

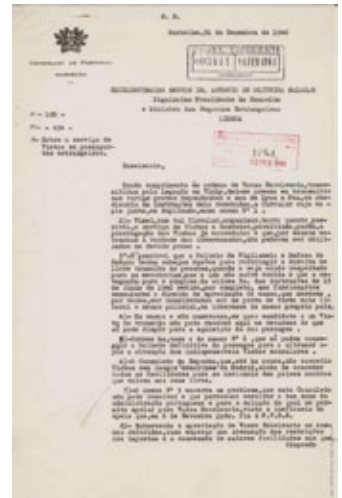
Spared Lives

The actions of three Portuguese diplomats in World War II

31 Dec. 1940

Official letter n° 180 from the Portuguese Consul in Marseilles, José Augusto de Magalhães, to the MNE, criticizing the restrictions to people's right of free transit introduced by Circular n° 29, and asking to be replaced as he did not wish to act in accordance with same.

(AHD - 2P, A44, M152)



Marseilles, 31 December 1940

Dr. António de Oliveira Salazar
President of the Council and
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Lisbon

Excellency,

1) – In compliance with Your Excellency's orders, conveyed through the Vichy Legation, I was quick to transmit to the various dependent posts, as well as to those of Lyon and Pau, a Circular with the instructions therein contained. I attach a copy of this Circular in duplicate, under Annex n° 1.

2) – My aim in sending that Circular was to ensure the best possible organization of the visa service whilst nevertheless permitting visas already granted, which for reasons beyond their bearers' control had not been used within their period of validity, to be renewed.

3) – It is possible that the Police of Vigilance and Defense of the State (PVDE) has overwhelming reasons to restrict the free movement of people, whilst still allowing the free movement of goods, but there is no doubt that the revocation, pure and simple, of sub-paragraph 3 of the instructions dated 13 June 1940, strips consular functionaries of the right to evaluate certain cases which, in the interest of our own country, should sometimes be judged from a more liberal, less police-oriented point of view.

4) – In many cases the applicant for a transit visa cannot receive, here, the funds he may have, there, to buy his passage.

5) – In others, such as that mentioned in Annex n° 2, applicants will only be able to buy their definitive passage overseas once they have obtained the necessary consular visas.

6) – The Spanish Consulate, which until recently granted no visas without lengthy "démarches" in Madrid, has just granted all facilities to the nationals of neutral countries returning to their homes.

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7) – In Annex nº 3 I enclose a problem which cannot be solved by the Consulate and which appears to me to involve the good name of Portuguese administration. I appeal to Your Excellency to find a solution, as my appeal of 8 November last to the PVDE went unanswered.

8) – I submit said Annexes for Your Excellency's perusal and dare to hope that the restrictions now imposed will be lightened and greater facilities granted for those who, whilst having sufficient funds to travel to their countries of destination, are locked in a vicious circle from which it is difficult to emerge: Consular Visas required for definitive purchase of passage; passage to be shown when obtaining a transit visa.

9) – Would not a declaration from the Shipping lines to the effect that they have received a deposit on account for a ticket to be issued, suffice for the concession of a transit visa? Could we not grant similar facilities to Pan-American Airways and the Rockefeller Foundation?

10) – To ensure proper efficiency of their delicate mission the diplomatic bags of friendly nations cannot be delayed by one hour, much less by the several days now needed for telegraphic consultations and decisions. Telegrams sent between the 21st and the 23rd have only just arrived.

11) – Our ancestors carved out our homeland on a strip of Europe facing the Atlantic which today, as the result of Your Excellency's wise and clairvoyant government, is the only door left open to the rest of the world through which victims of political and religious persecution can escape. Can we, should we, betraying the mission entrusted to us by this position and by the providential government that has made Portugal happy at this difficult moment in history that humanity is now undergoing, obstruct the route and prevent the salvation of those needing to leave this Old World in turmoil?

12) – An incorrigible dreamer, through my spirit of hard work and organization, I considered the needs of our industry and of our colonies, and aspired to see the bearers of vast fortunes, honestly come by, and proven technical skills who seek us out, settle in our homeland or in our Colonial Empire, thus becoming a decisive factor in the progress of these places. The negativist mission imposed by these latest instructions is therefore most unpleasant for me. I have always found it hard to say No, today more than ever. I would ask therefore to be replaced as soon as possible, preferably by a colleague who takes pleasure in pronouncing that word and in creating difficulties even for the most legitimate of requests.

13) – Some creatures are born to do evil and others feeling only pleasure from doing good: many consider the former to be strong and

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the latter weak. Out of a sense of loyalty I must declare that I belong to the latter group and on the threshold of a new year, express ardent hopes for the happiness of Your Excellency, which is as if to say for the happiness of our beloved Nation, which I wish neither to damage nor embarrass by my weaknesses born of a character which given my age will not change.

I take this opportunity to reiterate to Your Excellency the protestations of my highest consideration.

AT THE SERVICE OF THE NATION

s/ Dr. José Augusto de Magalhães
Consul