

Spared Lives

The actions of three Portuguese diplomats in World War II

4 Nov. 1944

Telegram n° 347 from the Portuguese Legation in Berlin communicating start of talks with the German Foreign Ministry on the situation of the Hungarian Jews protect by the Portuguese Legation in Budapest, revealing German counter-information and unawareness of Count Tovar, Portuguese Minister in Berlin.

(AHD - Cipher, Collection Telegrams to Bern)

347 - Have initiated essential preparatory talks in Foreign Ministry here to clarify situation Hungarian Jews protected our Legation Budapest. This Ministry has no knowledge of Jewish protégés Portugal except for a certain Israelite family authorized on account special interest shown Minister (?) Sampaio Garrido. Business pending with Sweden who has granted protection numerous Jews and given many passports of convenience. Switzerland has granted neither passports nor protection to Jews - ? - but submitted International Red Cross project wishing for its approval. Tomorrow I will meet with the Swedish Minister. Foreign Minister promised telegraph German Legation in Budapest to find out more about Portuguese protégés. Generally, the issue is the following: all Jews resident Hungary without distinction of nationality (?) must work in the arms factories and are subject to a special exception regime. Hungarian government places no difficulty departure foreign Jews and appears also to have agreed departure limited number Hungarian Jews protected by Sweden. Transit through Reich territory depends however special authorization German Government. Neither Hungarian nor German governments admit possibility of Hungarian or foreign Jews remaining in Hungary benefiting from privileged regime due to protection passports or letters issued by any foreign government. Situation is identical to one occurred recently with Jews resident in the Reich: they either left the country or were subject to the regime established for Israelites. To continue my X (?) matter first point to clarify is whether Portuguese government is willing to receive (?) on Portuguese territory Jews under its protection Hungary. I beg (?) Your Excellency (?) enable me take a position on this point in my next meeting - coded, 2 November.

s/ Tovar

