

Spared Lives

The actions of three Portuguese diplomats in World War II

20 Apr. 1945

Information/Summary by Teixeira Branquinho describing the procedures and organization set up in Budapest to support Portugal's protection of the Jews in Hungary.

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On the subject of telegram nº 18 from the Portuguese Legation in Bucarest please note the following:

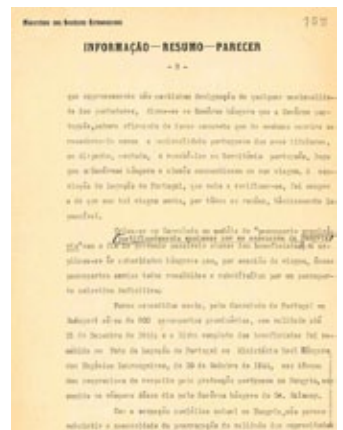
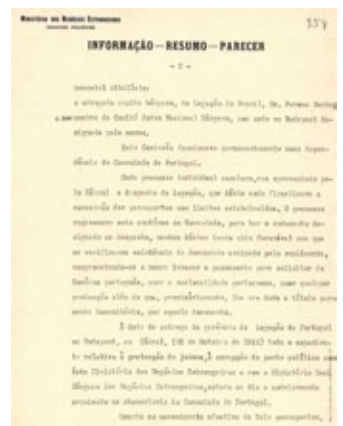
In order to save the lives of Hungarian Semites threatened with persecution or death on account of the racial measures adopted by the Hungarian Government under Mr. Stoya, H.E. the Minister instructed the Portuguese Legation in Budapest to attempt to save as many people under threat as possible.

Along the lines of the system adopted by the legations of neutral countries in Hungary, namely Sweden, on the instructions of H.E. the Minister the Portuguese Legation authorized the Portuguese Consulate in Budapest to issue "provisional Portuguese passports" to all Hungarian Semites who could provide unmistakable evidence that in the last years they had had any type of moral, intellectual or commercial ties with Portugal or Brazil (Brazilian interests were looked after by the Portuguese Legation and the Brazilian Government followed the same criterion on the racial issue).

The applications from the interested parties were submitted exclusively to the Consulate where an individual file was organized on each one, properly documented and informed by a committee expressly set up for this purpose, consisting of the Portuguese Consul, Dr. Jules Gulden, doctor of law and permanent government adviser, a Hungarian Semite from the Brazilian Legation, Dr. Ferenc Barta, a lawyer, and a member appointed by the Hungarian National Jewish Committee, based in Budapest.

The Committee worked non-stop in a room at the Portuguese Consulate.

Once each individual file was completed it was submitted by the Consul for approval by the Legation who was thus able to supervise the concession of passports within the limits established. The process then returned to the Consulate, to be treated as indicated in the dispatch, none of which was favorable unless the applicant had signed a document undertaking never to invoke the passport to request from the Portuguese government Portuguese nationality or any protection other than that provisionally afforded on a purely humanitarian basis by that document.



On the date when the Portuguese Legation in Budapest was handed over to the Consul (29 October 1944), with the exception of the political part with this Foreign Ministry and with the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, all work relating to the protection of Jews was up to date and exemplarily filed in the chancery of the Portuguese Consulate.

As for actually deserving these passports which purposely did not mention the nationality of the bearers, the Hungarian government was told by the Portuguese government that although its bearers would never be given Portuguese nationality, the Portuguese government was willing to welcome them on Portuguese territory as soon as the Hungarian and German governments consented to the journey. The Portuguese Legation's conviction, which was later proved right, was that for various reasons this journey would prove technically impossible.

A model of a "provisional passport" was created at the Consulate to avoid any abuses by the benefited people, justifiably anxious to escape from Hungary. It was explained to the Hungarian authorities that at the time of the journey the passports would be collected and replaced by one definitive group passport.

The Portuguese Consulate in Budapest granted approximately 800 provisional passports valid until 31 December 1944. A complete list of the benefited people was sent in a Note from the Portuguese Legation to the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated 20 October 1944 under the terms of an undertaking to respect Portuguese protection in Hungary given the previous day by the Hungarian government under Mr. Salcsy.

With the current Soviet occupation of Hungary I do not think there is any need to renew the validity of said passports particularly as their bearers, having been previously condemned by the Nazi authorities, will not be suspect by the occupying power. Be that as it may, there appears to be no need to maintain this Portuguese protection in Hungary particularly as there is no lawfully constituted national Government or diplomatic relations resumed with other countries. On the other hand, for administrative reasons and to measure the extent of Portuguese protection in Hungary it would be better to seize any provisional passports presented at Portuguese departments for renewal, and send them to the Portuguese Consulate in Budapest.

Lisbon, 20 April 1945

s/Branquinho