

- **July 20, Friday**

Storm. Unable to travel.

- **July 21, Saturday**

Storm. Unable to travel.

- **July 22, Sunday**

Departure from Koufonissia. Very rough seas for Paros, where we hope to arrange permits. We're accompanied by Cap. Stavro Suzza from Paros with his boat. The first engine stops in the port (water pump). Departure at 8 AM. After ½ hour of navigation, the second stop. By sail, we arrived in the small southern bay of Naxos. Repair not possible. Cap. Stavro set sail around 4 PM to the small island of Eraclia. Very good people. Nice village.

- **July 23, Monday**

Stefani works hard to repair water-filled engines, helped by blacksmith... Nicholas. Hope to fix it the next day. We stayed with Mr.(?) and Mrs. Calliope Suzzo(?) and his daughter, Miss Auti(?). Family is well. Let's regain some strength thanks to rest and a good climate. Stella has a boil on her forehead, causing her much pain.

- **July 24, Tuesday**

Contrary to our expectations, the engine was not fixed and the compressed air cylinder was exhausted. Cruel disappointment. We decide that Stefani leaves for Paros with Barque du Cap. Suzzo despite rough seas. I paid him 9,000 drachmas; they left with a cylinder and spare part at 11:50 AM. We recommend him to ask the naval authorities of Paros to make us stay because it is impossible to continue a journey which has lasted for almost 35 days in impossible conditions.

- **July 25, Wednesday**

Expect Stefani's return with hopefully good news.

- **July 26, Thursday**

Expect Stefani to be back all day. We went to bed around 9:30, and at 11:30 PM, Stefani appeared. He had just returned from Paros on a motor sailboat, which would tow us. He met his cousin, Mr. C... (?), and his family in Paros and hopes things can be sorted out there. We decided to leave at dawn.

- **July 27, Friday**

Around 1 AM, our two sailors woke us and told us that we were leaving immediately. We got up and dressed, greeted the good people who had given us hospitality, and paid. We...to embark. We left at 1h25; the sea seemed good. We are doing approximately 5 miles per hour. After half an hour of navigation, the wind dropped, and the sea was rough. The rope broke between Naxos and Paros, and with difficulty, we repaired it. The sea is good between Paros and Antipatros, but rough seas and the rope that binds us to the other motor sailer breaks again before reaching Paros. We repaired it, and soon after, we arrived in Paros very tired, around 8:30 AM. Mr. Carelakis(?) took us home. He and his family were extremely kind. We sent a long telegram after having eaten at the Carelakis.

- **July 28, Saturday**

We are resting. Nothing to report except kindness of Carelakis family.

- **July 29, Sunday**

Nothing to report.

- **July 30, Monday**

In the morning, I received a telegram from my friend Nikita Sifonios (?). He was very upset by our superfluous adventures; he was working and was going to telegraph us.

- **July 31, Tuesday**

In the afternoon we received a new telegram from our friend Sifonios announcing that the Allodapon Directorate will telegraph...Paros issued us permits to re-enter Cos. I take advantage of the departure of a sailboat for Kalymnos to inform my dear Hati (wife of Alberto Franco).

- **August 1, Wednesday**

We are informed by the police station that we have received a dispatch from Director Allodapon (Vlastaris) to leave us free to go to Athens, and from there, we will return to Cos. New disappointment! Towards the evening, we received the third dispatch from Sifonios confirming this news to us but adding that our permit to return with means(?) granted by Allodapon. To telegraph Sifonios, praying to intervene to get us, if possible, to transmit permits and to return from here without going as far as Piraeus. We await a response. Stefanis leaves for Siro for engine part repair.

- **August 2, Thursday**

Awaiting a quick response.

- **August 3, Friday**

Awaiting dispatch reply to Sifonios. Stefanis returns from Siro after repairing the engine part.

- **August 4, Saturday**

Still no response from Sifonios. The engine is repaired, but needs another tune-up and the repair of the tubes and the substitution of some screws.

- **August 5, Sunday**

I telegraphed to H(?) to ensure that my dispatch to Sifonios reached its destination. Shortly after, I received the expected response from Sifonios confirming the need to go to Athens, and from there, we could return to Cos, but with great surprise, he informed us that Juliette and Moché Ménaché (sister-in-law and brother-in-law of Albert Franco) were already in Athens and that we will return together to Cos. This is completely unexpected for us. We decided to leave tomorrow, having to carry out some necessary repairs and formalities.

- **August 6, Monday**

Around 2 PM, to leave for Syra. Mr. Carelakis pay (?).

THE STORY ENDS HERE. THEY WERE ABLE TO ARRIVE SAFELY IN COS.