

At Sea



This photo was taken on our boat at Burgazada, the second of the Prince's Islands on the Sea of Marmara. When we started going to Burgazada for the summer, we also acquired a boat and spend nice days on the sea with our friends. Here you can see some of them, Ester Tani at the back on the right, Lili Hananel and her daughter. The photo must have been taken by my wife, Suzan. We spent many a nice day like this at sea in the summer. I liked this motor-boat very much. It had 50 horsepower and was the only one of its kind on the island.

We have become residents of Burgaz [one of the Princess Islands] since 1945. We had everything within reach there. The sea, the sun, friends, and the entertainments at the clubs. We used to spend our summers in this way. We didn't fancy going to Bodrum and etc like nowadays' families. We didn't feel such a need.

I was always interested in motor vehicles. I used to rent motorcycles during my youth. One winter day, I took the man renting the motorcycles, on the back of my bike and we rode to Kilyos. The weather was so cold that, upon our return to the garage, I lost consciousness for one or two minutes. I took great pleasure in these trips. There was an empty field in Talimhane, where cars and motorcycles were rented. The Talimhane [a neighborhood on the European side] tour by car cost 10 kurus. [kurus = 1/100 of lira]

I started my business life at the place of the famous glass merchant of the time, called Ishak Niyego. Our place was in Karakoy. [district on the European side]. We had a warehouse, which we would call a "factory", and a shop at the exit of the "Tunel" [13] in Karakoy. The customers' orders were taken at the shop, and then we would prepare them at the warehouse. The glass was processed according to the order, or mirrored. I was the technician of the firm, and my assistant was Israel Menase. (later on he became the president of the Jewish Community) I met my late wife Suzan there. She was the secretary of the firm.

We were all together 15-20 people in the shop, and were all Jewish. I worked there for 10-12 years, till the Wealth Tax [14] was imposed, and ruined our lives. During the Wealth Tax event, our firm

was closed, and we became unemployed.

My friend and confidant Izak Altabev (he became a member of the Turkish National Assembly), was the General manager of the Koc Company [one of the oldest companies of Istanbul's most important group of companies dealing with many diverse industries, from the automotive to the electronic.] During one of our conversations we had together, I learned about Vehbi Koc's personality, and his being open to new investments. Thanks to Izak, we went to meet Vehbi Koc himself, owner and biggest shareholder of the company. At the end of the meeting, we came to the conclusion that a separate "glass" branch could be opened within the company's own structure. From then on I had a new job. We imported the glass from various parts of Europe. Hungary, Bulgaria, and Belgium were the countries with which we worked frequently.

There was also the installation, iron, and export divisions, within the structure of Koc. "Glass Division" was the last one that was founded. The profit made by the glass division within the first year of its foundation, constituted for the 62% of the profit made by all of the other companies. We became first in four branches with 62%. 38% was shared by the other three divisions. I continued working there for long years. After a certain period of time, I started receiving bonuses from the profits.

One day in 1971-1972, while I was the general manager of the glass division of the Koc Company, I received an invitation from a firm in Britain, which we imported some goods from. "Pilkington Brothers" was Britain's most famous glass factory, had 40.000 workers, and everything was automatized. My wife Suzan, and I went to Britain to visit the factory upon the invitation we received. They took us around. We went to Sweden, Norway, and Denmark with the overcraft. (the guide who showed us around in Sweden, was Jewish-Swedish) . We went to Austria after this trip. I had to make a decision, as a result of the meetings I had had with one of the division managers over there. We were producing glasswool under the brandname "Izocam", within Koc's divisions. The population of Austria was only 7 million, and was consuming 17 tons of this material (Izocam) a day. On the other hand, Turkey had a population of 25 million people, and we were only producing one ton a day. We learned that lack of advertising was the cause of the situation. When we returned, we prepared a feasibility report, and presented it to Koc Holding. We founded a factory, with 4 million liras, and I became a shareholder. We produced 4 tons a day of the material, and sold one ton of it. After 6 months of advertisement campaigns, it was not possible to find glasswool on the market any more. The 4 tons we produced daily, was sold immediately. As a result, we enlarged the factory, and increased the production to 11 tons a day. As you can understand "I can say that I'm the creator of Izocam. As you know this is very good material used both in sound and heat isolation. Our expert engineers take part in the installation process, where the material is installed in the places it's needed.

In the same way, I also took part in the foundation of Aygaz [an LPG, liquid petrol fuel company]. We used special lamps at our houses on the Princess Islands. We used to cook our food on them. On one of the trips we made to Israel, I saw Aygaz tanks [liquid fuel tanks], and its smaller sizes. Till then, we didn't have such LPG tanks. Upon my return, I immediately presented a proposal to Koc Holding. We did some research. A Jewish Italian citizen, originally from Egypt, had founded such a factory there. We contacted him, and visited his factory. I brought him to Koc Holding. He explained to us about the things that had to be done. The factory was founded with 4 million dollars. This factory today is very rich. Besides its capital of 4 quadrillion, it owns ships, cisterns,

and quite a lot of land.