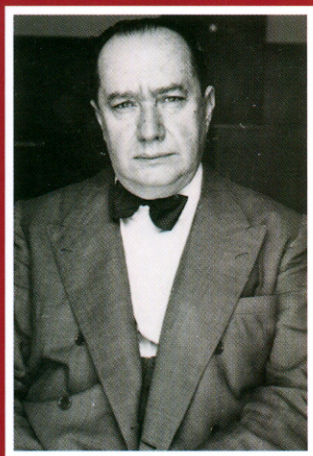


Two Diplomats and People in Need



Souza Dantas



Raoul Wallenberg

By Fábio Koifman and Jill Blonsky

Diplomats and People in Need

To be used by the Brazilian Embassy in Stockholm

Diplomats and People in Need

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The cover photograph of Raoul Wallenberg, Sweden, 1944 is from
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Preface

A vision of humanity and responsibility

In the late 1930s, society as a whole – and public opinion – had not yet fully embraced the idea of and attention to human rights and was not consistently engaged in humanitarian assistance. With the exception of the endorsement by a relative few, as the International Red Cross (1863), Save the Children (1919), those concepts became widely accepted only decades later. The League of Nations, an outcome of the Versailles Treaty of 1919, already had failed in its mission to protect citizens and maintain peace and was replaced with the establishment of the United Nations only in 1945, which in turn took a long time to become effective in the field of International Humanitarian Law.

But in those troubled times when States failed to guarantee the integrity of their civilian citizens, men and women of principle acted on their own to defend the dignity and survival of many people, and among those heroic individuals were two great diplomats, a Brazilian and a Swede, who are exemplars of two very important traits for the career: diplomacy requires both passion and perspective.

Both Souza Dantas and Raoul Wallenburg were men ahead of their times. Souza Dantas realized early on and reported that those who most needed assistance were close to being “immediately admitted in the concentration camps, that could be included in the chapter of Dante’s Inferno.”

It was not easy to obtain an entry visa to Brazil in light of Circular 1.127 of 1937: the possession of property, capital, and family members in Brazilian territory was not always sufficient for a foreigner, unless backed by political interference. The great merit of Souza Dantas was that he tried to help everyone and, facing danger,

even issued illegal visas. In mid-1942 and with keen awareness, he described in great detail “the industry of death in all its intricacies”.

A diplomat from the age of 24, noted for his professional competence, Souza Dantas believed that he could represent the very best of the Brazilian soul by saving people at risk, foreshadowing a central concern of nations in the decades to come. Other officials of Brazil’s Foreign Ministry, such as Guimaraes Rosa, Aracy de Carvalho, Martins de Souza, and Castro Brandão, also issued visas which saved people whose lives were at grave risk in Europe.

Diplomats of other nations acted similarly, such as Japan’s Chiune Sugihara and The Netherland’s Ian Zwartendijk in Lithuania; China’s Feng-Shan Hoo in Vienna; Portugal’s Aristides de Souza Mendes in Bordeaux; Hiram Bingham IV of the United States in Marseilles; and many others in Budapest, such as Carl Lutz of Switzerland, Carlos de Liz-Teixeira Branquinho from Portugal, Italy’s Giorgio Perlasca, Spain’s Angel Sanz Briz, Poland’s Henryk Slawik, and from Sweden Raoul Wallenberg and his other Swedish colleagues Per Anger, Lars Berg, Carl Ivan Danielson, and Waldemar Langlet. Not forgetting Count Folke Bernadotte, godfather to King Carl XVI Gustaf, who served as vice-chairman of the Swedish Red Cross which helped release and brought to Sweden thousands of prisoners in the legendary “white buses.” Folke himself sacrificed his life as the victim of an attack in Jerusalem in 1948 while acting in a humanitarian mediation mission mandated by the UN General Assembly under the Presidency of Oswaldo Aranha, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brazil.

Both Dantas and Raoul were declared “Righteous Men Among the Nations” by Israel’s Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, and institutions were created bearing the name “Raoul Wallenberg International Foundation” and “Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law” (Lund, 1986). The Swedish diplomat is deservedly the subject of many publications describing his accomplishments. Dantas, who is forever the pride of the Brazilian

Foreign Service, is being presented in English for the first time with this article by historian Koifman, which hopefully will make his great merit more widely known beyond isolated references (New York Times, July 14, 2013:“Of the visas Mr. Dantas issued, mine was number 447; thanks to him, my family and I were able to begin new lives as Americans,” Felix Rohatyn, former US Ambassador to France.)

Even today, no country in the world, unfortunately, can guarantee absolute respect for human rights or – within its borders – ignore the continued need to provide humanitarian aid or special care to vulnerable people. The inveterate human tendency to disregard those rights and needs – which have been a focus of concern since long before the French Revolution – is the product of human nature or personality when it forgets reason and the human heart, and it has caused terrible consequences and immense pain seeking redress.

Underprivileged adults and children and persecuted minorities, especially when subjected to violence and severe physical and mental suffering, depend on protection. Certain humanitarian situations require action, whether in times of conflict or not, such as hunger, serious disease, natural disaster, and social neglect. The effort to remedy such ills has engaged, now and in the past, dedicated people who struggled, sometimes in precarious or dangerous circumstances, to guarantee basic rights for the afflicted: the right to life with dignity, to be protected, and to live in security.

The task of protecting citizens, a primary role of the nation state, has been undertaken by courageous men and women whose consciences impel them to act vigorously and with generosity, whether in an official capacity or through their own private initiatives.

The basic rights of all human beings embrace the realms of the political and civil (such as the right to property or freedom of expression); the economic and social (such as the right to work, to education, and to health) and of the community (the right to self-determination and to peace). But the fundamental right, from

which all the others derive, is the right to life, and the origins of its protection are found in the codes and rules of religions and cultures worldwide throughout human history.

The first declarations of human rights in the modern era were the Virginia Declaration of Human Rights in 1776 at the outset of the American Revolution, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in 1789 at the beginning of the French Revolution. But thereafter until 1948 when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, injustices proliferated with little means of a legal response from the international community.

Today, International Humanitarian Law refers to a set of rules which seeks to limit the human impact of conflicts, to protect people who do not take part in hostilities, and to restrict the means and methods of warfare. Its modern development began in 1864 with the signing of the First Geneva Convention for the “Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field,” by which the signatory states agreed on practical rules reflecting a delicate balance between their humanitarian concerns and military requirements. There followed the Second Convention in 1906 setting limits on naval warfare, and the Third in 1929 regarding the treatment of prisoners of war. However, a considerable part of international humanitarian law was only consolidated in the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and in its 1977 Additional Protocols, which for the first time mandated the protection of civilians.

International Humanitarian Law seeks to establish the clearest possible distinction between combatants and civilians, in order to ensure some rights to the combatants and to maximize the safety of civilians. But what does the law say when civilians are targets of the use of force by their own State, such as when civil wars or ethnic or religious conflicts put a population or part of it under threat from the same State which should guarantee their safety?

The answer to this question was not directly answered in those

Geneva Conventions, implying a gap in Humanitarian Law which began to be discussed by international society in the 1980s. Over the past thirty years, the goal of protecting civilians exposed to conflict situations in their States prompted successive approaches: the Duty to Intervene in the 1980s, Humanitarian Intervention in the 1990s, and the Responsibility to Protect in the 2000s.

The concept which gives States the “Responsibility to Protect” their populations – against genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing – was approved unanimously by the UN General Assembly in Resolution A/Res/60/1 endorsed by the Security Council in April 2006. It represented the evolution of international society in terms of Humanitarian Law, as chastened by the tragic examples of Rwanda, Darfur, and the Congo.

However, some States even approving the Resolution have difficulties in applying the concept, fearing it will be used as a tool for foreign intervention. The Brazilian position, based on concern for the tragedies of civilians and always stressing the importance of preventive measures, is that the use of force for protection is ultimately justified. In 2011, when traditionally Brazil opened the General Assembly of the United Nations, the President advanced the proposal of “responsibility while protecting” to ensure that the force used to protect civilians not cause more damage than the situation which led to its use. It advocates careful and limited action and opposes unilateral humanitarian interventions or those arising from hidden interests.

Great advances were made by the international community in recent decades in order to fulfill the duty to protect civilians in various aspects. Agencies were created by the United Nations dedicated to the care of refugees and of children and to fight hunger. UNICEF, FAO, WFP, UNHCR, PNUD and other agencies now have a significant global presence in providing relief to the afflicted, whether or not they are victims of armed conflict.

For the whole of global society, the development of the media

was essential to awaken and prepare public opinion, by spreading awareness of the many emergency humanitarian crises caused by shortages, conflicts, and natural disasters, especially in poor and densely populated regions. It became necessary to expand the international community's ability to cope with those situations and to develop initiatives and projects in a broadly shared way among government sectors and civil society. Prevention, response, and reconstruction became essential.

Increasingly, States-whether by their isolated efforts or acting collectively within international organizations- as well as individuals began to develop projects to assist those in need. At the same time, private organizations were created, such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC, at the behest of Albert Einstein), the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) set up in 1945, Oxfam, Medecins sans Frontieres dating from 1971. And also helping on a broad scale to improve the lives of those in need have been individual citizens, such as Graca Machel – a great lady and friend to whom I pay tribute; the Gates, Buffetts and Safras of this world, Bono, Oprah Winfrey and so many others who have made enormous efforts on their own.

In this regard, particular respect and honor should be paid to a great woman of Brazilian descent, the founder of many institutions for the care of children and disabled people, such as Silviahemmet (dementia care), Global Child Forum, Care About the Children, World Childhood Foundation (active in 17 countries), Mentor Foundation (drug prevention in 80 nations), which are having an impact upon the lives of millions of elderly, children and young people, the Queen Silvia of Sweden.

The UN General Assembly chose August 19 as World Humanitarian Day to honor those who offer assistance and relief to millions of people, recognizing their sacrifices and contributions in rendering humanitarian services to the disadvantaged. That date was chosen because, on August 19, 2003, many lives were lost,

including that of the Coordinator of the UN to Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello from Brazil, in an attack on the Mission's headquarters in Baghdad.

The aims of this publication are to immortalize those who have suffered privation – "to forget is to concede; remembering is an act of defiance" – and to honor men and women who with generosity of spirit dedicated a part of their lives to mitigate the suffering of others.

I like to remember as well those who, by migrating to Brazil from Europe in troubled times, saved their lives and through their work contributed to the well being of my country.

The conduct of Souza Dantas, Raoul Wallenberg, and all those people who committed themselves, even if momentarily, to the care of the persecuted or needy, manifests not an isolated act but a humanitarian spirit which they embodied and which one hopes will be embraced by all of us.

LEDA LUCIA CAMARGO
Ambassador of Brazil
Stockholm, June 2014

“SOUZA DANTAS”

Fábio Koifman

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FÁBIO KOIFMAN is professor of the History of International Relations at the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro. He received his Ph.D. in History. He is the author of “Quixote in the Darkness: Ambassador Souza Dantas” and the “Refugees from Nazism and The Ideal Immigrant: The Ministry of Justice and the Entry of Foreigners to Brazil (1941–1945)”. He has organized and edited various books to which he also contributed, written numerous articles, and contributed to books edited by others.

1: Introduction

This paper is based on research that was published in a book of 540 pages titled *Quixote in the Darkness: Ambassador Souza Dantas and Refugees from Nazism (Quixote nas trevas: o embaixador Souza Dantas e os refugiados do nazismo)*, whose first edition was released in Brazil in 2002 by the publishing house Record. The result of three years of research and study, the book was based on over 7,500 documents, thirty hours of taped interviews and dozens of other testimonials. The full original Portuguese version has yet to be translated into English or any other language. Due to limitations of space, many details of the study have necessarily been omitted in the following pages, as have the notes listing sources. Hopefully, in the not so distant future, it will be possible to present the non-Portuguese reading public with a version of the original work in English. The bulk of the information gathered during the research on the original study was eventually sent to the Yad Vashem Museum in Jerusalem in 2002, as part of the process for the recognition of Souza Dantas. In 2003, the ambassador was recognized as one of the Righteous Among the Nations.

Abbreviations (the original Portuguese letters are retained)

CIC: Council on Immigration and Colonization

DASP: Administrative Department of the Public Service

DNI: National Department of Immigration

IPMA: Inspectorate of Maritime and Air Police

MJIA: Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs

MRE: Ministry of External Relations

SRE: Foreigner Registration Services of the Civil Police of the Federal District

Luiz Martins de Souza Dantas was born on February 17, 1876, in Rio de Janeiro. In December 1896, he graduated in law. From then on, he scaled all the echelons of the diplomatic career, entering at the lowest rank, in 1897, and climbing to the coveted post of Ambassador in Paris, from which he retired in 1944. He served in St. Petersburg, Rome and Buenos Aires. In 1916, he was appointed Undersecretary of State for External Relations and then temporarily assumed the post of Minister of External Relations for approximately six months. This was during the First World War, when the post was an especially difficult one. In 1917, he was named ambassador in Rome. On 17 November 1922, he became ambassador of Brazil to France. While occupying this post, in 1923, Souza Dantas was Brazil's representative in the Executive Council of the League of Nations. He held the same post in 1924 and 1926. In August 1930, Souza Dantas was awarded the *Grande-Croix* of the *Légion d'Honneur*, a significant honor, from the French government.

The ambassador became dean of the diplomatic corps in Paris the following year. A single man until the age of fifty-seven, in September 1933, Souza Dantas married an American, Elise Meyer Stern. The most famous of her brothers was Eugene Meyer, who acquired the bankrupt newspaper, *The Washington Post*, the same year, and turned it into one of the most important newspapers in the United States. However, the great love of the ambassador's life was not her but the French actress Madeleine Carlier. The enormous prestige and political instincts of Souza Dantas kept him for more than 20 years as Ambassador of Brazil in Paris, one of the most enviable positions in the Ministry of External Relations (MRE). From 1940 on, there would be considerable strain put on Souza Dantas' relationship with President Getúlio Vargas, culminating in an administrative inquiry into certain of the ambassador's acts in 1941.

Until the 1930s, Brazil did not have a very restrictive immigration policy. Because of legislation influenced by a specifically Brazilian brand of eugenic thinking, this policy started to change in 1934.

The MRE developed the first circular specifically restricting the immigration of Jews in 1937; namely, the secret Circular no. 1,127. During the *Estado Novo* (New State, 1937–1945) approximately fifty circulars dealing solely with the entry of foreigners to Brazil were issued. Twelve of these dealt specifically with Jews.

From 1938 on, the Brazilian government decided to implement a strict and organized system of control. Aranha took over as head of the MRE in March 1938, and shortly after President Vargas signed two important decrees dealing with the entry of foreigners into the country, Decree-law no.406 of May 4 and Decree-law no. 3 010 of August 20 . Decree-law no. 3 010 was extensive, extremely detailed, and resembled a kind of manual. It provided not only the rules and guidelines to follow, but also set down and standardized all the details related to the entry of foreigners to Brazil.

The year 1938 marked the beginning of Nazi expansion, but also the so-called “critical years” (1939–1941) for the Jews of Europe. The number of people seeking refuge outside the continent increased, and also the number of refugees presenting themselves before the Brazilian diplomatic offices abroad.

Even with the effectiveness of the new legislation in reducing the number of Jews entering Brazil, the MRE continued to be accused by the Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs (MJIA) as incompetent and inefficient in controlling the entry of foreigners into the country. Under instructions from President Vargas, throughout 1940 and early 1941, the MJIA, the minister Francisco Campos, and his secretary Ernani Reis, drafted a new decree-law, no. 3175. With its approval by the president on April 7, 1941, the entire decision-making power in relation to the granting of visas to foreigners came under the administrative control of the MJIF. The new law would seal the fate of who still sought to immigrate to Brazil. In addition to restricting the entry of foreigners to Brazil, it also stated that the visas issued before the publication of the new law, and not used within 90 days of the prescribed term, could only be renewed or deemed valid

with great difficulty. Even though the control exercised by the MRE over the entry of Jews had been rigid and selective, the practices of the MJIA would prove far more rigorous and efficient.

With the outbreak of World War II, the complaints about irregularities in the entry of foreigners to Brazil grew, and the first administrative inquiries were initiated in the second half of 1940, when commissions of inquiry were “appointed by the president of the republic to investigate irregularities in the entry and stay of foreigners in the country”. As a result of one inquiry, concluded in January 1941, a number of public officials were punished, including 13 who were dismissed. Among those involved in the irregularities was a general of the army. In the complicated context of late 1940 and early 1941, when the granting of a visa to Brazil was an extremely sensitive issue, Souza Dantas took action, guided by his feelings of humanity.

2: Brazil and the Refugee Question

In May, 1940, the German armies advanced on countries that already concentrated within their territory refugees from many other European countries under Nazi occupation or influence. In panic flight before the advancing German troops, thousands of people desperately sought to escape from Europe. Long line-ups formed in front of diplomatic missions. Afraid of losing their places in the ranks, people remained in the streets for days, waiting for the chance to speak personally with a diplomatic representative, and perhaps get a visa. With reports of the defeat of the French and allied armies, and the news of the German military advances, France became a country in chaos, overwhelmed by the panic of people in flight.

In the face of the imminent entry of an enemy army into Paris, the French government withdrew from the capital, on June 10, 1940, and a few days later, on the 14th, German soldiers marched into the

city. With the departure of the French government from Paris on June 11, 1940, Souza Dantas left for Ballan-Miré (Indre-et-Loire) in the company of the embassy counsellor Carlos Ramos da Silveira Martins. They arrived on June 12. Ambassador Souza Dantas' wife had already returned to the United States.

The earliest records to be found of "irregular" diplomatic visas granted by the ambassador begin to appear from the moment of his departure from Paris. Souza Dantas' preoccupation with the refugee situation had not begun with the fall of France, but faced with the despair and the absolute necessity of so many to flee the country, in order to survival, the ambassador responded by offering a means of escape to those who somehow managed to reach him. The visas he personally signed provide physical evidence of the humanitarian acts of Souza Dantas, although it is our conviction that other, unrecorded acts, such as interventions with local and foreign diplomatic officials, certainly also occurred. Everything suggests that during the 1930s, until the invasion of France, the ambassador used his influence to facilitate the granting of visas to refugees and forwarded recommendations to the consulates authorizing the same. However, this is a fact that is difficult to prove, since the visas in question were not personally signed by the ambassador.

No longer in Paris, the seat of the French government became, for the time being, an itinerant one: the city of Tours from June 11 to June 14; then Bordeaux. The diplomatic corps followed the French government. On June 21, the ambassador travelled to the city of Perpignan, returning on the 26th to Bordeaux. On 22 June 1940, the French capitulated, and the armistice with Germany was concluded on June 26. Brazil had established precise rules for the granting of visas to foreigners in Decree-law no. 3, 010 and the circulars of the MRE established special criteria for visa applicants who were Jewish or thought to be Jewish. Besides the applicant having to meet all the basic requirements for the granting of a visa, it was necessary that a formal authorization be requested by

mail or in telegram sent to the MRE. The consular authority that issued the visa necessarily had to proceed in a minutely bureaucratic manner. It had to provide as information the “ethnic origin” and the “religion” of the foreign applicant. It also required that various documents be presented, such as attestations of the absence of a criminal record or “conduct harmful to public order”; attestations of good conduct and health; proof of lawful profession; and other documents. Such certificates and documents were very difficult to obtain, since most of these refugees in France were living outside their countries of origin, which were now under the military control or influence of the Nazis, and, therefore, unwilling to issue any such type of certificate or document. Thousands of people were stateless, holding only “Nansen” passports. Others did not have any type of travel document. Many were refugees from countries which legally no longer existed or whose government no longer recognized them as citizens. Obtaining travel document was very difficult for these people, and the other evidence required by the Brazilian government was often impossible to obtain.

The granting of visas is a duty which, as a rule, falls to a consul or consular authority, and although an ambassador is not forbidden to issue a visa himself, under normal conditions, he does not take on such a function. It is a question of hierarchy. On several known occasions, in the period previous to June 1940, Souza Dantas did all that was necessary to facilitate the granting of a visa. Such was the case of the Polish refugee Zbigniew Bitner Mathé. However, the papers ended up being signed by one of the staff of the consular corps, which fact prevents us, in the absence of any other evidence, to attribute, with any certainty, the visa given to the influence of the ambassador. Our criterion for considering that someone owed his visa, and, consequently, his life, to the ambassador is that it is possible to prove that it was the direct actions of Souza Dantas that allowed the refugee to leave Europe.

Souza Dantas’ approach was to listen to the requests made to him,

always showing goodwill towards foreigners of different nationalities, ethnic origins and religions, who had in common with each other the need to escape the Nazis. Not all were Jews, not all were bankers, or great scientists and specialists. There were actors, artists, journalists, teachers or doctors, and ordinary people whose lives in one way or another, were at risk if they remained in France. In many cases, the refugee simply sought out the ambassador, in person, and received a visa. In other cases, the refugee reached Souza Dantas through former diplomats, or anyone else who was in contact with Souza Dantas.

It has proven impossible to say what happened exactly in the case of certain visas issued by Souza Dantas during his stay in Perpignan and Bordeaux. Although there was a Brazilian consulate in Bordeaux, to deal with visa matters, Souza Dantas signed visas for the Polish couple Abraham and Sarah Rifka Rozenberg and her two children. The ambassador did not ask the consul to grant the visa because he knew only too well his unwillingness to do so. A few weeks earlier, on May 23, 1940, Souza Dantas had telegraphed the following to the MRE:

“I managed to secure the release of Gustavo Schneter ... The Brazilian consulate in Bordeaux refuses to issue visas ... Gustavo Schneter has been interned since September of last year ... The consulate replied that it could do nothing without your express order ...”

This telegram makes it clear why Souza Dantas personally issued visas in Bordeaux, instead of asking the consul Mário de Lima Barbosa, who would certainly have created all sorts of difficulties. Still, on June 15, 1940, Lima Barbosa signed a document requesting that the port authorities of Rio de Janeiro facilitate the entry of actress Vera Korene, pointing out that “His Excellency L. M. de Souza Dantas, ambassador of Brazil in France adds his recommendation to mine” and the two jointly signed the letter with which the actress landed in Brazil on August 2, 1940. Souza Dantas was also able to persuade Lima Barbosa to issue a visa for the Italian couple Michele

and Giovanna Goldberger, who arrived in Brazil with their child in August 1940, bearing a passport with the handwritten comment “visa granted by order of the ambassador of Brazil in France”.

Souza Dantas spent a few days in Perpignan, and in this city, also granted diplomatic visas to refugees, for example, to the Belgian lawyer Niko Gunzburg and his wife Josephine Schakewitz. As he later argued in his defense of May 1942, the ambassador, “seeing there was no consulate in this city, felt obligated not to lose a moment, and to assume consular responsibilities in order to, literally, save human lives, because of the worst catastrophe mankind has yet faced.”

Souza Dantas was careful to issue visas that appeared to be “in order” so that, based on them, the refugees could get the other necessary authorizations they needed to leave Europe and save their lives. The greatest danger was in territories under Nazi control. Once they escaped from there, the chances of surviving increased considerably.

As well as personally granting visas in Perpignan and Bordeaux, Souza Dantas asked the other diplomats who accompanied him to do similarly. We managed to find diplomatic visas completed and signed by embassy counsellor Martins Ramos, in response to requests from his superior, Souza Dantas. In the passport of Nicolas Zabłudowski, for example, on June 20, 1940, Martins Ramos, eager to justify the irregularity he had committed, wrote that “given the circumstances of time and danger of life that the bearer of this ‘Nansen’ passport runs, this embassy authorized the granting of the visa for Brazil”. On the same day, as reported later by the Brazilian police, in the “identity and travel certificate”, issued in place of a passport by France to the refugee Paul Loeb, to whose name “Israel” had been added by the Germans, the counsellor wrote “by order of His Excellency the Ambassador”. As for the “numberless” diplomatic visas in the passport of the French couple Morel, where the signature of Martins Ramos occurs, the counsellor was careful not to write any comment, and even exempted the bearers from showing a birth

certificate, attestations of profession and good conduct, or health and vaccine certificates. Besides these refugees, others received their diplomatic visas by order of the ambassador, during the days when he and Martins Ramos were in that city, before proceeding to Vichy.

On July first, Souza Dantas was in La Bourboule, from where he telegraphed, on July 8, stating that he was leaving for Vichy that day in the company of Martins Ramos. Souza Dantas arrived in Vichy, in the company of the counsellor, and settled in at the Hotel du Parc, his residence until his deportation to Germany in 1943.

On July 10, the new government, headed by Marshal Petain, an octogenarian, assumed its functions, with the city of Vichy as its capital. Under the terms of the armistice, France was divided into two parts, with Paris and the entire northern portion of the country being administered and occupied militarily by Germany and the southern portion of the country, the “free zone”, under the administration of a French government, without the overt presence of Nazi troops.

Souza Dantas did not limit himself to authorizing the granting of visas by subordinates in his immediate entourage or by signing them himself. He also wired the MRE and contacted other consulates, recommending the issuance of visas to many refugees. In more than one case, he provided the refugee with a letter of recommendation addressed to Minister of External Relations Aranha. This was the case with Jakub Stieglitz, who was carrying an unnumbered diplomatic visa, granted on August 29, 1940, when he arrived in Brazil, as well as a handwritten letter by Souza Dantas addressed to Aranha.

Max Fischer, who, along with his wife received diplomatic visas from Souza Dantas dated October 21, 1940, but only arrived in Brazil on May 7, 1941, brought with him a handwritten letter from the ambassador addressed to Aranha, in which Souza Dantas explained that this refugee was “one of the most brilliant men of letters in contemporary France, and one of the most important publishers of this country”, which did not prevent the police from

recording on his card and that of his wife that “both did not meet the requirements” of the law, and enumerating the irregularities committed in the granting of the visa.

In everything he did to help refugees, Souza Dantas acted with total integrity. Various recipients of Souza Dantas visas declared in interviews that they paid absolutely nothing for their visas. Similarly, in petitions to the MJIA, written during the 1940’s by immigrants to Brazil, in order to regularize their stay in Brazil, there frequently appear expressions of gratitude to Souza Dantas, which would be inconceivable had money exchanged hands. An example of this is to be found in the petition to the Council of Immigration and Colonization (CIC) of May 18, 1943, drawn up by the Polish couple, Benjamin and Betti Majzels, who, after the German occupation of Poland, sought refuge in Paris, and then in the “Free Zone”, “where with the greatest humanity His Excellency the Ambassador of Brazil to France, understanding the situation of the applicants, was pleased to grant them “diplomatic visas nos. 230 and 228 of the Embassy of Brazil in Vichy” so that they could embark for Brazil. The Strozenberg family, whose twelve members received diplomatic visas from Souza Dantas, tried to express their thanks by offering “a gift” to the ambassador, but he, being informed, replied : “If you want to give something, give to the Red Cross”.

The Pole Michal Bemski, who had little money, went to Vichy to get a visa for his family to leave Europe and to go somewhere in the Western hemisphere. His applications to enter the United States and Canada failed, and in his words:

“the consuls of the Latin American republics were asking for money to grant a visa ... The only decent soul among all the diplomats was the Brazilian ambassador, Souza Dantas, who was granting diplomatic visas left and right, solely out of the the kindness of his heart.”

According to the testimony of Zbigniew Marian Ziembinski, a playwright who would become one of the most important men of

the the Brazilian theater, who had fled from Poland when his country was invaded by the Germans, and was in France in 1940, penniless, surviving with the help of the Cross Red:

“during all this time I was in France, everyone and I wanted to go somewhere. The problem was to get out of Europe – to get out of there. Because all of us were not fodder for guns, automatically, we were undesirables, under attack, the object of distrust – we were all spies. Either side, didn’t matter. German side, French side. Anyone. Everyone was undesirable. Then everyone was, at any moment, threatened in some way. So, I wanted to go. I wanted to go anywhere you could go to get out. We tried to get a visa here, we tried to get a visa there, to China, to New Zealand, who knows, anywhere, England, wherever, but there was no possibility, because no one was giving. So there remained those endless line-ups, two hundred, three hundred, four hundred meters in length, in the street. There were people lying on the floor in front of embassies, asking, waiting. ”They said that the Embassy of the Netherlands is going to open”. That business. Subjected to the greatest scorn, the greatest torture, French soldiers catching rats and slipping them on the laps of the women, in between their breasts, to scare – horrible to see. And we found ourselves in the midst of all this, until, all of a sudden, we heard that there was a Don Quixote whose name was ... Souza Dantas ... who said: “Open the doors of the Embassy. I will give diplomatic visas”. And he did ... We took the diplomatic visas and hoped to be able to use them to get out. It was the only possibility: visas valid for Brazil.”

Nowhere in all the testimony gathered is there any indication Souza Dantas charged for visas. Even during the administrative inquiry that eventually took place, and in the years that followed, was it ever suggested the ambassador was bribed.

Souza Dantas did not have a single method for granting visas. We have found about 90 requests for authorization to grant visas to refugees and their family members by the ambassador dating from

June 1940 to the end of 1942. In most cases, he submitted a request for authorization to grant a visa after he had already granted it, as in the case of Fritz, Hans and Regine Feigl. In most cases, it was a question of people who the ambassador felt had chances of being admitted on the basis of the exceptions allowed by the MRE. In many cases, the request by Souza Dantas elicited no response, which forced him to reiterate it. The response from the Brazilian government to his requests varied: "Impossible, right now, due to the quota.", "No, because of the quota. No", and "I answer your telegram No. 114 negatively", or simply, "No".

In other cases, permission was dependent on whether or not the applicant was an *Aryan*, or whether he could make a transfer of capital to the Bank of Brazil, or whether his name suggested he was a *Semite*. At that time, the MRE granted or refused authorizations on the basis of "racial origin", as was the case, for example, of the Polish refugee Rojza Poznanska. The Passport Division replied on August 20, 1940 that Souza Dantas was "authorized to grant a permanent visa according to the Circular no. 1,127, item c, that is, provided the applicant is not a Semite". Souza Dantas wired so many requests for authorization to grant visas that, on 21 December 1940, in the case of a request for authorization to grant a visa to a Czech chemist and his wife, "both Catholic and of Hungarian ethnic origin", the MRE reiterated:

"to grant visas in passports of foreigners, in general, it is not necessary to obtain prior authorization from this ministry, which must only be consulted when dealing with foreigners of Semitic ethnic origin. In this circumstance, Mr. Michel Veres and his wife should present themselves at the Brazilian consulate in Marseille in order to obtain a visa."

Souza Dantas knew perfectly well what kind of refugee had a chance of obtaining an authorized visa, even though, on more than one occasion, he was surprised by the negative reply of the MRE. Given

this situation, Souza Dantas decided to take unto himself the task of helping those fleeing the Nazis, regardless of any financial, technical or racial considerations, granting diplomatic visas in ordinary passports to any person or family who came to him, or who found himself in danger, whether due to racial or political persecution. The ambassador did this without consulting anyone or asking for authorization in the vast majority of cases. It has also been possible to identify some refugees for which the ambassador officially requested permission to enter Brazil, and, in whose cases, despite the negative response of the Brazilian government, Souza Dantas eventually granted diplomatic visas, such as occurred with Irena Stypinska, Halina Kern, Wacław Piotrowski and Franciszek Siwillo.

For those seeking to escape the Nazis who found themselves blocked in France, the ways out were few and limited. Passage through Spain and Portugal was difficult, but it was virtually impossible without a valid visa for another country. The Swiss border was also strictly controlled, to prevent the passage of anyone who did not have authorization to go to another country. Countries only allowed the temporary entry of foreigners in transit who could prove they were headed elsewhere, and the proof for this was a valid visa for a foreign country. Similarly, to purchase a ticket on a passenger ship in any port it was necessary to prove that the passenger had obtained prior authorization to enter the country of destination.

Aware of these facts, and faced with the widespread desperation of the refugees, in the months from June 1940 and January 1941, Souza Dantas illegally signed hundreds of visas in foreign passports, adding brief comments, in French, which made it clear to anyone who checked the passports that the bearer was guaranteed entry to Brazil. Souza Dantas dated the visas and added his short remarks, but with the vast majority of visas issued, he did not officially stamp the visa as a “diplomatic visa“, nor number it. He also did not ask applicants for the necessary health certificates and background checks, and did not fill out consular forms, one of which the bearer

was supposed to deliver to the port authorities on arrival. In the case of foreigners of “Semitic” origin, authorization for a visa could only be obtained if the applicant could prove that he belonged to one of the few categories of refugee the MRE was prepared to admit. Ignoring the legal regulations of the Brazilian government, Souza Dantas granted his visas and left behind not so much as a list of those who received them.

Almost all the visas granted by Souza Dantas were filled in by him in French and by hand. They consisted of the round and simple stamp of the Brazilian embassy, a short sentence handwritten in French, which made it clear that the visa was valid for Brazil, or that the carrier “could enter Brazil”, the date and the signature “L. de Souza Dantas, Ambassador of Brazil”. Some variations occurred, but basically the form was the same, as in the case of a visa granted to the Grossman family, coming from Czechoslovakia : “Bon pour le Brésil, L. M. de Souza Dantas, Ambassadeur du Brésil” (“Good for Brazil, L.M. de Souza Dantas, Ambassador of Brazil”). In other cases, the text of the visa was written as follows: “bon pour se rendre au Bresil et pour y séjourner” (“good for Brazil and for a stay there”), as in the case of the visas granted to Adophe Messer and his wife or as in the case of the Stieglitz family, who received their visa on August 29, 1940, “Vu, bon pour le Brésil” (“Seen, good for Brazil), or even, this time in Portuguese, “valid to go to Brazil with his wife and his son”, which was written in the Czech passports of Arnost Hermann and his family. The ambassador’s intent was, by means of a few words written in their passports, to enable those people to get out of Europe, as he declared in May 1942, when informed of the proceedings against him, saying that almost all the visas “were granted only to facilitate the exit from France of unhappy people, doomed to commit suicide”.

It is virtually impossible to specify the number of people Souza Dantas allowed out of Europe, during the period in which he granted visas, because in many cases the same passport covered several members of the same family. Some of the visas were numbered.

To take an example, diplomatic visa no. 915 was granted to the Hungarian Wladislau Bard on November 30, 1940 – in theory. However, another diplomatic visa, numbered 102, and signed by Souza Dantas on December 12, 1940 (date on which it was forbidden to issue visas) was among the travel documents of Ruth Jawschitz, showing that the numbers of visas, in some cases, did not always obey the logic of chronological order, or were not given the date they bore. We know from testimony that in January 1941, Souza Dantas predated many of his visas, due to complaints by the MRE, and it is thus impossible to determine whether the numerical sequence corresponds to any logic. A large part of the visas granted were unnumbered, and were recorded by the authorities as “no number”, which makes any attempt to estimate the total number of visas granted on the basis of numbering, impossible. At that time, the ambassador of France in Brazil, Saint Quentin, sent a letter to his government stating that “Souza Dantas had sent a thousand refugees, despite the measure prohibiting the entry of foreigners not from the Americas”. The French ambassador did not, however, give the source of his information. In the course of our research in the Brazilian archives, once we discovered records on 500 recipients of Souza Dantas visas, we regarded that figure as sufficient and conclusive evidence that the ambassador had indeed intervened on the behalf of refugees. It is important to point out that a fair number of the recipients of Souza Dantas visas used these documents, as Aranha himself pointed out in a report, only to get out of Europe, so that, having not ever come to Brazil, they left no record of any kind there. Even if certain visas proved traceable by research, other humanitarian demands made of the ambassador were documented only in sparse, random documents and statements that we were fortunate enough to collect, 60 years after the facts. Because of the way in which Souza Dantas granted his visas, they were all considered by the Brazilian port authorities as “diplomatic visas granted in ordinary passports”, and maritime inspectors noted numerous times

on the ship passenger lists, beside the names of the passengers with visas granted by Souza Dantas, “art. 56” . This reference is to Article 56 of Decree-law 3,010, which precisely regulated the terms for the granting of diplomatic visas in ordinary passports. The legislation was precise, and indicated that diplomatic missions could issue this type of visa in the case of:

- a) diplomatic and consular agents of foreign governments, members of their families and their domestic service, and those who come to Brazil on government service;
- b) the official members of international congresses or conferences.

In exceptional cases “and with the previous authorization of the MRE” it was also possible to grant a diplomatic visa to a distinguished foreigner.

The vast bulk of the visas granted by the ambassador did not fit the categories laid out in the law, but still, his signature had the strength to pull hundreds of refugees out Europe, and also allow the (proven) entry into Brazil of at least five hundred refugees, for many of whom remaining in France meant certain death when the deportations to concentration camps in Poland began in the mid-1942.

Souza Dantas ignored all the regulations and procedures for the granting of visas, knowing that the people he helped could not meet the requirements. The main purpose of the visas was to allow immediate flight from Europe, and Souza Dantas increased the number of visas as new anti-Jewish measures were introduced, beginning with the mandatory registration of Jews, and ending tragically in the internment of Jews and others in concentration camps, and subsequent deportation in freight trains to Poland. In some cases, Souza Dantas interceded in favor of some people already interned in French concentration camps and, on occasion, managed to effect their release by granting them a visa for Brazil. An example of this is to be found in the testimony of Goldi Rothstein concerning the release of the Still brothers, who had been interned in Les Milles concentration camp.

With the arrival in Brazil of recipients of Souza Dantas visas, complaints arose in various bureaucratic and government sectors. It was clear that such visas did not in any way respect the existing laws and guidelines. The visas were all regarded as diplomatic ones by the port authorities: they lacked the seals indicating that fees had been paid for the visa, had all been issued free of charge, and only bore a declaration, in a foreign language (a further irregularity) that the bearer had the right to enter Brazil. By issuing visas in this manner, Souza Dantas was personally running a great professional risk.

The difficulties for many refugees in leaving Europe began with the need to possess a travel document that would be accepted internationally. To give an example of the complicated situation with regards to travel documents, even with its country under German military occupation, the Belgian diplomatic office issued several travel documents, which were not standard passports. They were simply letterheads of the Belgian consulate and a photo of the holder stamped with the consular seal and signed by the consul. In a few words, the diplomat certified that the bearer had Belgian papers, and that such a statement should be sufficient for obtaining a visa for any foreign country. It also gave personal information on bearer, such as name, date of birth, etcetera. With such a document, which was essentially a letterhead of the Belgian consulate in Marseille, the refugee Ruth Jawschitz, for example, born in Germany, and a Lithuanian citizen, received, on December 12, 1940, a visa from Souza Dantas, on the basis of which, she was able to obtain transit visas to Spain and Portugal. Other embassies scrambled to provide the necessary documents. In some cases, Souza Dantas sought the help of the representatives of other countries to obtain passports or travel documents for refugees, as was the case with Nicolas Zabłudowski.

It is possible that the first visas issued by Souza Dantas, after the start of the German invasion of France, date from June 12, 1940, because several foreigners arrived in Brazil in the months following that date, bearing diplomatic visas issued in the French city of Angers,

which is located exactly in the same region where the ambassador was at that moment, and where some of the diplomats of the Brazilian Legation in Warsaw, who had accompanied the Polish government into exile, also found themselves. Several bearers of diplomatic visas, with the signature of the consul Eulálio Joaquim Nascimento e Silva, arrived in Brazil, stating they had received their visas in the “Brazilian embassy in Angers”. The consular stamp in their passports was identical to the stamp of the visas granted by Souza Dantas. We cannot attribute the granting of these visas to Souza Dantas, however, due to the lack of conclusive evidence.

Souza Dantas forwarded recommendations to other consulates, and, as can be seen from the wording of the “confidential” letter sent by the consul in Lyon, Osório Hermogeneo Dutra, on July 30, 1940, regarding the “serious matter of visas in passports”, not all were willing to do what Souza Dantas was:

The question relative to visa applications assumes, in this country, given the gravity of the moment, frightening proportions. I do not recall ever seeing such:

“an avalanche. Having been informed that a career consulate had been created in Lyon, numberless people seek me out every day, with the highest recommendations, in order to overcome my resistance to their plans and desires. Almost all of these individuals are Jewish or Semitic origin, and only in the rare case, in my view, are the sort of applicant that might interest us. I therefore believe that I have done a great service to Brazil by refusing once and for all to grant the visas they ask for ... I think, however, that we should adopt uniform rules for dealing with this problem so that the visa refused by a consulate is not granted by another, as happens quite often ... The Jews who are in France today – Poles, Belgians, Dutch, Austrians and even Frenchmen – will pay anything to obtain the necessary documents to leave for Brazil, either permanently or temporarily. They offer everything, buy everything. If we don't open our eyes, and take drastic measures, we will fill our country with the worst possible elements.”

The “highest recommendations” to which Osorio Dutra referred, included, among others, those of Souza Dantas, and the Consul was troubled by the fact of having refused to grant visas to some refugees, and later, to see another diplomat (in the consulate in Marseille or the embassy in Vichy) grant the visa. Like many other government officials of the time, Osório Dutra regarded all those who sought to escape the Nazis as Jews, and the upshot of his letter, reproduced here as an example, was basically the point of view expressed regularly in correspondence of that period by a large number of Brazilian diplomats serving in France and throughout Europe.

In the months that followed, during the second half of 1940, Souza Dantas began concentrating on the consulate in Marseilles for his recommendations and requests for authorization to grant visas. This choice was not a random one, and the records suggest that the diplomats in that city also acted with good will in the sense of helping a large number of politically persecuted people leave Europe. Acting in a manner diametrically opposed to that of Osório Dutra, consul Murillo Martins de Souza, and vice consul Roberto de Castro Brandão, both of the Brazilian consulate general in Marseille, issued, between 1940 and 1942, hundreds of legal and irregular visas, as well as helping refugees in other ways. The result was that eventually Martins de Souza, was dismissed, on July 17, 1942, “in the interest of public service”, on account of the granting of illegal visas.

Throughout all this, Souza Dantas remained staunchly *anti-pétainiste*. The main leaders of the Vichy government were old acquaintances of Souza Dantas, with whom the ambassador had connections, but throughout his stay in the French “Free Zone”, even while being welcome in local government circles, Souza Dantas became more and more critical of the government headed by Pétain in the letters he addressed to the MRE, referring on July 29, 1940 to the Vichy regime, as “totalitarian”.

As we have seen on more than one occasion, not all diplomats were willing to help Souza Dantas and violate regulations for the

sake of desperate refugees. Less than a month after he arrived in Vichy, on August 6, 1940, the ambassador sent a telegram to Aranha complaining of embassy counsellor Carlos da Silveira Martins Ramos. He informed the minister that, in his forty-three year career, he had never needed to make “a complaint about an employee”, but that was deeply offended and no longer able to tolerate the insubordination of the counsellor:

On three occasions, in front of witnesses, he showed me disrespect. He declared:

“today that he would not obey my orders, saying they are not in accordance with the regulations; he almost hit me, insulted me, and ended by saying that I have no moral justification for complaining about him. It’s mostly in order to give him the chance to express to Your Excellency all charges with which he threatens me that I telegraph to Your Excellency.”

The disagreement between the two diplomats had its origin in the diplomatic visas issued and signed by the counsellor under orders from the ambassador, and in the other diplomatic visas that Ramos Martins had seen Souza Dantas grant to refugees, since their departure – together, in each other’s company – from Paris. This is clear from the telegram in question and also from the later statements of the counsellor, provided to reporters at the time of his arrival in Brazil, three months after this incident, in early November 1940.

Upon learning of the conduct of counsellor, Aranha immediately reprimanded Martins Ramos, ordering by telegraph that the following message be transmitted to him:

“Informed of your attitude, I hope that you will cease immediately any and all personal acts that might call into question the authority of your superior. The secretariat is having you transferred. I warn you that if you do not respect my instructions, you will be dismissed for the sake of discipline.”

On August 14, the counsellor was recalled to the secretariat by decree. Even though he travelled with a diplomatic passport, with all the advantages it implied, because of the problems created by war, he took two and a half months to reach Brazil. Martins Ramos believed that because he had witnessed the granting of many irregular visas by Souza Dantas, he would have some kind of power or control over him. Seeing the direction things were taking, and on the point of falling a victim to blackmail, Souza Dantas anticipated Martin Ramos's move, recounting the counsellor's threats, relying on the fact that breaches of hierarchy would not be tolerated by the MRE. Unknowingly, Martin Ramos ended up providing important evidence regarding the "illegal acts" of Souza Dantas on behalf of those fleeing nazism.

On August 30, 1940, inspector Mozart Varella of the National Immigration Bureau (DNI), visited in the port of Rio de Janeiro the passenger ship "Serpa Pinto", which had just arrived from Lisbon, and produced a report stating that:

"Passengers listed as nos. 120, 121 and 122 had their passports seized by the Maritime Police, by virtue of presenting passports stamped by the ambassador of Brazil, with the seal currently used by the consuls in the countries of the Americas for tourism purposes, and the signature of the ambassador with a note: valid for Brazil. Their names are included in the list of temporary visitors although I could find no article under which to classify them because of the lack of a reason. The passengers claimed to be refugees and stated that, under the circumstances it had been impossible to comply with all the formalities. They told me, moreover, that they had been attended to by the ambassador because they could not manage to speak with the consul (they did not say why)."

The report was then sent to the MRE so that appropriate measures could be taken. Aranha had a clear idea of the political and ideological views as well as the sensibility of Souza Dantas, and

it is probable that he knew that the ambassador was giving visas to some “eminent people” – bankers, especially – but he had no idea that Souza Dantas was also issuing visas to ordinary people. Moreover, Aranha had no information on the number of visas granted, since some refugees did not go to Brazil, and of those who headed there, most had not arrived yet, due to the complicated and difficult journey, which could take months before the actual embarkment on a ship, because of the immense difficulties of travelling in wartime Europe.

Souza Dantas was already granting diplomatic visas in ordinary and “Nansen” passports, but because of the political situation in which France found itself, getting these travel documents was becoming increasingly difficult, and thus Souza Dantas made the following request by telegram of Aranha on 8 October 1940:

“In light of the quite exceptional and distressing situation in which certain stateless people find here, I ask, Your Excellency, for permission to grant visas, for which I assume all responsibility, to bearers of Nansen passports and other identity papers that I will detail and send to the secretariat.”

At first, the minister relied on the discretion of the ambassador, and October 12, 1940, Aranha gave him the requested authorization in telegraphic dispatch no. 213. Exactly two months later, on December 12, 1940, faced with a volume of complaints from the various government regarding visas granted by Souza Dantas, Aranha revoked the authorization by telegram.

Precisely during those two months, Souza Dantas managed to obtain a one of its kind authorization, unimaginable at that moment. Aranha reposed great confidence in the ambassador, who was famous for his contacts in the higher social spheres of Paris, and the minister had no idea that at the moment of asking for authorization to grant “some” visas, even before ministerial approval was received, the number of visas already numbered in the hundreds. Furthermore,

besides the foreigners *of distinction*, there were quite *common* people to whom Souza Dantas was granting visas; not just “bearers of Nansen passports and identity papers”, to which he referred, but also people who had ordinary passports.

The first bearers of diplomatic visas granted by the ambassador started arriving in Brazil in August 1940. Noting the irregular nature of the visas granted when the passengers disembarked, the immigration port authorities and the Office for the Registration of Foreigners (SRE) reported the incident to the MRE. But the state bureaucracy was slow in sending its report, and the facts came to the attention of the minister only weeks later, having been downplayed in importance until then, amid other problems of the ministry. On October 12, 1940, the same day that Aranha sent his authorization to Souza Dantas, the SRE forwarded to the MRE a communique on the irregularity in the visa issued by the ambassador in the *Nansen* passport of Nicolas Zabłudowski, a proof Souza Dantas had requested authorization for a *fait accompli*.

Souza Dantas was reacting to a bitter political reality. On October 18, 1940, the ambassador telegraphed Aranha stating that “the Government has just published a Jewish statute, including provisions against aliens of the Jewish race, which gives the police the power to intern them in concentration camps, summarily, or send them to a place of forced residence”.

If Aranha was not aware of the acts and the way in which the ambassador was proceeding in relation to the granting of diplomatic visas up until then, he was certainly informed in early November 1940. On November 3, 1940, the Portuguese steamship *Angola* arrived in the port of Rio de Janeiro. On board were several Brazilian diplomats, including Martins Ramos, his wife and his dog “Ruby”. Also on board, was the family of Jakub Stieglitz. When the port authorities inspected the ship they noted, on the passenger list, that Mr. Stieglitz, his wife and their children lacked immigration cards, that their visas had been issued free of charge, with no indication of

the basis on which they were granted, and with the simple comment “Seen, valid for Brazil, Vichy, 29/8/40”.

The next day, the newspaper *A Notícia* ran the headline: “In Europe, they are selling fake passports to Brazil, for 55 francs each”. Below this in large type was the following: “Serious statements made by Mr. Carlos da Silveira Martins Ramos, former counsellor of our embassy in Paris”. A large photo of the Brazilians still aboard the ship, was published just below the headline. The newspaper began its reporting by stating that among the the six hundred and fifteen passengers on the *Angola* were “400-odd refugees” from Europe, which would account for the “overcrowding”. What the newspaper did not explain was that the majority of those referred to as “refugees” were, in fact, Portuguese immigrants. According to the newspaper, Martins Ramos explained that since the end of the Spanish Civil War, he had held the position of embassy counsellor in France, and, because of the German invasion, had left Paris, after the collapse of France, under horrible conditions. Martins Ramos told the newspaper that:

“with the roads jammed with refugees fleeing the German onslaught, and German planes flying over the roads and dropping bombs and more bombs, it took five days to cover a distance of 18 kilometers. The body of the car in which he was travelling was riddled with machine gun bullets ... [and he did not know] how he managed to escape survive this dreadful tragedy.”

Although this perilous journey was undertaken in the company of Souza Dantas, Martins Ramos preferred not to mention the name of the ambassador, and then went on to make what the reporter classified as “serious statements”:

“very serious irregularities are being committed in the present French capital, with regards to the granting of documents to people who want to come to Brazil. Since the beginning of the war, a veritable industry of false passports has developed. For 55 francs, any family,

consisting of three persons, can obtain in an establishment in the Rue Autern the visa it needs to come to our country. Even diplomatic passports are being granted in a criminal manner.”

Martins Ramos concluded by stating that he would take the case to the MRE, because “hundreds and hundreds of people must have entered the country illegally”. It is possible that Martins Ramos has been referring to “diplomatic visa”, and not “diplomatic passports”, and that the reporter had made a mistake in his reporting, but the reference was certainly to the ambassador. The counsellor had started his denunciation of Souza Dantas, immediately upon his arrival in Brazil, as he had threatened to do, not holding back in front of journalists in the capital. He paid little attention to ministry protocol, and the habits of the dictatorship of the *Estado Novo*, which in addition to other restrictions on free speech, did not view with a favorable eye an official of the MRE communicating first hand to the public and to the press, matters of ministry and state. In his remarks, Martins Ramos mixed up information about the sale of Brazilian visas, which was already known in the years previous to the war, with indirect reference to what Souza Dantas was doing in France at that moment. Maybe it was his intention to seek public support for his personal vendetta against the ambassador.

Martins Ramos was undoubtedly harshly rebuked by the MRE, since the next day, on November 5, he sent a letter of apology and rectification to the editors of various newspapers regarding his statements of the previous day, in which he sought to explain that:

“My words were obviously misinterpreted. I did not say that Brazilian visas and passports were being falsified. Brazilian diplomatic and consular representations are indeed above any suspicion, and now, in extremely difficult circumstances, are providing important services to Brazil. I said that both in Paris and Lisbon there were intermediaries, who, under false pretenses of taking steps in Rio de Janeiro to obtain visas were extorting huge sums, and I even learned of the case of a

Jewish family, composed of three persons, had been asked the sum of 55 pounds to obtain such authorization. Incidentally, I added that our authorities are aware of these facts. So that aspersions are not cast on our agents abroad, it is only fair that I ensure that this clarification is as widely publicized as possible.”

Thus, Martins Ramos sought to “clarify” and made reference to previously published reports in the newspapers about the exploitation of desperate in Europe and accused journalists of having had difficulty in understanding his initial statements or having done so incorrectly. It is virtually certain that the rebuke suffered by the diplomat was the reason for this retraction. Martins Ramos had underestimated the support and prestige that Souza Dantas still enjoyed with Aranha. Even more than that, the minister would not tolerate the recurrence of insubordination by the diplomat who had been reprimanded for his attacks against the ambassador, months before, although the MRE had not officially punished Martins Ramos, who continued his diplomatic career in normal fashion. Even though the press was under the permanent control of the state, the press was allowed to publish the original article, as it was in the interest of certain sectors of the government, such as the MJNI, which continued to exert pressure for a stricter control on the entry of foreigners, a responsibility of the MRE, and one which the MJNI deemed was being carried out inefficiently.

It was no coincidence that the day after the “retraction” of Martins Ramos, the secretary general of the MRE, Maurício Nabuco, sent a dispatch requesting Souza Dantas inform him “of the reasons which led the Embassy to take ... [the] decision” to stamp a visa in the *Nansen* passport of Nicolas Zabłudowski, as the MRE had been informed weeks previously in a report from the secretariat. Zabłudowski had received his visa on the orders of the ambassador.

On November 14, 1940, Souza Dantas directed by telegram a dramatic personal letter to Aranha:

“Your Excellency knows the hellish situation in Europe and humanitarian duties created by this war, which is the greatest disaster mankind has ever had. There is a veritable exodus to escape from hunger, cold, and misery in the camps as well as other horrors. Not being allowed to work here, not having means of subsistence, foreigners are immediately interned in concentration camps, comparable to Dante’s Inferno. I know the generosity of the Brazilian soul, of which Your Excellency is a proverbial example. Although already authorized by Your Excellency to grant visas to holders of “Nansen” passports and simple identity papers, I ask permission, since it is impossible to collect fees because there is no consular service in this chancellery, to continue to issue visas free of charge to those who need the visas to leave France, but promise not to go to Brazil. I would appreciate an urgent reply.”

This extremely heartfelt letter summarizes in a few lines the thinking and motivations of ambassador in relation to the situation of refugees still in France. By asking for authorization from the minister, Souza Dantas was, in reality, seeking to legitimize what he had already been doing for five and a half months; that is, issuing free visas. In September and October 1940, the Vichy government had implemented its policy of deportation to concentration camps, which lasted until 1944, with almost 80,000 Jews who found themselves on French soil being deported and killed. The majority was expelled from France, still under the administration of the Vichy government, prior to the full occupation of France in November 1942. The “urgency” that Souza Dantas spoke of was indeed a correct analysis of the facts.

Aranha replied by telegram to the request of the ambassador of November 21 as follows:

“While I view sympathetically the situation in which Your Excellency finds himself confronted by the pleas of persecuted people wanting to come to Brazil, I am, however, unable to acquiesce to your request

to suspend in such cases, the application of the legal provisions, because if I wanted to thus facilitate the exit from France of these people, I would not be freeing them from the difficulties they would later have in legalizing their stay here. Our current legislation has established a stricter control over the entry and stay of foreigners in the country, forcing them to comply with various formalities, including registration. The execution of these various measures are incumbent upon the various authorities, and this legislation forms a whole that requires exact compliance with its provisions so that the system can work properly. A visa can only be granted for the purpose of giving the bearer entry to Brazil. I ask Your Excellency, therefore, to adhere to the terms of the law, and to consult the secretariat regarding any exemptions from the legal provisions.”

Through the contents of these two letters, exchanged on a private basis, at that time, it is possible to see that Aranha was not unaware of the intentions of Souza Dantas, since he had communicated them clearly. Aranha believed that the number of visas the ambassador had granted on humanitarian grounds were limited in number and granted to worthy candidates, so there was no reason to worry.

However, on the same day, November 21, the MRE sent a new letter to Vichy concerning “Irregularities in visas passports”, letting Souza Dantas know that the DNI had informed the MRE on November 1 that “the Consular Service of ... [the] Embassy is classifying passengers as definitive, whereas the regulations for the entry of foreigners provide for two only two classifications: temporary and permanent – not definitive”.

Believing that the request would in all likelihood be approved, on November 22, 1940, Souza Dantas sent by ordinary mail to Aranha a list of thirteen “intellectuals, mostly of Semitic origin, who believe they ... [would] find in Brazil suitable professional opportunities”. He did this in response to a request, made the previous day, by Varian M. Fry, director of the voluntary organization, the “Centre

américain de secours”. The ambassador sent along with the letter, the curriculum vitae of each of the visa applicants, experienced academics in the fields of biology, archeology, marine engineering, aeronautical engineering, radio – electricity, chemistry, physics, mathematics, tropical medicine and physiology. Besides the fact that the request was made by an American, an important point for an anglophile like Aranha, the impressive resumes of those professionals would, in theory, entitle them to receive visas from Souza Dantas, as they fit into the category of exceptions allowed in the granting of visas to Jews. The ambassador further added:

“Aside from humanitarian considerations, I believe it could be of real benefit to our country, a great land of enlightenment, to allow to continue the work of these labourers of the mind, many of unquestionable value, and authors of meritorious works, but who, today, are groping in the darkness that has befallen Europe. I thank Your Excellency for your instructions on the subject at hand, should you deign to send them to me, with your pure patriotism and noble human understanding.”

Probably due to the resumes that were sent as attachments, it was not possible to send the request via telegram, which meant that it only reached the Foreign Ministry on February 27, 1941, and at once received the classification 558 – immigration – and 99 – Jews, while the manuscript comment was added “cannot answer”. Teachers and scientists that managed to leave Europe and survive, continued their careers in other countries, in many cases brilliantly – as in the cases of Hans Ekstein and Leo Oppenheim – and in Brazil, the government that, at the time, was supposedly still willing to receive this type of specialist of great value, even if he was not an Aryan, preferred instead, at that moment, to take into consideration only his Semitic origin, and deny him entry to the country.

On November 25, the MRE questioned Souza Dantas once again in a dispatch on the visas granted to four members of the Stieglitz

family, which, on November 11, the secretariat had informed the ministry were irregular because they were granted “without submitting documentation and respecting Decree-law no. 3010 of August 20, 1938”. On November 27, another dispatch was sent to Souza Dantas, this time including a copy “of the official letter no. 1,176, of September 10, 1939, addressed to this ministry by the head of the Civil Registry of Foreigners of the Civil Police of the Federal District, on the granting by ... [your] embassy of visa no. 63 to Mrs. Vera Korene”.

In this context and in spite of these positions, the MRE still maintained its authorization for Dantas to grant visas in exceptional cases. However, since the beginning of December, Aranha realized, because of the numerous complaints the secretariat was receiving, that he had lost control over the ambassador; or else he already thought that Souza Dantas had overreached himself. This had occurred precisely at a time when his position as minister within the government was deeply shaken, especially given the incidents with Brazilian vessels retained by the British blockade. The continuous arrival of undesirables in Brazil was a weakness which Aranha's enemies tried to exploit to show how incompetent the minister and his ministry were. Thus, on December 12, 1940, Aranha sent telegraphic dispatch no. 256 to Souza Dantas, stating that, “The authorization given in telegraphic dispatch no. 213 is hereby revoked.”

From this period on, the tone of reproof in despatches sent to the diplomatic representations was becoming harsher, for example, the reprimand sent confidentially to the consulate in Marseille on December 13, which asked the consulate to “state why the confidential Circular no. 1.323, of June 5, 1939, which suspended the granting of temporary visas, in passports of persons of Semitic origin, ... [had] not been respected”.

On December 15, 1940, Souza Dantas sent a list of visas he had granted under conditions set out in paragraph telegram no. 148 of

October 8, and also informed the MRE that “In compliance with the instructions set out in Telegraphic Dispatchno. 256, received on the 13th of the current month, I suspended, from that date, the granting of visas to holders of the “Nansen” passports or identity cards”. Since this letter was not sent by telegram, it was received by the MRE only on May 9, 1941. This document prepared by the ambassador is the only official list of visas granted by Souza Dantas, and it contains only 40 names of refugees, many of them carrying only mere identity papers, and who supposedly received visas between October 14 and December 12, 1940. Among the names that appear on the list is that of Leo Castelli Krauss, his wife Ileana, and her daughter Julia. Of Jewish origin, Castelli did not go to Brazil, but took up residence in the United States, where he became an important figure in the world of art, linked to various avant-guard movements, and responsible for the popularization, for example, of the work of Andy Warhol. Not by chance, the ambassador’s letter, with its list, was classified under correspondence classification no. 511.16; namely, “false passports; irregularities and incidents in the granting of visas; fraudulent documents”. The letter was filed alongside documents dealing with such irregularities.

On December 23, 1940, the secretary-general of the MRE Maurício Nabuco rebuked the Brazilian consul in Marseille, because of a visa issued irregularly, and requested “would Your Excellency be so kind as to tell me under what conditions the visa referred to was granted [?]” Nabuco also brought to the consul’s attention “the many irregularities committed by that consulate in the granting of visas”. He therefore, recommended “the perfect and complete compliance with the provisions of the aforementioned decree”.

The rebuke that followed, on December 26, 1940, was written by Oswaldo Aranha himself, who after pointing out an irregularity in the granting of a visa by the consul in Marseilles to Joshua Abraham and Frieda Drezner, and was very direct: “I bring to Your Excellency’s attention that such irregularities ... [If] they continue,

[that fact] will force this ministry to apply the penalties provided by the law.”

Three days before the publication, on January 3, 1941, of Circular 1,498, which placed a total restriction on the granting of visas to Jews, Aranha sent a “confidential” dispatch to Souza Dantas. In a moderate tone, Aranha rebuked the ambassador, pointing out to Souza Dantas that the authorization the ministry had granted on October 12 had been made:

“believing that although your Excellency did not give details with your request, your intent was to facilitate the immigration to Brazil of prominent people of that country, forced to leave in view of the current situation. In so doing, the ministry sought once again to show the trust in Your Excellency which you have always shown yourself worthy. However, what we have seen no longer justifies the continuance of the authorization given to Your Excellency ... and so, by telegraphic dispatch no. 256, this authorization was suspended. This ministry did so because the arrival of people whose entry is, if not entirely prohibited, at least limited, according to the instructions of the confidential circulars 1, 127 and 1, 249, of which Your Excellency must have knowledge. According to information provided by the Foreigner Registration Services of the Civil Police of the Federal District and the National Department of Immigration, the visas issued by the Embassy of Brazil in Vichy has favored almost exclusively individuals of Jewish ethnic origin. And this is not the only irregularity in the visas issued by that embassy: the visas in question, issued in the wrong manner, in total disregard of the provisions laid down in Decree-law no. 3,010, of August 20, 1938, have created problems for the port authorities responsible for the landing and the registration of foreigners. Complaints from these services are frequent and refer to diplomatic visas in ordinary passports, visas without number, visas for which the applicants have not filled in the necessary qualifying forms, and visas given to individuals entirely devoid of documents. Everything mentioned above is required by

the aforementioned Decree-law no. 3,010, and failure to comply hardly with it leaves the consular services of the ministry in a difficult position before the port authorities. While cognizant of the current difficulties in Europe and particularly in France, this ministry can only look after the interests of immigration and has to provide its services in accord with the dispositions of the law. I know that, by acting as you have done, Your Excellency has been guided by your feelings of pity, faced with the difficulties in which they find so many people in France find themselves, but that does not justify this ministry disregarding restrictions placed on the selection of foreigners wishing to come to Brazil.”

The dispatch is an important document and offers a comprehensive summary of the ambassador's acts. At the same time, it clearly reflects the views of Aranha, who agreed with the entry of Jews, albeit in a limited way, and in conformity with the strict selection criteria. These criteria were flexible in the case of European Aryans, and was to be applied rigidly only in the case of foreigners identified as Jews. Portuguese, or Swedish foreigners, for example, whether or not they were very rich or famous scientists, simply by belonging to a certain race or ethnicity, would have no great difficulty in obtaining a visa for Brazil. Still, within the manifestly anti-Jewish sphere in which virtually all the important and powerful men of the *Estado Novo* circulated, it can be considered that Aranha, while not exactly enthusiastic about the coming of Jewish immigrants to Brazil, manifested one of the most flexible attitudes toward the Jews. Even if he accepted restrictions, Aranha agreed with the immigration to Brazil of Jews considered to be *of value* and “eminent”. This narrow possibility of granting visas to the distinguished continued to exist, in theory, even after April, 1941, when the power to decide which foreigners would enter the country was transferred to the MJNI; but, in practice, the criteria for the granting of permanent visas to foreign Jews became so rigid as to make them practically impossible to obtain.

3: Brazil's immigration policy becomes even more restrictive: Circular no. 1,498 and the Interminable Voyage of the *Alsina*

On January 6, 1941, Aranha signed Circular no. 1,498, categorically ordered the suspension of any type of visa for Jews and *their descendants*. An interesting particularity of Circular no. 1,498, was the following text in the space at the top of the document indicating to whom it was addressed: "THE DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CONSULAR SERVICE (INCLUDING THE EMBASSY IN VICHY) AND TO THE HONORARY CONSULATES AUTHORIZED TO GRANT VISAS IN PASSPORTS."

The MRE always distributed its circulars with few variations in its standardized ways of doing things. Typically the same text appeared in all circulars addressed generically to all consular offices, without ever singling out any particular one. The specific mention of the embassy in Vichy was not accidental. Because of the many visas granted by Souza Dantas in the second half 1940, Aranha used this subtle way of rebuking the ambassador.

In spite of receiving Circular no. 1,498, in January, in Vichy, Souza Dantas continued to grant visas for some time. The testimonies gathered reveal that ambassador even ended up showing a copy of the said circular to Jewish refugees who had been issued visas by him, commenting that he had been forbidden to grant visas to Jews from January on, and that for this reason, the diplomatic visa bore a date prior to the introduction of this restriction. According to Chana Strozenberg among others, Souza Dantas also stated that he was not sure his signature any longer had the power to permit landing in Brazil, but, he hoped, the bearers of the visas would be able to go out of Europe with them.

The journey of the *Alsina*, which began on January 15, 1941

and was never completed, is a key to understanding the conditions and reasons which led Souza Dantas to act and to expose himself to administrative censure, and to being seen in the eyes of the Brazilian government as unquestionably implicated in the exit of Jews from Europe. The passengers of that steamship, who insisted on heading to Brazil, were decisive factors leading to the administrative inquiry into the ambassador because of his efforts to help them.

In Brazil, the authorities tightened controls at ports and began to create difficulties for foreigners arriving in the country with irregular documentation, as was the case, strictly speaking, with all holders of diplomatic visas issued by Souza Dantas. None of the visas issued to refugees by the ambassador was dated later than December 12, 1940 (even those clearly granted after this date) and with the tight control exercised by the MJNI over the ports, these visas are no longer accepted. The bearers of visas issued by Souza Dantas who arrived in Brazil after the entry into force of the Decree-law no. 3,175 had trouble disembarking.

Throughout the 1930s, passenger and cargo ships left regularly from European ports headed for Brazil. Among others, Spanish, French, and Portuguese steamships passed through the port of Rio de Janeiro, and afterwards the port of Santos, and usually continued their journey to other South American ports. From the last port of call, whether it was in Chile, Argentina or another country, the ships returned to Europe, retracing their path. Travel time to Brazil varied according to the number of stops and, of course, sailing conditions. Until early 1940, it took, on average, less than two weeks to get to Rio de Janeiro. From June 1940 on, because of the developments in the war and the installation of the naval blockade imposed by the British, the travel time increased, trips became less regular, and transportation became more difficult. Brazilian steamships assured the sea link with Europe. As of early 1941, shipping between Europe and Brazil decreased on account of the World War, and the only routes to the Americas still open to

European refugees were those of Spanish, Portuguese and Brazilian ships sailing from the Iberian ports.

During the 1930s the French steamship *Alsina* did the route between France and Buenos Aires with some regularity. With the fall of France and all its implications, the French shipping companies drastically reduced their activities. The same happened with foreign shipping companies operating in French ports. For the period stretching from from June, 1940 until the departure of the *Alsina* in early January the following year, we could identify the arrival in Brazilian ports of only six steamships from France. On June 14 came the *Campanha* from Marseille. On the 23rd of the same month, came the *Mendoza*, from the same city. The *Aurigny*, from Bordeaux, arrived in Rio de Janeiro on July first. These three steamers left France before its government capitulated to the Germans on June 22. For the period that stretches from the moment of surrender until the end of the war, we were able to identify only four ships from France: the *Santarém*, coming from Bordeaux, which arrived on July 11, and again on August 4; the *Alexandra*, which reached the port of Rio de Janeiro on September 18, 1940; and, of course, the *Alsina*, whose trip to Brazil was interrupted by the British blockade.

The journey of the *Alsina* was much awaited by hundreds of people. The possibility of boarding a steamship departing directly from France, which had not happened for almost three months, allowed one to circumvent the extremely difficult and complicated process of obtaining transit visas through the two Iberian nations, from whose ports maritime transport still operated regularly. Passengers had no way of foreseeing the difficulties they would have on the *Alsina*. Before departure, the ship spent months waiting for the necessary permits to start the trip, and passengers waited a long time before the shipping company decided on the day of embarkment. Initially scheduled for November 15, 1940, embarkment was delayed until it finally occurred two months later.

When the *Alsina* reached the African port of Dakar, Senegal, on

January 27, 1941, the passengers disembarked for a few hours. They thought they would leave the next day, but the departure was delayed day after day. A statement by the company informed the passengers that there was no firm date for the resumption of the journey and that the price of passage included food for only three weeks, so the passengers would have to seek accommodation and meals ashore. As Elsa Czapska later recounted “very few passengers had money and there were terrible rumors about what would happen to those who could not pay. After numerous complaints and telegrams, the order was revoked and we all allowed to stay on board the ship.”

The crew did not dispense more information to the passengers. They learned only in June that the British blockade had found contraband aboard ship. They did not learn the real reason for the seizing of the *Alsina*, which was a question of the British blockade.

Each day in Dakar there were renewed rumors, optimistic or pessimistic, about what would happen to the passengers. Anxious, those who were fleeing in fear nazi-controlled Europe, did not know literally what would happen the next day. The conditions on the ship were getting worse. According to Lisbeth Forell, the food was rationed: just fish and chickpeas, two small pieces of sugar and a piece of bread, per passenger, per day. Passengers were allowed to go ashore once a week. For most passengers, who did not have any financial resources, shopping for groceries was not an option. According to a witness, “The months passed without any news for us. Occasionally the *Alsina* changed its place of anchorage, and that was all. The heat increased, diseases on board as well, and four children were born.”

At the beginning of June 1941, passengers learnt from the ship’s noticeboard of the return of the *Alsina* to Casablanca, Morocco; and the departure did indeed take place on June 3. The *Alsina* arrived in Casablanca on June 10, 1941, and on the 15th, the company returned 75 % of the amount paid for passage. The local authorities, however, decided to send to Sidi el Ayachi concentration camp families with elderly members and children of less than 15 years

of age, while the others were sent to the town of Kashba Tadla. Thus, on the morning of June 16, all passengers were forced to disembark “amid the unwarranted and humiliating spectacle of sentries with rifles stationed at a short distance to receive innocent people, mostly women and children” as reported by Niceto Alcalá – Zamora y Torre, the former president of Spain, who was on board. Among the more than seven hundred passengers, only those who could prove that they still had money to pay for their maintenance, were allowed to stay in Casablanca. The others, who were the majority of the passengers, were divided into three groups of just over two hundred people each. Awaiting each group in the harbor were some buses, accompanied by heavily-armed Moroccan soldiers. The passengers of the *Alsina* who had no more money, were violently pushed into the vehicles. The groups went to three different concentration camps, where living conditions were very bad, and where they were poorly housed and fed, as though they were soldiers being punished.

From the moment of the final embarkment, in the first days of June, 1941, each of refugees tried to resolve his situation in his manner. Those who had money and had not been interned in the Foreign Legion camps tried to continue their voyage. Those who were interned were released if they could prove they were headed somewhere outside of Morocco; or in some other fashion, they managed to get to Casablanca and find a way to leave. A minority managed to reach the United States, for which they had visas, but most passengers held fast to their original intention of reaching Brazil. Those who managed to arrive there, from the second half of 1941 on, found it difficult to enter the country. As other expassengers of the *Alsina* continued to arrive, in the course of weeks, the situation ended up preventing the landing of virtually all the passengers aboard another steamship, the Spanish boat *Cabo de Hornos*. The majority of the passengers were former passengers of the *Alsina*, who had been retained for a long time in Dakar.

The steam *Alsina* never completed the trip to South America. Most passengers, if they did manage to reach Brazil, did so aboard other ships. Many of the *Alsina's* former passengers attempted, in different vessels, and on subsequent trips, to land in Brazilian ports. Some of them were successful, up to the landing of the steamship *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* in September, 1941, which took place against the will of Vargas, who a month before had decided to authorize, for the last time, the landing of former passengers of the *Alsina*. The case of the steamship *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* led to the ordering of an administrative inquiry to determine who was responsible for the continuing arrival in Brazil of these unwanted and “unassimilable” refugees.

Ships from Spain or Portugal – whose neutrality still allowed them to continue their shipping activities – followed their regular routes in those long months of 1941. The *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* made the trip from Europe to Brazil on at least five occasions between February and October 1941. The *Cabo de Hornos*, between May and November 1941, arrived on at least three occasions in Brazil. The ships stopped again at Brazilian ports on their returns to Europe.

On January 6, 1941, the MRE sent to the Brazilian diplomatic representations abroad Circular 1,498, which made it clear that the granting of temporary and permanent to the Jews and their descendants visas was now totally prohibited. Exceptions had to be authorized by the Ministry. Circular no. 1,498 reflected the difficult political situation in which Aranha found himself, the pressure being exerted by members of MJNI – already elaborating a new decree-law, transferring the responsibility for the granting of visas to itself – and by discontent within certain sectors of Brazilian civil society, as well as by the desire to see restrictions on the number of Jewish refugees entering the country.

On January 20, 1941, the Department of National Immigration (DNI) sent the MRE a letter requesting action on a complaint made by the Immigration Inspector Rui de Carvalho, on January 9, 1941:

“Chief, I bring to Your Excellency’s attention an irregularity which has been repeated frequently in the granting of consular visas by our diplomatic mission in Vichy, and which it is necessary to curb. Indeed, the embassy in question is granting visas in French, which is endangering the preponderance that our language should have in our consular services, especially when it is a matter of the text of visas to be read by the Brazilian authorities. I believe that if this situation persists, Brazil will be the only country in the world to issue its consular visas in a foreign language, with the aggravating circumstance that the texts are not always the same and are not accompanied by a translation in the language of the country for which they are intended, which, at least, would serve to reveal any irregularity.”

Similarly, Ociola Martinelli, Chief of the Foreigner Registration Services of the Civil Police of the Federal District (SRE), kept sending the ministry reports regarding irregularities in visas granted by Souza Dantas. With each new complaint, the MRE responded that “explanations have been called for in this matter” and they would be sent onto the police “in a timely fashion”. All this correspondence was classified under “511.16”, “Irregularities”.

On February 4, marine police in Rio de Janeiro seized nine passports of foreigners who had arrived aboard the steamship *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*, holding lapsed visas, and, two days later, reported as much to the MRE.

Breathing a sigh of relief perhaps, Aranha telegraphed Souza Dantas on February 12, informing him:

“Owing to Your Excellency being about to reach, on the 17th of this month, the legal age limit for active service as ambassador, and seeing as I lack the legal means to make an exemption to this age limit, I am very reluctantly obliged to ask the President of the Republic to announce your retirement. I hope this news does not come as a surprise to you, and I want to express the high esteem I have for

Your Excellency because of 40 years of inestimable service to Brazil, performed with so much clearmindedness and patriotism.”

On 13 February, Souza Dantas sent a personal response by telegram to Aranha's communiqué, expressing thanks to the minister for his kind words and appreciation for “the trust of the eminent President of the Republic”. He asked permission to remain in office until the arrival of his successor. He asked to stay on, afterwards, as legal or even special Counsellor, attached to the Embassy in France, without cost to the State. The Administrative Department of the MRE expressed its opinion that the appointment of a successor could be delayed, but it was opposed to the nomination of Souza Dantas to the position of counsellor.

On February 18, 1941, Martinelli, the chief of the SRE of the police, sent two letters to the MRE about two irregular visas issued by the Brazil consulate in Casablanca, in accordance with a “telegraphic authorization from the embassy in Vichy”. On the same day, the inspector Hoonholtz Martins Ribeiro, of the Maritime and Air Police (IPMA) sent to the head of the Passport Division 24 passports seized from foreigners who arrived aboard the steamship *Serpa Pinto*, on the February, 14 “for an extension of the validity of the visa already expired”. Among the visas was “ a diplomatic one ... issued by the embassy in Vichy, without any qualification form”. At this time, the authorities still allowed the landing of bearers of lapsed visas to Brazil, requesting that the foreigners revalidate the visas, normally with accompanying extra fees.

The way of proceeding of the MRE with regards to the entry of foreigners, especially those considered to be Jews, was not considered satisfactory by Getúlio Vargas, and thus, from April 1941 on, the MJNI took over entire responsibility on the matter, controlling hierarchically all the steps of the process from the authorization to issue visas, inspections on arrival at major ports, the individual registration of every foreigner new to the country. On every new

refugee who arrived in an irregular fashion, inspectors of the DNI and agents of the IPMA submitted notes and reports to the MJNI. The passenger list necessarily followed the pattern and form required by Decree-law no. 3,010. The inspectors' notes became increasingly detailed and, during 1941, they started to indicate the number of the articles that authorized landing, or indicated irregularities and restrictions.

According to the "Steamship Reports", the first steamer that arrived in Brazil after the entering into effect of the Decree-law no. 3,175 was the *Admirante Alexandrino* on April 20, 1941. The inspectorate seized the passports with "lapsed visas" and containing no consular stamps. On April 22, 1941, the Chief of the Division of Passports, John Severiano da Fonseca Hermes Júnior, sent a letter to the director of the "Maritime and Commercial Company" responding to a letter dated the 17th of that month, in which the Company requested that the passengers on the steamship *Alsina*, still held up in Dakar, have the date of validity of their visas extended. Hermes Júnior replied that only the parties involved could ask for a revalidation of the visas, on a case by case basis.

On April 30, 1941, the IPMA sent to the MRE "for appropriate action" 14 passports of foreigners who arrived aboard the steamer *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* on the 27th of that month. The Decree-Law no. 3,175 had already been published, and it would not take long for MJNI officials to recognize and promptly curtail the practice of the MRE of revalidating visas whose expiry date had passed.

The document officially announcing Souza Dantas's retirement was signed by Vargas on May 9, 1941, and published on the 12th in the "Diário Oficial". Two days later, on May 14, by means of a telegraphic dispatch, the MRE notified the ambassador that his pay had been suspended, but reiterated that "the Government, however, counted on ... [him continuing] at the head of that Embassy until the arrival of ... [a successor]". Souza Dantas then requested that his remuneration be maintained by the MRE until his successor took

office effectively, and this request was granted by Oswaldo Aranha.

Yet a further sign of the ongoing dispute over areas of competence in issues relating to foreigners, on the same day, May 14, Hermes Júnior sent a “Memorandum” to the Secretary- General of the MRE, in which he expressed his indignation over the fact that even though the consulates were under the obligation to indicate on what basis or under what classification a refugee entered Brazil, they did not do so. This case began with visas granted by Souza Dantas to the brothers Leopold and Paul Loeb, which had not been classified by the ambassador, and which the Passport Division, ironically, had transformed into “permanent visas”, this being justified by the CIC’s decision, in late April, 1941, that the responsibility for such a decision fell within the jurisdiction of the MJNI. The incident is especially curious because those visas, initially illegal were re-classified by Hermes Júnior as legal. The Chief of the Passport Division even went so far as to try to justify the granting of the visa:

“The officer in charge of the consular service, in that diplomatic mission, perhaps because of the exceptional circumstances of the moment, because that embassy moved incessantly from one to another city, because of the effect of the German invasion, because of lack of practice, or because of distraction or other motive, failed to indicate the character of the visa, which the secretariat had seen fit to authorize.”

What was at stake at that time for Hermes Júnior, was what he judged to be an absurd situation that “sought to deny the competence of the secretariat to correct omissions by an authority subordinate to it”.

On May 16, 1941, Dulphe Pinheiro Machado, director of the DNI, sent to the secretary general of the MRE, Maurício Nabuco, a letter in which he reported that he had already asked, some time previously, for measures from the CIC, “concerning diplomatic visas granted to foreigners, with obvious disregard to the existing requirements, in order to facilitate the entry of some into the

country”. Shortly after, he was informed by the chairman of CIC, that steps had already been taken through the MRE. However, “with the arrival on the 7th, in the port of Rio de Janeiro of the steamship *Serpa Pinto*, the immigration authorities were able to detect anomalies, which allows me to inform Your Excellency that we will take the measures which, in your high judgement, you deem necessary”. He reported that the ship had brought 418 passengers classified as “permanent”, of which, 26 were Brazilian, 235 Portuguese, and 30 Argentinians. The remaining 127 foreigners traveled with “diplomatic visas”, 67 of whom were made up of:

“28 diplomats and their families, with the remainder having the following professions: capitalists – 7, writer – 1, domestic – 1, teachers – 2, businessmen – 7, reporters – 3, nurses – 1, engineer – 1, milliner – 1, diamond cutter – 1, chemists – 4, various professions – 2, no profession – 7, and orchestra conductor – 1.”

Of the 67 bearers of “diplomatic visas”, Machado pointed out that 19 were Poles, 5 Belgians, 11 French, 1 Spanish, 5 Paraguayan, 2 Dutch, 2 English, 1 “White Russian”, 6 Hungarians, 5 Italians, 4 Luxemburgers and 6 Germans. As to religion given, 44 said they were Catholics, 2 Protestant, 2 Anglicans, 11 Orthodox, 4 Jewish, 4 “no religion”; noting that the designation “Jew” was avoided.

The director of the DNI includes in the letter the text of the legislation dealing with the granting of diplomatic visas, which stated that this type of visa, could only be issued to applicants with diplomatic passports, and only in exceptional cases, and duly authorized by the MRE, to “people considered to be eminent personalities in their countries”. Machado noted that these provisions and regulations concerning foreigners entering the country, “were not observed”, so he recommended that “the embarkment of all those who presented themselves in the ports of embarkment with ‘diplomatic visas’ in ordinary passports should be stopped by telegram”. Although Machado did not make direct reference to this

fact, on board this ship, there were at least 30 holders of diplomatic visas issued by Souza Dantas.

A week later, the director of the DNI sent a further letter, this time to Hermes Júnior. With it, were the Polish passports of seven members of the Kostman family, for “purposes of revalidation of the consular visas and indication of the basis of entry into the country, omitted in the documents”. Sulamith Kostman and six members of his family came to Brazil aboard the steamship *Cabo de Hornos* on May 11, 1941, bearing visas granted by Souza Dantas. Interestingly, the family had received visas the previous year from the Portuguese Consul-General in Bordeaux, Aristides de Sousa Mendes, later, like Souza Dantas, to be declared Righteous Among the Nations. According to Sulamith, they and other passengers were not allowed to disembark in the port of Rio de Janeiro. However, a priest who traveled on the same ship, on arriving in the port of Santos, asked members of his congregation and of the Jewish community to intercede with the port authorities, and managed to obtain authorization for the landing on May 13. As was the case with the Kostman family, the maritime police at first seized only the documentation, but, before long, began to detain the passengers who arrived with irregular visas. As the inspectors entered the ship before landing was made, they soon adopted the practice of preventing the disembarkment of people still on board. Some refugees who had someone ashore who was aware of their arrival and could advocate for them, still managed to land. Many others continued on board ship to try their luck or a bribe in another port.

Managing to get out of Morocco, each in his individual way, numerous ex-passengers of the *Alsina* tried to reach Brazil, by various means. Everything seems to indicate that the first to reach Brazil arrived aboard the steamship *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*, on July 10, 1941. From the moment of the landing of this vessel, there begin to appear records of their arrival in the passengers lists to be found in the National Archives, and in official letters coming from different

government organs referring to different cases of landing being denied. The letter sent by the IPMA to Hermes Júnior, on July 14, reported that “the [question of] the validity of the respective ‘visas’ gave rise to different interpretations in this inspectorate and in the DNI, a divergence motivated by the fact that the passengers of the steamship *Alsina* started its journey within the legal time limits, but the ship did not arrive in this capital as it was expected to”.

On July 18, Hermes Júnior sent an “urgent” response to the police inspector, stating that he was returning all the passports, except for those of the Chinatti-Schlesinger couple, which the MFA would be holding onto:

“I restore to you the others, along with the respective consular records of qualification, since no action can be taken regarding them, given that the visas in them had already lapsed before their bearers entered the country and before they began their voyage aboard the steamship *Cabo de Boa Esperanza*. Let me stress that any visa that had lapsed before the start of the voyage by steamship to Brazil is considered null and void.”

On July 22, Hermes Júnior, returned, in similar fashion, the passports of the Chinatti-Schlesinger couple once he had determined that “the bearers also initiated the voyage to Brazil, after their visa had already lapsed”. At that time, the Chief of the Passport Division of the MRE shared the point of view of the port police; namely, that the visas of the ex-passengers of the *Alsina* were all null and void.

On July 17, a week after the arrival of the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*, the *Cabo de Hornos* pulled into port. On the two ships, about forty passengers with lapsed visas were prevented from landing by the port authorities and were detained on the island of Flores. There they stayed for several days hoping that Vargas would authorize their entry into the country. The dictator ordered that they be set free, “until it was determined whether or not it was convenient for them to be made to re-embark”.

On July 26, the CIC informed Vargas that the forty refugees had

embarked for Brazil with expired consular visas “that is, almost without a visa ... For some of them, revalidation of the visa was denied either by the Minister of Justice, or by Your Excellency. For others, revalidation was not even asked for”. The CIC decided that all the passengers should be made to re-embark. If Vargas wanted to change this decision, the CIC could examine each case, and decide on the appropriateness of the entry into Brazil of one or another foreigner. The CIC gave Vargas the responsibility to decide the fate of those people. On the same day, after consulting with the MJNI, Vargas issued the following dispatch:

“I authorize the proposed measures. It seems to me, however, that this issue has already dealt with by the Minister of Justice in a general exposition. If the stay of the remaining foreigners is not in accord with the terms of the Minister of Justice’s exposition and the current law of immigration, they should be made to re-embark. On 26-7-41 (s) G. Vargas.”

Francisco Campos’“exposition”has proven impossible to locate. The president’s order was relative to the foreigners disembarking in the country carrying expired visas. Vargas returned to the CIC the responsibility of deciding which refugees could be authorized to land. Some of these passengers managed to disembark, although we have no certainty that, at the time, some were not forced to re-embark. The records in the archives full of gaps on this point. Although the names of nine members of the Lehmann family and four of the Baumann family appear on the passenger list, all with diplomatic visas granted by Souza Dantas, and all prevented from landing, there is no record of them having stayed for any time in Brazil. On July 29, 1941, the MRE sent the Brazilian consulate general in Lisbon, a telegraphic dispatch titled “diplomatic visas in ordinary passports”, explaining that:

“Since there has been abuse in the granting of diplomatic visas in ordinary passports, especially those of Jews, and in order for the

shipping companies to avoid assuming grave responsibilities, I inform Your Excellency that, since they violate the provisions of the law, all diplomatic visas that do not adhere to Articles 54 and 56 of Decree 3010 and Decree 3345 must be invalidated.”

To be considered valid and legal, diplomatic visas granted in ordinary passports had to be “indicate the legal basis of their issuance” which, in practice, rendered worthless the absolute majority of the visas granted by Souza Dantas. The order further stated that it would be necessary:

“to warn shipping companies not to sell tickets to the holders of these passports without submitting them first to the consular authority. A visa should be denied for any ship list that includes passengers in the situation referred to. Please forward to the consulate in Porto. I beg to reiterate to the consulate in Porto and shipping companies that consular visas are valid for only 90 days and that no passenger may disembark in Brazil if his visa has expired before the day on which the ship sails.”

Former passengers of the *Alsina* continued to arrive in the port of Rio de Janeiro. The Brazilian steamship *Siqueira Campos* brought a small group in late July and early August 1941, both landings being prevented. On August 5, 1941, the Portuguese ship the *Serpa Pinto* docked in the port of Rio de Janeiro and fifteen of its passengers, including three young children, were prevented from landing and continued their journey to the port of Santos. The next day, the CIC met and decided that it would be up to the Minister of Justice to decide what to do with these new bearers of expired visas.

On August 8, Vargas received from São Paulo a long telegram on behalf of the *Jewish Congregation of São Paulo* and the *Jewish Benevolent Association of Rio de Janeiro*. They appealed to the “humanitarian spirit” of the dictator, to resolve the case of those unfortunate refugees “in danger of having to return to the horrors of

Europe”. On the same day, Vargas received a telegram by someone identifying himself simply as “Margolis”, saying that the “15 passengers of the *Alsina*, including three children, who are aboard the *Serpa Pinto*, having reached this country of freedom and hope, after 7 months of travel, request authorization from Your Excellency to land and thus put an end to their tribulations”.

The CIC informed the Minister of Justice on August 11, that it had decided at its meeting held on August 6 to turn the matter over to the MJNI for a decision. On the morning of the 12th, the French lawyer Léon Crutians, one of the passengers aboard the *Serpa Pinto*, already on its way back to Portugal, telegraphed Vargas explaining to him the drama of the former passengers of the *Alsina*:

“Driven from our homes by war, we departed on January 15 from Marseilles headed for Rio, provided with legal visas, but arrived just now. The trip lasted seven months for reasons completely beyond our control. Our group ... crossing French Senegal and Portuguese Guinea, suffered from tropical diseases and finally got to Rio de Janeiro, depressed throughout this trip because of all our sufferings. We beg you, Mr. President, to put an end to our misfortunes by allowing us to land in this country.”

Crutians added that his request was urgent, since the *Serpa Pinto* would sail the next day from Brazil. Vargas immediately sent a telegram to Francisco Campos, along with a note of urgency, requesting an opinion. On the same day, the Minister of Justice responded to the president, concerning the fifteen passengers who “beg for an order from Your Excellency authorizing their landing in this capital”. He gave a brief summary of recent events involving foreigners who had arrived in a similar fashion in the previous weeks. He had been informed that it was a question of former passengers of the *Alsina*, who had, after all, succeeded in obtaining passages on the last four ships to reach Brazil. The minister justified all the impediments because they “avoid creating a *fait accompli*, that

would be the admission of these foreigners to our country, where their removal would be difficult, and sometimes impractical, given the current irregular maritime communications and the difficulty of obtaining visas from foreign consulates”.

Campos stated that the authorities acted in accordance with the guidelines of Brazilian immigration policy.

The Minister of the MJNI, who, until then, had defended a position of strict and radical restriction of entry of foreigners in Brazil, now suggested a startling solution to the new refugee case. On examination of the matter, he found that the responsibility for the situation in which the bearers of the expired visas found themselves lay not with the refugees, but with “shipping companies which sold them tickets knowing their irregular situation, and, in particular, with the Brazilian consular authorities who facilitated the departure of these ships, by signing passenger lists that contained the names of foreigners ineligible to enter our country, since their visas had already expired”. This paragraph Vargas underlined in pencil. Campos concluded that “[looking] at the matter in this manner, I do not hesitate to suggest to Your Excellency that kindness be shown to those who bear expired visas and are already on Brazilian territory or on ships in our ports, or traveling to them, and who cannot be more than 50 in number”. Campos suggested that cases could be studied individually, not allowing to land and re-embarking those passengers “unable to demonstrate the requisite moral character”. He also proposed that decisions regarding the expiry of the visas be published and communicated to the Brazilian authorities abroad so that “new errors and abuses would be avoided and the measure dictated by generosity, and in keeping with Brazilian traditional sentiments, would not have any major future consequences”. The following lines, written by the Minister of Justice, probably impressed by Vargas, who underlined them as well. Campos wrote:

“This small group of people will finally encounter on Brazilian land the shelter they were seeking on their voyage, for more than seven

months now, through countries and seas infested by war, disease, misery and hunger. At the end of their long journey, the threat of a return, which would signify imprisonment, spoliation, death and the exercising of revenge by the enemy, will no longer weigh heavily on their heads.”

This was the period in which Campos enjoyed the greatest prestige with Vargas. On the same day, in his characteristic manner of handwriting his instructions on the top left hand side of the document in question, Vargas accepted in their entirety the minister's suggestions. He ordered that it be brought to the attention of the Brazilian authorities that they were sometimes signing lists of passengers whose visas had expired. Thus, the fifteen passengers of the *Serpa Pinto* were allowed to disembark, and the situation of the passengers on the previous three ships who had been allowed to land was regularized with the police. While the entry of foreigners to Brazil was controlled by the MRE, Campos criticized vehemently, and with insistence, the practice and the criteria used for granting visas. More than once, he stated that these issues should not be resolved on the basis of mere humanitarian feeling. In stating his opinion, the minister praised the authorities subordinate to him, at the same time as he criticized and blamed the officials of the MRE for the incident involving refugees. Still, the fact serves to demonstrate that the dynamics of the anti-Semitism of the *Estado Novo* followed a logic, specific to itself. Campos' attitudes towards refugees were more easily implemented when the fate and lives of these people were no more than a name written in an impersonal request taking the form of a paper telegram from distant Europe via the Passport Division. Such a diluted reality made responsibility and conscience lighter matters. Perhaps the minister, seeing played out before him, the drama of fifteen people at the gates of his city, felt some kind of remorse or pity. Or, frightened by his weakened state of health, which a few days after would oblige him to take a sick leave of eleven

months, Campos succumbed to Christian compassion. All sectors of the government turned to the Minister of MJNI for a decision that perhaps they had not the courage to take themselves. This apparent compassion would not, unfortunately, continue. The continued arrival of other former passengers *Alsina* would exhaust the patience and “good will” of Vargas and his assistants.

If there was any doubt, the criterion adopted by Vargas was to consider as obsolete all the visas of the former passengers of the *Alsina*. Campos imagined that by notifying the consuls that they should not sign the passenger lists of shipping companies when they included passengers with expired visas, this type of refugee would be unable to board a ship. If those companies sold tickets to people with expired visas for Brazil, the consuls would signal the fact. The companies did not want to run the risk of having to keep passengers aboard whose landing was not sure. Apart from having to shoulder the cost of the passenger on his return trip, the companies might find themselves unable to disembark certain types of people who might end up being denied landing rights in all the ports of the world. If Campos was really convinced the system would operate correctly in future cases, his secretary in the MJNI, Ernani Reis, drew up a significant administrative note which he attached to the files concerning the four ships: “File. These and other documents relative to irregular landings should be filed in a special place, together, and ready to be consulted.” Reis correctly foresaw that the matter would not end there.

The next day, August 13, the CIC met to hear the president’s decision concerning the submission of the Minister of Justice. At the meeting, the CIC developed “Resolution No. 88”. Seeing as present conditions necessitate a complete control of the entry of foreigners into our country, and in compliance to our current law, it is resolved that:

I – A visa for entry into the country must be valid at the time when the bearer begins, outside Brazil, the journey to Brazil ...

II – Passenger lists that include bearers with lapsed visas will not be signed by the Brazilian authorities, in accordance with the preceding item.

At the same meeting of the CIC held on April 13, Dulphe Pinheiro Machado expressed the wish that the DNI be informed “about the number of authorizations given by the MFA, between January 1 and July 31 of the current year, for visas in the passports of stateless people” and two days later, the president of the CIC asked the secretary general of the MRE for an answer to this question.

On August 27, 1941, the Secretary General of the MRE, Maurício Nabuco, sent the text of Resolution no. 88 of the CIC, attached to Circular no. 1,548, giving as the subject of the communication “when a visa expires”, and requesting “strict observance” by consular authorities. He explained that “such measures only relate to common visa and not to free diplomatic or official visas, whose expiry dates are not limited”. This makes it absolutely clear that the diplomatic visas granted by Souza Dantas were no longer being accepted, not because they had expired, but because of the changes that resulted from Decree-law no. 3,715 of 1941, which transferred control of the entry of foreigners to the MJNI. On September 1, 1941, four days later, Nabuco sent Circular no. 1, 549, entitled “Diplomatic visas in ordinary passports”. In language very similar to that he used in a text sent to the Brazilian consulate in Lisbon, on July, 29 of the same year, he observed, probably thinking about Souza Dantas, that:

“Since there has been abuse in the granting of free diplomatic visas in ordinary passports, especially those of Jews, the secretariat wishes to notify those responsible for consular offices and consular service that, because they violate the terms of the existing legislation, all diplomatic visas that do not respect articles 54 and 56 of Decree-law 3, 019, of August 20, 1938 should be annulled. Diplomatic visas, issued in ordinary passports, in compliance with these articles, should indicate the legal basis of their issuance.”

Since the *Alsina* sailed from France, Souza Dantas remained concerned about the fate of the passengers, informing the MRE in the following months, about the details of the interrupted voyage of the ship. On April 30, 1941, he reported that the *Alsina* had left Marseilles in January of that year, with its final destination being Buenos Aires, but it had been forced by the British blockade authorities to stop in Dakar, where, according to the note he received from the Vichy government, it was finally allowed to sail, bound for the French Antilles. Still quoting the note, Souza Dantas added that:

“The passengers of the *Alsina*, including Alcalá Zamora, former president of Spain, will take a ship to the Antilles, and from there proceed to Argentina, after a stopover in Brasil ... [the] consulate in Dakar having stated it could not grant transit visas without a higher authorization ... [the Vichy] government would appreciate urgent steps being taken.”

Whenever Souza Dantas requested steps be taken to help refugees, he wisely did not do so directly in their name. In this case, for instance, he cited instead the former Spanish president. Knowing that his pleas on behalf of refugees, here, of the *Alsina*, would carry little weight, Souza Dantas adopted the practice of referring to someone not automatically associated with them. Here, for example, he cited the former Spanish president.

The MRE replied on May 12, 1941 to the ambassador that the matter relating to visas issued to former passengers of the *Alsina* had been filed away. On the copy of the document was noted the May 8, 1941 communication from the MJNI. Such would be the basis of decisions on such matters from now on, in accordance with the new law.

On May 17, 1941, the Brazilian diplomat Rubens Ferreira de Mello, who had remained in Paris, wrote a letter, sent by telegram to the MRE by Souza Dantas, reporting that a new law had been promulgated, completely preventing Jews from working. Ferreira de Mello explained:

“Dr. Blanke, who is in charge of Jewish economic issues for the military authorities in the occupied zone, has declared that all measures against the Jews are progressive. That means that Jews may not hold, henceforth, the meanest job. Dr. Blanke stressed ... it would be desirable, and for the good of Franco-German cooperation, that France adopted a similar solution ... Not wanting to be outdone in violence, the Vichy government has just interned in the concentration camps of the occupied zone, about five thousand foreign Jews, from 18 to 45 years of age. This measure concerns exclusively Polish, Czech and German Jews; however, it would not be surprising, given the haste of the French authorities on this matter, to see this measure extended to other nationalities before long.”

Ten days after sending this letter, Rubens de Mello left Paris at the request of the Nazis. By means of this and other telegrams, we know that the Brazilian authorities were perfectly well informed regarding the situation of the Jews and what steps were being taken against them throughout France.

On June 21, 1941, the MRE dispatched a response to the consulate in Marseille, in which it stated categorically that the “authorized visas ... not used before the entry into force of Decree-law no. 3,175, are now invalid”. Six months later, on January 30, 1942, the MRE again sent a dispatch to the consulate in Marseille reiterating that “all authorizations made before the publication of Decree-law no. 3,175 have expired”.

On the evening of June 26, 1941, Souza Dantas sent a telegram on the situation in France, in which he stated:

“Political activity in France, which before was in a painful slump, has limited itself to the renewed persecution of the defenseless Jews, who are the object of a barbarous law imposed by the Germans, unleashing hatred that reminds one of the Dreyfus Affair, while vital national problems, such as the spiralling food shortage and the fear of growing hunger, go unanswered.”

On June 27, 1941, Souza Dantas once again raised the issue of the passengers of the *Alsina*, this time, on behalf of Max Grandin, his mother and wife Paulette, who was Brazilian. All of them had embarked on that ship, asking the ambassador to request that the MRE authorize the “consulate in Casablanca to dispel the doubts of the shipping companies which refuse to sell passages to those whose visas it feels are no longer valid for Brazil”. Speaking in his own name, Souza Dantas addressed himself to Aranha saying:

“I would be most grateful to Your Excellency if you would take this measure on behalf of all the passengers, who have been travelling for five months, carrying visas that were valid for 90 days from the date of issuance, as I am regularly able to confirm, but who had no idea how long the voyage would take.”

The ambassador tried to argue that the visas had not expired, since the passengers of the *Alsina* had used the authorization within the regulation period, and the visas were still valid when they landed. The duration of the journey had been extended due to *force majeure*, which had rendered the visas invalid. But the MJNI did not see things the same way, considering that the visas issued before April, 1941 were invalid, whatever the motive. Souza Dantas tried revalidating the visas of the passengers of the *Alsina* through the MRE, but was not successful. The MRE did even respond to the proposal, and the answer to his question only arrived two months later.

While the MRE was seeking a solution to the problem of the passengers of the *Alsina*, Souza Dantas was pressuring consuls to intercede as well. On the same day that Souza Dantas sent his telegram, the consul in Marseilles, Murillo Martins de Souza, also sent one to the MRE. He asked if the MRE had authorized the honorary consulate in Casablanca to grant visas. The secretariat replied that authorization could only be given individually and not on a general basis.

Significantly, the day after sending his latest request relative to the

passengers of the *Alsina*, Souza Dantas sent Aranha a confidential letter, dealing with a story on Getúlio Vargas, picked up from a radio transmission in Rome on June 27. The news story referred to the Brazilian dictator as an ally, opposed to the “warmongering” of Washington. This image of Vargas would certainly upset the anglophile minister, and, who knows, perhaps convince him to suggest a more favorable solution to the problem of the passengers aboard the *Alsina*.

Still without an answer to the predicament of the passengers of the *Alsina*, Souza Dantas again used a “neutral” name to bring up the subject. This time, he made a request on behalf of the Brazilian Ramon Luis Martim, a former passenger of the *Alsina*, who had been repatriated by the consulate general in Marseilles to Brazil. As he was without resources, when the ship arrived in Casablanca, he was sent to a concentration camp, where he wrote Souza Dantas. He had addressed himself, in vain, to the honorary consulate in Casablanca, which had done nothing for him. The ambassador suggested that the honorary consulate be authorized by cable to arrange repatriation. He also reported that he had asked the Vichy government to release the Brazilian citizen.

Two months after making the request on behalf of the Grandin family and getting no response, on September 1, Souza Dantas sent another telegram to the MRE requesting a response to his original telegram concerning the passengers of the *Alsina*. This time, the answer was given by the MRE the following day, September 2. The MRE informed the ambassador that “the visas were granted before the Decree-law no. 3.175. “A lapsed visa could only be“ renewed by the Ministry of Justice, which denied the necessary permission for Max Grandin and family”

Souza Dantas had finally received his answer, but it was not the one he wanted. He, therefore, decided to find his own solution to the drama of the former passengers of the *Alsina*, who had failed to leave Casablanca or were retained at some other point on the route

to Brazil. On September 5, 1941, the Consul in Marseille, Martins de Souza, sent to the MRE telegraphic letter no. 57 in which he reported that “the Embassy in Vichy asks me to ask the honorary consulate in Casablanca to get the navigation companies to accept as valid the visas of the passengers of the steamship *Alsina* who landed there, in January, and whose voyage was interrupted in Dakar. I ask for further instructions”. On September 8, the MRE dispatched an answer to Murillo Martins de Souza notifying the diplomat that the consulate should not take any action without the express authorization of the MRE.

On September 16, a family arrived in Brazil aboard a cargo ship, the *Barbacena*, belonging to *Lloyd Brasileiro*. They were four members of Guerson family, who had been aboard the *Alsina*, and were prevented from disembarking in the port of Rio de Janeiro. The ship was sent for repairs and the family stayed aboard for weeks. José Guerson was an inventor, and held a number of patents. Only after Carlos Guinle wired Vargas, taking responsibility for them, did the president authorize their entry into the country.

4: The Former Passengers of the *Alsina*: End of a Voyage

The Spanish ship that was the next to arrive in the port of Rio de Janeiro was the steamer *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*. It arrived on September 25, 1941, carrying forty-seven former passengers of the *Alsina*, some with children. Thirty-seven planned to disembark in Rio de Janeiro and the rest in the port of Santos. This information appears in a letter to Vargas written in French by Léon Crutians, and sent on September 25, 1941. Crutians, who had landed a month before in Brazil, and was a lawyer and former passenger of the *Alsina*, also reported that Brazilian consuls in Casablanca and Cadiz had revalidated the visas in response to a telegram sent by Souza Dantas

on August 19, 1941, stating that “these passengers are allowed to continue their journey to Brazil”.

At 3:00 in the afternoon of September 25, 1941, the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* reached the port of Rio de Janeiro. The first official to go aboard for official inspection was the inspector Severino Gonçalves da Rocha, from the maritime police (IPMA). At 6:00 p.m., Rocha left the ship, carrying with him numerous passports, all already stamped by the immigration inspector, and a letter written by the Brazilian consul in Cadiz, dated August 26, 1941, with the following text addressed to the inspector of the maritime police in the port Rio de Janeiro:

“Inspector, I have the honor to inform Your Excellency that various passengers, who boarded in January of this year the French steamer *Alsina*, left for Brazil, within the regulation time of the respective consular visas, but were detained, along with their steamship in Dakar, as a result of war. They stayed aboard for five months, and as the steamship could no longer continue its voyage, they were forced to return to Casablanca, many of them being interned in a concentration camp. Freed, they presented themselves to the Brazilian consul in Casablanca, declaring that have been authorized by the MRE and the Brazilian embassy in Vichy, in a telegram of 18 of the current month, to receive new temporary visas... the permanent ones ... [remaining] valid. The bearers of the permanent visas having presented themselves themselves today in this consulate, and new visas being necessary for them as well as for the bearers of temporary visas, I decided to authorize them, as it is a question of *force majeure*, and taking into account that they came to Brazil in the regulated time, since they had been unable to conclude the voyage for reasons beyond their control, and their authorizations had been renewed in the manner described above. Since this is a moment of exceptional gravity and it not fair for these poor people to stay here helpless and without material resources, I believe that my act is legitimate and that it will meet with the approval of your

Your Excellency, whose high spirit of justice I greatly appreciate. I charged all of them the respective consular fees.”

In his text, Eduardo Porto Osório Bordini appears to have been fully aware that he was committing an act that would surely be considered as illegal by the Brazilian authorities. Besides the letter to the inspector, Bordini wrote, by hand, a justification for each of the passports, citing the letter reproduced above. Bordini revalidated ten passports, and they included several members of the same family.

The visas revalidated by the honorary Brazilian consul in Casablanca, bore the statement “You are allowed to continue the trip to Brazil – Telegram from the Embassy of Brazil in Vichy, of 19-8-941 “or” You are allowed to continue traveling to Brazil as a request of the Brazilian embassy in Vichy. Casablanca, August 16, 1941 “or even the same text in French, all signed by the honorary consul in Casablanca, Antonio Porciúncula. That little statement was written in the visas issued earlier that had expired. Due to the apparent legality of such visas, the inspectorate accepted the landing signed by the immigration inspector. But it decided that the passports should be seized for clarification. Some passengers were on board with a “simple statement of Casablanca, signed by ‘Porciúncula’ “ and without having any other type of visa. These were issued by the honorary consul apparently on his own initiative. Still, the immigration inspector had signed, permitting the landing. The maritime police (IPMA) did not allow the landing of those passengers and contacted Consul Moraes of the Passport Division of the MRE, who recommended not allowing the landing of the group.

Antônio Machado Gonçalves, secretary of the IPMA, and the immigration inspector now boarded the ship in order to prevent the landing of the passengers with passports bearing only the statements by Porciúncula, and not so much as a lapsed visa. The passports had been stamped by the immigration authority and these authorizations were cancelled one by one. Initially, the total number of passengers

prevented from landing was thirty-seven, five of whom were minors. In his own hand, and on the letterhead of MJNI, Ernani Reis noted beside the list of names the following: "Passengers detained on board by the Marine Police of this Capital. ALL ILLEGAL AND JEWS."

The passengers who had already been waiting for several hours in the ship, and had seen immigration sign off on the landings, now panicked. Some insisted they were authorized to land by Vargas. Thus, Machado Gonçalves asked the inspectorate to see if there was anything from the MRE or MJNI to substantiate the allegations. As nothing was found, he reiterated the restraining order. Just in case, Machado Gonçalves phoned the interim Minister of Justice Vasco Leitão da Cunha and Ernani Reis. Reis decided that Magdalena Landsbergova, who was among those prevented from landing, was authorized to land. Once it was known, on board, that only Mrs. Landsbergova would be allowed to land, the passengers revolted "protesting" and "they were in such a state that the police which the inspectorate maintained on the ship were deemed to be insufficient." So Machado called in police reinforcements to contain the unruly group.

On the 26th, the day after the arrival of the ship, Machado took all the seized passports to the office of Ernani Reis. These belonged to the passengers who had managed to land and to those who were still on board so that the MJNI could investigate the claims of those who said they were authorized to land. After a brief analysis, Reis decided to "seize for review all the passports of the passengers of the ship who had landed ... with the exclusion of the Portuguese, and nationals of non-European countries". The police deployed some staff cars and agents to find and collect all the passports of the foreigners who had landed. A day later, the police had managed to find thirty-five passports, which corresponded to a larger number of foreigners, since many families carried the same passport. Until then, twelve passengers had not yet been located. Thirteen of the passports seized had diplomatic visas issued by Souza Dantas. Thirty- six people were

kept on board, and just over thirty-five others found themselves with their passports in the hands of the MJNI. It is impossible to give the exact total number of people involved because it is impossible to know how many family members shared certain passports.

Ernani Reis drew up an organized inventory of all the names, data and “observations”. These observations concerned the inspection practices of the SRE when dealing with names in records established at the time of some previous request to enter Brazil. Although Reis sought from the Passport Division some information about the authorizations granted by the MRE before April, 1941, he was unable to find, in the overwhelming majority of cases, filed records of authorizations granted by Souza Dantas to grant visas, since the ambassador did not follow the practice and mandatory consular procedures, and, therefore, did not leave anything on file, a consular card or any other document or information, beyond the few French words written in the passport of each of the foreigners.

Reis acknowledged that Mrs. Landsbergova’s visa was authorized by Vargas on August 18. He also encountered bearers of visas granted or revalidated by Souza Dantas and by Porciúncula, which had been denied by Vargas. The ambassador granted visas to three Polish actors, Irena Olimpja Stypinska, Halina Waldyslawka Kern, and Wlacyw Piotrowski, who had already had their request for a visa refused by the president. The head of the Van Straten family, which included three children, had a brother in Brazil. The family had sought from the president himself an authorization to come to Brazil, and on June 12, 1941, Vargas had rejected the request. Porciúncula either did not know of, or ignored the order of the president, and gave the whole Van Straten family, temporary visas. The same happened with Ana Maria Meider, Max Grandin, Benjamin Lerner and their families. The honorary Consul in Casablanca granted visas to foreigners who had received a negative response to their request for authorization to receive a visa, made to the Brazilian dictator himself.

Vargas continued receiving various requests that he allow the

landing and right to stay of the group aboard the steamship *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*. On September 26, a new telegram from Léon Crutians arrived at 8:35 in the morning. At 3:56 in the afternoon, another dramatic telegram arrived at Catete Palace, the president's residence, asking for the landing of refugees, and signed by Josef Schlanger. At 8:52 in the evening, there was a further telegram, this time signed by Paulo Zander and Luís Lorch, and sent in the name of the "United Jewish Benevolent Association of Rio de Janeiro" and "Jewish Congregation of São Paulo". The authors of the telegram pleaded the cause of the "unlucky" fifty ex-passengers of the *Alsina* who had arrived. They stated that the thirty-six passengers, prevented from landing "after having glimpsed the possibility of ending their sufferings ... [were] appealing to the lofty humanitarian feelings of Your Excellency, who, a short while ago generously authorized the landing of a group of passengers of the *Alsina* group, even though their visas had expired."

The passengers seemed convinced that those who had who already been allowed to disembark would be allowed to stay. The number of fifty passengers referred to included the thirty-six prevented from landing in Rio de Janeiro, and fourteen others who intended to leave the ship in Santos, the next port. The last telegram to arrive, at 8:51 p.m. on September 26, would be that of Horácio Lafer, from São Paulo, asking his name be added to the other signatories of the previous telegram, Zander and Lorch.

On September 27, two more telegrams arrived. One came from the War Ministry and was signed by Alfredo Eydio, asking that Max Grandin, who had been prevented from landing, receive the necessary authorization. In another, from Santos, Paulette Nabuco Abreu, pleaded that Vargas would listen to her request, delivered the previous day by Colonel Benjamin Vargas, concerning Benjamin Lerner and his wife, who were related to her. "They have travelled ten months with two sick, extremely weakened children, one injured in an accident on board. I request urgent action seeing steamship *Buena*

Esperanza to sail this afternoon. May God repay magnanimous gesture unfortunate and innocent victim.”

On the morning of the 29th, Vargas received yet another telegram, this time in French, signed by “Odon, Duke of Württemberg”, sent from the “Franciscan Monastery” in Washington. He asked that Vargas authorize the landing of Anna Meider, who was joining her family in Brazil.

Francisco Campos was already on medical leave. On October 4, the interim Minister of the MJNI, Vasco Leitão da Cunha, addressed to the president an official letter titled “GS/978 information”. The steamship *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* was already returning from Buenos Aires, and would soon dock in Rio de Janeiro, and then in Santos. According to Cunha:

“Opposing the landing of the persons alluded to, [who are] of various European nationalities, but all Jews, the officials responsible for inspection control have justified their position by the fact that the consular visas they were carrying were obsolete before the start of the voyage to Brazil of the ship referred to ... In a similar case, that of the passengers of the ‘Serpa Pinto’, of the ‘Cape Horn’ (belonging to the same company as the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*) and of the very same ‘Cabo de Buena Esperanza’ on a previous trip, Your Excellency authorized the landing of the passengers prevented from disembarking, almost all, as now, war refugees; establishing, thereby, a definitive decision on the matter of expired visas. The necessary measures were adopted, then, so that Your Excellency’s dispatch would be executed. The decision on the expiry of the visas was published, the transportation companies were advised, the consuls were informed of the same, so that the incident would not repeat itself. What has just happened was nothing else but a bold attempt either by the consular authorities, or by the foreigners, some of which had the renewal of their visas denied by the competent bodies, to establish a *fait accompli*, by their presence in the country, and to frustrate Your Excellency’s decision and the legal provisions governing the matter.”

Leitão da Cunha made a detailed report on the facts taking as its basis the report of the IPMA and the information provided by Ernani Reis. He justified the fact that the port authorities, believing in the validity of visas granted in Cadiz, had allowed the landing, since Bordini had given a legal appearance to the ten visas granted. “It turned out , however, then such visas, legal in appearance, were as irregular as the statements of the honorary consul in Casablanca.” Leitão da Cunha explained that the MRE had never issued a general authorization as the consul in Cadiz suggested. He further stated that the piece of information stating that the embassy in Vichy had made a request or issued an order in this sense might also be false. He pointed out that the consulate of Cadiz was subordinate to the embassy in Madrid and not the embassy in Vichy. He expressed the opinion that the two consuls had “acted together to perpetrate a fraudulent act which was truly unworthy of them”. As for the refugees with visas issued by Souza Dantas, because they bore passports with the “strange annotation” the honorary consul in Casablanca had made in them, they still managed to land, thanks to the diplomatic visas issued in late 1940 by the embassy in Vichy.

Leitão da Cunha was careful to make it clear to Vargas that when the MJNI realized that among those bearing diplomatic visas were “persons to whom Your Excellency denied the authorization for the granting of a permanent visa ... [and] appropriate measures were adopted so that the passports would be seized and the baggage of the non-Portuguese Europeans not allowed to be unloaded until further notice”. Leitão da Cunha counted ninety-nine passengers whose documentation was seized. He included in this amount those held on board, the bearers of the Cadiz visas and the others, who had managed to land. Among them, some “whose entrance to Brazil is perfectly legitimate in accordance with current regulations: former residents, parents of native Brazilians, bearers of duly authorized visas, included in the special concession made some time ago, by Your Excellency, in consideration of a request

from the Pope”. For the interim minister, Vargas had to take a decision only on the visas granted by the two consuls and by Souza Dantas. Leitão da Cunha found that “from a legal standpoint these three categories are equivalent. The revalidations in Casablanca or in Cadiz of the visas in ordinary passports and the ‘diplomatic’ visas of the embassy in Vichy are illegal and, perhaps, fraudulent, which means that the presumption cannot be made that they can be accepted”.

For Leitão da Cunha, the fact that the visas were signed by employees who, in theory, had the power to do so, did not, of itself, create any rights for the bearer. Lacking were the remaining conditions for legitimacy that Brazil required of foreigners obtaining a visa. In other words, since it was not a matter of immigrants who could transfer the sum of money stipulated by law, the “racial” characteristics of the individuals, *a priori*, made them ineligible for a visa to Brazil. The acts of each of both of the diplomats were null and void. Leitão da Cunha concluded that:

“This ministry does not, therefore, dare to plead with Your Excellency for the landing of the passengers detained on board and the regularization of the status of those who have already disembarked, mainly because this would contradict the general decision of Your Excellency in the case of Serpa Pinto’ and special prior and subsequent decisions. Nevertheless, it is my opinion that the greatest share of the blame must be borne by the consuls in Casablanca and Cadiz, and the ambassador in Vichy.”

Leitão da Cunha further stated that the appeals that had been received were not legal ones, but pleas for clemency, which could only be decided by the president. Years later, in testimony recorded in 1983, Leitão da Cunha would say about that he received an unbelievable number of visas, that “ there were problems with political refugees who wanted to leave a bleeding Europe, and to whom Souza Dantas granted visas. The Ambassador in Paris gave visas to Jews and to

“Rumaics”. They say Rumanians nowadays. He exaggerated. Luiz Dantas sent thousands of people to Brazil.”

Thus, the advice provided to Vargas by the interim minister of the MJNI Vasco Leitão da Cunha, who was pro-ally, a diplomat, and a member of a family which had deep bonds of friendship with Souza Dantas, was that he “did not dare to suggest” to the president that he remove obstacles in the way of dozens of desperate people. Leitão da Cunha concluded the document assigning “blame” for the situation to his three fellow diplomats. Ironically, the position of Francisco Campos on refugees had been much more flexible than that of Leitao da Cunha. The minister was an admirer of fascism and authoritarian regimes, and Leitao da Cunha, was pro-ally.

In the letter addressed to Vargas, the MJNI annexed the passenger lists of the steamship *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*. On the first page, in large type, were the words “THE PASSENGERS TRAPPED BY THIS BOARD POLICE MARITIME CAPITAL (ALL ILLEGAL AND JEWS)” written above the list of names of those passengers. Beside each name, was the nationality, and the information in brackets classifying each illegal foreigner as “Jew” or “Jewess”. On the next page, there was another list giving the names of the passengers who had succeeded in landing. They were classified “legal” and “illegal” like the others in Casablanca, “visas ... [at the request] of the Pope”, and “Legal diplomatic visas”. None of diplomatic visas issued by Souza Dantas was considered “legal”.

On October 9, Léon Crutians sent another telegram to Vargas. He warned that the refugees had departed from Buenos Aires headed for Brazil “in their eternal pilgrimage” toward Spain, back to Europe. On October 13, they would, once again, pass by the port of Rio de Janeiro. Léon Crutians made a dramatic appeal to the dictator. The next day, Vargas sent to the MJNI his answer, Directive GS/978:

“Decision. Denied. The landing of passengers who do not bear the respective documents in accord with legal requirements cannot be permitted. An inquiry is to be conducted to determine which

funcionaries in the Ministry of External Relations violated the provisions of the law. On 11/10/41 (s) G. Vargas.”

On the same day, the president received three other telegrams containing dramatic appeals. The first arrived at 9:10 p.m. Again, “Odo, Duke of Wurttemberg” wrote from the “Franciscan Monastery” in Washington, USA. He pleaded desperately that Vargas authorize Anna Meider, still on board, to disembark from the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* in Rio de Janeiro so she could be reunited with her husband and children, after so much suffering and tragic misfortunes.

The following telegram arrived at 3:38 in the afternoon, signed by José Guerson, who a few months before had been prevented from disembarking from a ship. He appealed on behalf of thirty-seven passengers still aboard the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*, and the other forty in the same situation who were already on their way aboard the steamship *Cabo de Hornos*, and who would arrive within eight days. Guerson revealed to Vargas that one of the passengers of the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* had been driven to suicide. “Having lived with them all aboard the *Alsina*, I can say that none of them will pose problems for the hospitable Brazilian nation.”

The third telegram arrived at 10:03 p.m. and probably irritated the dictator. It was once again from Léon Crutians. He stated that the passengers of the steamship *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*, who were supposed to arrive from Buenos Aires on the 9th, had provisionally landed in that port, “in order that their situation before the Brazilian authorities could be studied and resolved in the time necessary”. Only two of the passengers were prevented from continuing their voyage aboard the steamship.

In Buenos Aires, the authorities allowed the landing for 90 days of 40 former passengers of the *Alsina* who arrived aboard the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*, all the refugees being taken to the guarded shelter for immigrants.

Vargas had already taken a decision on the issue. He signed the order that same day. Apparently, the decision had not yet been publicized, or the insistence of the telegrams weighed in the dictator's verdict.

On October 12, Otto Gerhard Meider begged Vargas via telegram, that his wife Anna Marie Meider who would arrive from Buenos Aires aboard the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*, receive authorization to land. Otto stated that he had entered and lived in Brazil legally, with a son.

On October 13, there arrived yet another telegram from Sao Paulo, signed by Caspar Libero. He appealed on behalf of Benjamin and Cecília Lerner and their two children, still aboard the *Cabo de Esperanza*. Libero was mistaken when he suggested "I believe they are the final, remaining cases of the passengers of the *Alsina*. They stand in need of a humane word and the pity of the Chief to land in Rio. Otherwise they will go live out their bitter life in a concentration camp".

On October 14, Aranha sent a small note to Vargas. To it, he attached a letter from Léon Crutians, who asked for an authorization to land for the forty-seven passengers still aboard the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*, "who sailed to Brazil with lapsed visas, regarded as invalid, in their passports". He informed Vargas that due to the irregular situation in which the passengers found themselves, only he could authorize the landing, as an exceptional measure.

Three days later, on October 17, the interim minister of Justice delivered a "confidential" letter to Aranha. Leitão da Cunha passed on to Aranha the text of the order of Vargas, denying authorization for landing and ordering an inquiry. He reported that "measures relating to surveillance at ports and at the border are being taken by this ministry. Regarding the last part of the order of the president, it is, in my view, up to Your Excellency to take the necessary steps to ensure compliance". Leitão da Cunha annexed to the letter, the report on the bearers of visas granted in an irregular manner by the consuls of Cadiz and Casablanca, and by Ambassador Souza Dantas. In the documents, besides the name of the passengers was the term

“Jew” or “Jewess”. On the same day, Leitão da Cunha addressed a confidential letter to Dulphe Pinheiro Machado, who was filling in temporarily for the Ministry of Labour, Industry and Commerce. He also informed that ministry of the presidential order and sent the list of all those aboard the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* who were forbidden to land, after this, the final passage during the war, of a ship from Europe through Brazilian ports. In the conclusion to his letter, Leitão da Cunha asked Dulphe P. Machado that “the necessary measures be taken also by the inspection authorities of this ministry to prevent the landings, especially since in Buenos Aires some of the refugees have managed to disembark”. Even if he did not exactly plead for the refugees, Campos appeared much less indifferent to their fate, on this occasion, at least, than Leitão da Cunha.

On October 18, 1941, the *Cabo de Hornos* arrived in the port of Rio de Janeiro carrying aboard another installment of the group of former passengers of the *Alsina*. Fifty-seven passengers had no idea of the situation that awaited them in Brazil. The journey had already been tragic for some of those who have traveled for many months. After experiencing the panic of war and having escaped from Europe, many had been held aboard the *Alsina* in Dakar for five months, and, afterwards, in concentration camps in Morocco. The situation was already desperate before the ship arrived in Brazilian waters, with at least two deaths having occurred on board.

According to the report prepared by the chief of police for foreigners, Ivens de Araújo, during the October 18, 1941 stopover of the *Cabo de Hornos*, there were 87 passengers aboard destined for Rio de Janeiro, among them, 52 with a temporary status, and 35 as permanent residents. Araújo reported that of the 52 passengers carrying temporary visas, 5 were on the list through a mistake, since they were bound for Buenos Aires, two had landed in Curaçao, one had died on board and three passengers were allowed to land. Those who had landed in Curaçao, and to whom Ivens Araujo referred, were the German pedagogue Erich Arendt, 38, and his German

wife, Kathe Hayek Arendt, 41, who appeared on the passenger list as transit passengers for Colombia. Together with the documents relating to the *Cabo de Hornos*, there is a statement, in Spanish, of the commissioner of the ship, Don Gregorio Uribe – Echeverria, stating that “the passengers, whose destination is the port of Rio de Janeiro, named Erich and Kathe Arendt [,] died on September 26 and October 6, respectively”. According to the police chief, forty-one temporary visa holders were prevented from disembarking. Four of them were carrying diplomatic visas “given in Vichy”, which had been revalidated by the Brazilian consul in Casablanca, in response to the telegram from Souza Dantas. Another 31 passengers were carrying lapsed visas. Among them were 27 carrying the same revalidation of Porciúncula authorized by the ambassador and a holder of a temporary visa issued in Madrid, with exemption given by the consul of the proof of means of subsistence, “something the law expressly stipulates and which cannot be waived by the consular authority”. Four had French passports issued in Morocco, but instead of a visa, only a statement by the consul in Casablanca, and, finally, one foreigner was carrying a visa given in Marseille, “without the permission the Ministry of Justice, on July 25, 1941, with the following note: “combined with the Decree-law 3175, articles 1 and 2, adding that no information has been provided regarding means of sustenance”.

The police chief reported that of the 35 bearers of permanent visas, one died en route, 15 were duly “legalized” on landing in Rio de Janeiro, and the other 19 were prevented from disembarking. Seven were prevented because they held diplomatic visas from Souza Dantas, revalidated by Porciúncula; one, because he was given a visa in Marseille “with a note of authorization from the MRE, but with no record of that authorization in the Ministry of Justice files”; five held visas issued in Rome “with the authorization of the Brazilian ambassador to the Holy See”; and another five, with visas granted on July 16, 1941, in Vigo, Spain “with note of authorization from

the MRE, but not to be found in the Ministry of Justice files”. The police prevented the landing in the city of sixty passengers, 41 with diplomatic visas, and 19 with permanent visas.

Araújo, Ernani Reis, Inspector Martins Ribeiro and his helpers Milton Pereira da Costa and Hugo Miranda, all of PEI, and inspector Rui de Carvalho of the DNI all participated in a meeting throughout the night of the 18th, until the dawn of day October 19, at the MJNI, “to guide, according to the instructions of His Excellency the President, the work to be done on board the *Cabo de Hornos*”. At 5:30 in the morning, they declared their deliberations closed, after a “study of each case, and all being in agreement regarding those allowed and those prevented from disembarking. “However, the police chief gave an account of a disagreement between departments, denouncing the departure from the vessel of Rui de Carvalho, who did not come back on board, as he should have, and furthermore did not return to the IPMA, as agreed, to complete the job. That prompted officials to assume the functions of both departments, noting in passports the refusal of the right to land by the IPMA as well as by the DNI. They did not bother to add the notes to the passenger lists, since the ship did not depend on them to sail.

The next day, when the port authorities met to complete the annotations of ship passenger lists, a disagreement occurred between the inspectors Ribeiro and Carvalho. The inspector of the DNI decided to note the prohibition to land for only 33 passengers carrying temporary visas “obtained in Casablanca, where there is [only] an honorary consul”. For Araújo, there were no visas issued by that consul, “but only statements in lapsed visas”. Araújo also complained that the inspector had neglected to include in his prohibition “sui generis”⁴ more passengers with passports from the Protectorate of Morocco, also containing statements by the consul in Casablanca. On the day he did the inspection, Rui de Carvalho ended up not indicating a prohibition of landing for anyone with a permanent visa. Araújo concluded his comments, complaining that:

“to this must be added the failure of this same department to note the prohibition to land applied by DNI to the bearers of temporary visas referred to above (visas issued by the consul in Casablanca), the last time the other Spanish ship *Cabo de Horno* passed through this port “Cape of Good Hope”; seeing as that ... [department] noted nothing [in the passports of those] travelling with lapsed temporary visas and statements similar to those of the honorary consul in Casablanca, and they were allowed to disembark.”

It is apparent that at that moment there existed on the part of the DNI a less radical stance towards refugees who managed to reach Brazilian ports. While the IPMA, under the personal direction of Ernani Reis – carrying out the provisions of the president – was characterized by a rigid and inflexible procedure in relation to lapsed visas, DNI officials were more flexible. As shown by the 1941 report of the representative of “American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee” (Joint, a mutual aid organization that was committed to removing Jews threatened by nazism in Europe), Moses W. Beckelman, who was at that time in Brazil, this goodwill could be related to a possible interest of those officials to establish a situation in which they could earn some financial advantage, as in previous cases, the inspectors of the DNI having linked the landing permit refugees received to the payment of sums of money.

On October 21, 1941, Maurício Nabuco sent a “Memorandum” to Aranha containing as an attachment the warning of the MJNI dated the 17th of that month, which included, in turn, the dispatch by Vargas to open an inquiry “with regard to visas in passports of the passengers prevented from disembarking from the ship ‘Cabo de Buena Esperanza’ “. This led Nabuco to make the following comment:

“With due reverence, and while wishing to examine the issue more closely, it seems to me that there is no need for an investigation, because the dispatch itself that I mentioned comes with a letter

from Mr. Osório Bordini, Brazilian consul in Cadiz, directed to the Inspector of the Maritime Police of Rio de Janeiro, in which that consular officer confirms he granted the visas in question. As for [the matter of] the consul in Casablanca, by the way, an honorary consul, responsibility seems to fall on the ambassador in Paris.”

The reaction of the Minister of the MRE was quick. On the next day, October 22, 1941, at the suggestion of Aranha, Vargas retired “in the interest of public service” the Brazilian consul in Cadiz, Eduardo Osório Porto Bordini.

On October 22, Souza Dantas communicated by telegram the death of Hermenegildo Brazil, caused “by the poverty prevailing in France”, and in the same way as he had asked also, months before, for the communists political exiles, David Capistrano de Abreu and Joaquim Silveira dos Santos, he now asked for the authorization to issue a visa to another Brazilian communist “fellow sinner and companion in misfortunes”, Dinarco Reis, since he found himself “unable to seek work in another country, for lack of identity documents”. Souza Dantas appealed to the “generosity” of Vargas, asking him to authorize the consulate in Marseille (where Reis found himself now, according to the ambassador) to grant Reis a visa, ended the telegram by insisting that the case was “urgent”. Souza Dantas’ intervention on behalf of these Brazilians, is an important testimonial to the sensitivity and humanitarian ideals of the ambassador, who was aware of the case of another political exile, Apolonio de Carvalho, who was working at the moment unofficially in the Brazilian consulate in Marseille. All these exiles had fought in the Spanish Civil War, and because they have served in a foreign army, the Brazilian government no longer recognized them as Brazilian nationals. Arrest warrants were pending for each of them should they decide to return to Brazil. This did not prevent Souza Dantas, official representative of the Brazilian government, from trying to help them.

On October 23, Nabuco drew up a reprimand to the ambassador in Vichy and sent it in the name of Aranha. In dispatch no. 37, Nabuco stated that:

“The secretariat is aware that the embassy has been authorizing the honorary Brazilian consulate in Casablanca to grant visas and to extend the expiry date visas on passports ... I call your Excellency’s attention to Article 32 of Decree-law no. 3,345, dated November 1938, which states that honorary consulates may only grant visas when expressly authorized by the secretariat. “

The document to which we had access comes from a handwritten draft of the dispatch that was sent to Souza Dantas. The draft permits us to see parts that Nabucco drafted and then crossed out. In the first version of the text, Nabucco listed four items in his text, but in the final draft, eliminated one of the items. He had written “I wish Your Excellency to take the necessary measures in order to prevent the reoccurrence of the fact”. In the final item, he initially wrote “it must be added that that embassy should not intervene on the issue of visas in passports of foreigners except through the secretariat”, but he added, in the version sent to Vichy, that he was referring to the intervention of Souza Dantas in the granting of visas “by the Brazilian consulates”. This substantially changed the meaning of the text, which initially made reference to visas granted by the ambassador himself (which, in Nabuco’s opinion, exposed the MRE to criticism) and instead ended up referring to visas issued by consuls, that, by law, knew they required the permission of the MRE for granting visas to foreigners. The secretariat communicated directly with the consulates, and to grant a visa, the intervention of the ambassador, under the conditions prescribed by law, could only be respected by the consul if the MRE confirmed the request. That was the reason that led the consul in Dakar to keep refusing to revalidate the visas of passengers of the *Alsina*, while the ship was still in that city, and Bordini only revalidated passports when he was informed that the MRE so authorized.

On October 27, the consul general of Brazil in Lisbon, Joaquim Pinto Dias, sent a telegram to the MRE forwarding a request he had received from the Polish legation of that capital. According to the Consul , the text referred to:

“the situation of Polish nationals, holders of ordinary passports with diplomatic visas issued by the embassy of Brazil in Vichy, who are currently in Lisbon and are prevented from continuing their journey, according to the instructions of the telegraph dispatch no. 78 of July, 29. In this respect, it is up to me [wired the consul] to inform you that this consulate general [,] in accordance with the terms of the dispatch [,] notified in time the companies and shipping agents of this city that they not provide passage to holders of such passports without first submitting them to the examination of our chancellery. This measure resulted in some passengers – indeed few in number – being denied embarcation and being detained here for not having visas that were granted legally.”

The Brazilian consul, who had already shown on other occasions some goodwill towards refugees, went on to explain that he thought that the fact that those foreigners were in Portugal, was due:

“exclusively to the Spanish and Portuguese authorities allowing this ‘transit’ through their territories, based on ‘diplomatic visas’, granted by the Embassy of Brazil, signed by the head of that diplomatic mission, visas the validity of which, in all truth, should not raise any doubts, and should enable their holders to reach their destiny. There are cases where the embassy of Brazil in Vichy confirmed again recently by telegram to the consulate in Casablanca, the validity of the visas it granted.”

Pinto Dias explained that those refugees, prevented from sailing to Brazil, being allowed to stay in Portugal, and not having the possibility to return to their country of origin or provenance, meant that the situation of those people put diplomatic and consular offices

in Brazil in a “ delicate situation, in the eyes of the local authorities, with regards to their their competence and honorability. “Thus” he proposed that in:

“these circumstances and in order to safeguard the prestige and authority of our offices abroad, I take the liberty to suggest to Your Excellency that for the small number of foreigners staying in Portugal, be permitted the continuation of their trip to Brazil, where would remain provisionally, until with the remedying of the situation in Europe, they can return to their countries of origin.”

The ambassador had no idea that the situation in Brazil was leading inexorably to his indictment in the investigation on the granting of irregular visas. Aranha made a last attempt to dissuade the dictator from taking disciplinary action. On October 28, he sent Vargas a confidential letter in which he acknowledged receipt of the communiqué of the “person in charge of the business of the MJNI”, of the 17th, which dealt with the decision of Vargas to prohibit definitively the entry into Brazil of passengers of *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*, prevented from landing, and ordering the opening of an investigation into funcionarios of the MRE. The minister took the opportunity to complain about the situation in which the MRE was placed by the implementation of Decree-law no. 3,175. He pointed out to Vargas that:

“In relation to your order to no longer authorize the landing of those travelers, although they bear visas that were granted legitimately, if Your Excellency will allow me, I, respectfully, have nothing to oppose to such measures, since they are adopted in exceptional cases, and visas in ordinary passports constitute only a presumption of a right. This criterion being adopted, however, as a general rule, would signify a diminution in the authority of this ministry, this authority, moreover, being already so precarious that in several cases the MJIN granted visas refused by us. The law requires, moreover, that, in cases that are not clear, Your Excellency decide. Even outside the perimeters

of these cases, Your Excellency granted, for humanitarian, or other reasons, certain previously denied visas.”

Aranha clearly suggested to Vargas that the matter be shelved. Besides not wishing to expose the MRE to a further intervention by the MJNI, Aranha had no desire that the investigation be extended to Souza Dantas:

“As for the investigation Your Excellency has opened, with due reverence to your superior judgment, it is not necessary since the only employee directly responsible, Mr Eduardo Osório Porto Bordini, former Brazilian consul in Cadiz, was retired by Your Excellency, in the interest of public service and according to a previous suggestion on my part.”

Aranha protested that the situation was being created whereby even matters that were totally internal and the responsibility of the MRE were passing through the jurisdiction of MJNI. 1941 saw the decline to its lowest point of Aranha’s prestige in the eyes of Vargas. Aranha concluded with this observation: It is my duty to point out respectfully that, as regards the opening of an investigation ordered by Your Excellency to determine the responsibilities of officials of the ministry, it would be natural that the matter be brought directly to my attention and not dealt with by the person in charge of the business of the Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs.

On October 31, Vargas answered on the very text sent by Aranha, and determined that the document be filed with the “previous outgoing correspondence”.

After they were prevented from disembarking in Brazilian ports, the passengers of the *Cabo de Hornos* continued on their way, to Buenos Aires, where once again landing would be refused because they lacked appropriate visas. The Argentinian government, however, changed its mind on the matter and decided to re-embark the other 40 former passengers of the *Alsina*, who had arrived days

before in Buenos Aires aboard the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*, along with 57 refugees on board the *Cabo de Hornos*, thereby failing to fulfill the promise to grant them an interim stay of 90 days.

Then began the political and diplomatic initiatives to convince Vargas to allow the landing of the passengers on their journey back to Europe. Inside the ship, dozens of refugees had spent practically the entire year on board ship, were without money, and, moreover, were in danger of being returned to Europe, where certainly their lives would be in danger. Members of *Joint* contacted John Simmons, who was a diplomat in the crowded U.S. Embassy in Brazil whose job was to act on behalf of refugees. Simmons, with the help of other, French and Italian, diplomats sought to convince and pressure Aranha and Ernani Reis to allow the landing of refugees. The Americans negotiated with the Paraguayan government, which enabled the *Cabo de Hornos* to land there.

On November 6, the MJNI answered Aranha on the matter of a request made by the ambassador of Belgium for the landing of Anne Lévy and children, Florence Lévy, Hartog van Straten and his wife, Joseph Van den Broeck, Léon Levy, Pauline Lévy, and Rose Lévy – Belgian citizens who were detained aboard the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* – which was granted by the President of the Republic in the following dispatch: “meet the requirements of art. 2 of the Decree-law no. 3.175, of April 7, 1941”.

The letter sent by the Spanish ambassador to Vargas, was referred to the MRE, and, on November 6, the diplomat in charge of the Passport Division, José Júlio Carvalho Pereira de Morais, drew up a report on the matter, and sent it to the head of the Passport Division, Afrânio de Mello Franco Filho. Morais was of the opinion that the responsibility for the situation created with regards to the *Cabo de Hornos* was that of the Brazilian consulate in Cadiz, which “should have prevented from boarding the refugees referred to, people with lapsed visas, the majority of whom had requested the renewal of the visas they had in their possession, which request was denied”. Even

so, Morais suggested it might be a good idea to prevent the return to Europe of these people “in order not to diminish the authority and good name of our consular corps in the eyes of foreigners”. He felt this might perhaps be done “without harming the interests of Brazil, which cannot benefit from the entry of more of this group of refugees, mostly composed of non- assimilable people”.

Morais further argued that the matter could be remedied by the Passport Division in this fashion:

“this Division is informed that the Government of Paraguay is willing to allow the entry into that country, of the majority of these refugees. Under these circumstances, it seems to me, that would not be detrimental to the nation, to allow their internment on the island of Flores, which they would leave only with Paraguay as their destination; at least, all those who could provide proof of authorization from the Government of Paraguay to enter that country.”

On November 6, Afrânio de Mello Franco Filho forwarded a note to Ernani Reis, which Mello Franco Filho received the same day, hand delivered by the chief of the Polish Legation in Brazil, who had come in person to the MRE, to ask the Chief of the Passport Division that “in order to prevent his compatriots from returning to Europe and to the concentration camps, that it be suggested to the Brazilian Government that the Poles in question be detained on Flores Island, which they would leave to go to Paraguay”. In the note, the Polish diplomat reported that he had received from the legation in Buenos Aires the information that:

“the Polish citizens, who are on board the Spanish steamship ‘Cabo de Hornos’, and who were prevented from landing in Rio de Janeiro, have just obtained visas for Paraguay. Taking into consideration that if these persons are sent back to Europe, they will be again interned in concentration camps, the Legation of Poland earnestly requests that the MRE, in the name of humanitarian feelings, grant permission for landing in Rio de Janeiro, to those Polish citizens, in this manner

facilitating the trip to Asuncion by sea. The Polish citizens will stay in Rio de Janeiro for only a few days until the departure of the next steamship, which will take them to Montevideo.”

On November 7, 1941, the *Cabo de Hornos* arrived once again in the port of Rio de Janeiro. Throughout the time that the ship was docked, refugees crowded on deck, shouting down to the port, where some of their relatives were looking up at them. The ship's captain told reporters that passengers would certainly prefer to commit suicide en masse, than to have to land again in Europe. Throughout the evening, a boat sailed around the ship to prevent anyone from committing suicide by jumping overboard.

On the same day the ambassador of Brazil in the United States telegraphed the MRE, stating that congressman Sol Bloom, “Chairman of the Commission of the House of Representatives”, had earnestly requested that “95 Jewish refugees with Brazilian visas, which had expired, and for which reason the authorities had denied landing” be allowed for a “short term”, seeing as how Bloom himself assumed responsibility for the group re-embarking for Paraguay, which had already granted the necessary authorization. The MRE sent the telegram to the Office of the President. On November 8, Vargas wrote in his own hand the order:

“Wire our ambassador in Washington, saying that the 95 Jews [crossed out] that his telegram arrived, because the Cape Horn departed with the 95 Jews who did not land because that would violate Brazilian law immigration. As the *Cabo de Hornos* is headed for Trinidad, it will be easy to send them to whatever country wants to admit them.”

The ship sailed on November 8, 1941 toward Europe. Telegrams from desperate passengers on board followed in succession, until the Dutch colony of Curaçao accepted the refugees, temporarily, in mid-November 1941, after intense negotiations with refugee aid organizations.

Later that year, Moses W. Beckelman sent a long report on the “*Cabo de Hornos* affair” from Buenos Aires to “Joint” headquarters in New York. The text reveals important information about the political efforts of the Jewish mutual aid organizations to obtain the authorization for entry into Brazil of passengers being prevented from doing so. The information shows that the matter of the landing of the refugees from nazism in the ports of South America created opportunities for corrupt immigration officials who, in certain cases, made the paying of a fee the prerequisite for landing. According to Beckelman, when the *Cabo de Buen Esperanza* (which he mistook for the *Alsina*) was in Rio de Janeiro, in September of 1941, about 15 passengers were carrying expired visas, and unable to disembark, traveled to Buenos Aires, where the landing also had not been authorized. On the return trip to Europe, with the ship being held up once again in the port of Rio de Janeiro, an “agreement” “ was reached with officials of what he thought was the “Department of Immigration and Colonization – in fact, probably the DNI – which allowed the landing for a charge of about \$ 650dollars per passenger. Beckelman felt that this fact made activists of the mutual aid organizations in Brazil, who had negotiated the landing, imagine that the next time the *Cabo de Hornos* pulled into port, they would be able to reach a similar agreement and land other former passengers of the *Alsina*. It is apparent that Beckelman got certain details concerning the arrival of the passengers of the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* in September 1941 wrong, but it also seems that the landing of those people was made possible thanks to an “agreement” (extortion) proposed by officials of the DNI for the authorization of landings.

According to the report, once the *Cabo de Hornos* departed from Rio de Janeiro in October, negotiations began with the officers responsible for the partial desembarcation that took place in September, so that on the return trip of the ship, the refugees could land in Brazil. When the ship arrived in Argentina, it was

learned in Brazil that the authorities in Buenos Aires had decided to allow the landing of only some of the passengers, as well as to re-embark 40 others who were in the immigrant shelter, which meant that the “agreement” negotiated with the corrupt Brazilian officials had to be raised to \$ 2,500 dollars, because the officials claimed that due to the publicity surrounding the case, the difficulties in obtaining landings were greater. According to Beckelman, political manoeuvring was necessary, and a delegation was sent to the cardinal of Brazil (Dom Sebastião Leme) to request his support in this case. Polish, Belgian, French and Italian diplomats apparently also got involved in pleading for their citizens who found themselves aboard the ship. The American ambassador would not have directly intervened, because there was no immediate U.S. interests involved, but still, authorized his secretary, Donald Bloomingdale to help Beckelman in this matter. Bloomingdale went to see Ernani Reis twice, and described him as the representative of the MJNI in the CIC, voicing the opinion that “Reis was apparently the main obstacle in the way of a solution” to the matter of the landing.

Beckelman described how Jewish circles in Rio de Janeiro believed, based on similar situations, that at the last moment, the landing would be allowed, since no other ship had been sent back to Europe with refugees. The case of two passengers who days before had been forced to return to Lisbon, was seen as an example of bad negotiation (bribery) with the inspectors of the DNI. In fact, so far there had been no preventing of the collective landing of a ship. But contrary to what some said, many prevented landings of refugees were occurring. Again, according to Beckelman, at around the same time began the negotiations (regarding the amount of the bribe) with the consul of Paraguay in Buenos Aires so that the passengers of the *Cabo de Hornos*, or, rather, the re-grouped former members of the *Alsina* could receive Paraguayan visas. The amount of money being asked for was very great, but the amount was finally found, a part of it having been advanced as “honorariums”. In a change of attitude,

the Argentinian government decided to expel all 40 refugees who arrived on the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*. even though they had been promised shelter for 90 days. When it was about to re-embark them, along with 57 others who arrived on board the *Cabo de Hornos*, various representatives of Catholic and Jewish organizations, opposition and government MPs, other “influential individuals”, and the press of Buenos Aires, in force (except for the newspaper “El Pampero” which was financed by the Nazis), lobbied unsuccessfully so that the local government would not expel the refugees.

The visas bought at a high price from the Paraguayans could only be used if the Argentinian government was willing to issue transit visas for the passengers, but the authorities of Buenos Aires refused to do so, not even allowing the Paraguayan consul to board the ship to distribute the Paraguayan visas. Still, five passengers were able to use Paraguayans visas and head for Paraguay. Five others, still in Buenos Aires, managed to escape the police and secretly remained in Buenos Aires after the departure of the *Cabo de Hornos*. As soon as they left Buenos Aires, activists focused on getting authorization by the Uruguayan government for the passengers aboard the *Cabo de Hornos* to cross their territory. The idea was to bring the Paraguayan consul in Buenos Aires to Montevideo, and in that city he could finally issue the visas, allowing the re-embarkment of all on a ship to Asuncion. When they arrived in the Uruguayan capital, the activists learned that the local government had prohibited the ship from docking, and, from what Beckelman later learned, they were responding to a request from the Argentinian government. Because of this fact, the *Cabo de Hornos*, on its return voyage to Europe, arrived in Rio de Janeiro on November 7, 1941, and not on the 12th as scheduled. Beckelman hastily traveled to Sao Paulo, and mobilized “prominent Jews and non-Jews” to send telegrams to Vargas pleading for the refugees. Having arrived at Rio de Janeiro just five hours before the ship sailed, Beckelman was warned by the U.S. Embassy that the prospects of landing were minimal because the Brazilian

government was looking at the case as a matter involving national sovereignty. In a meeting with Aranha, the minister reportedly told the U.S. ambassador that “the government believed that the Brazilian ambassador in Vichy who had authorized the consulates in Casablanca and Cadiz to revalidate lapsed visas, had done such a thing under the influence of his wife, who was supposedly Jewish, and the government would not tolerate interference in internal matters”.

The wife of the ambassador Souza Dantas, Elise, had been in the United States since at least June 1940, and only rejoined her husband at the end of World War II. There is no evidence that she exerted any such influence on her husband, although one can understand this feeble attempt to explain away Souza Dantas’ humanitarian actions.

Regarding the visas for Paraguay, Aranha told the U.S. diplomat that he could only ask his government to grant visas of transit through Brazil, once the Paraguayan government confirmed that it would allow the entry of those foreigners. This permission had not occurred. According to Beckelman, the Paraguayan authorities were trying to extort more money. The representative of “Joint” reported that a group of Jewish leaders once again sought out Cardinal Leme, who on receiving them reported that his secretary had been unsuccessful in getting an audience for him with Vargas, and that he could not call the president, because it was a “political question” and, in no case, did he want to create the impression that the Church interfered in political affairs. The cardinal also said that in the same ship there were 19 Catholic nuns in the same situation, prevented from landing at Brazil. In fact, however, the nuns ended up later getting permission to land in the port of Santos. When the delegation withdrew from the meeting with Cardinal Leme, his secretary informed them that the real reason that made the cardinal not call the president, was that he feared a refusal. The secretary also reported that the cardinal had written a letter to the president, saying that the Catholic Church regarded the passengers’ situation as “a crime against humanity”. Beckelman described how

the newspapers of Rio de Janeiro, with the exception of two who that received German subsidies, were publishing articles favourable to the passengers wishing to disembark. Some even managed to publish that the wife of the president (Darcy Vargas) was committed to a favourable outcome to the situation of the passengers. However, the only statement that authorities issued was that “all passengers with papers in order will be allowed to land”.

The *Cabo de Hornos* docked at noon, and two Polish passenger carrying transit visas for Brazil landed since they already held valid visas to the United States. They had been prevented from landing during the voyage of the *Cabo de Hornos* because they could not prove they had money for passage to the United States, which the Polish Embassy arranged for the second time. Representatives of the “Union” (Beckelman does not say which one, but it is probably the “United Benevolent Jewish Association of Rio de Janeiro”) came aboard and distributed food, chocolate and milk for the children. During the day, several rumors circulated indicating that the landing would be allowed.

Half an hour before the scheduled departure time of the ship, the ship’s agents called the representatives of the “Union” for a conference at which they stated they would be willing to make a “special effort” to obtain permission for landing, but this would involve “a considerable cost”,and they asked for an advance of 75 contos, corresponding to one-third of the total cost. Beckelman managed to get the Jewish industrialist and philanthropist Wolf Klabin to lend him the money. The agents provided a receipt stating that the sum was for port charges on the excess hours that the ship would remain moored. According to Beckelman “what the ‘special effort’ which the agents undertook was we did not know in detail but the general assumption was that it involved the president’s brother”. Beckelman was informed that Vargas had consulted the CIC, and that at a meeting held on the morning of November 8, precisely when Ernani Reis was advocating for the prevention of landing, arguing that “surrendering to pressure would weaken Brazil’s

sovereignty”. Although the negative decision on the landing has been taken by Vargas personally, unpleasant decisions were disclosed in a cautious and discrete manner in order to shift responsibility to the state bureaucracy, and to preserve the desired image of the dictator.

The report said that on November 8, at around noon, a newspaper announced that the ship would stay another day and passengers would be landed on an island in Guanabara Bay, possibly the Ilha das Flores. But, at 15:30 pm, the port authorities marked the departure of the vessel for 4:00 p.m., and the port police officers notified the ship that further extension of time would not be granted, and that at that time, the *Cabo de Hornos* must sail. The ship departed at four, but was sailing in the bay for three hours, hoping for a last minute change. For Beckelman, the case of *Cabo de Hornos* served to highlight the weakness of the Jewish community in Rio. According to Beckelmann, there was one important figure in the community to bring the matter directly to the president.

Beckelman concluded his report by noting that he had difficulty in understanding the refusal of the president to allow the landing, in the face of so many, and so varied, pressures put on him. Beckelman mistakenly imagined that the reason for the prohibited landing was the presence of anti-American members of the Brazilian government that Vargas supposedly listened to in order to make up for previous occurrences.

On November 12, 1941, Leitão da Cunha announced to Vargas that he had complied with the order written on the letter of October 28, written to him by Aranha, and had added the document to the file “on visas granted, in irregular fashion, by the Brazilian authorities and which some of the passengers of the steamship *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* were carrying”. On November 13, Aranha forwarded to the MJNI suggestions he had received from Consul Pinto Dias concerning Polish Jews holding visas granted by Souza Dantas. Vasco Leitão da Cunha responded to Aranha only on December 5, 1941, stating that “the suggestions of the Brazilian consulate general in Lisbon, relating

to holders of visas issued by the Polish Embassy in Vichy” could not “be accepted unless the president of the Republic” modified “the decision” that he had taken “on this matter” and communicated “the change to this ministry”. On November 17, the Secretary General of the MRE, Maurício Nabuco, responded to the president, in a long and heartfelt letter, to the missive sent by the Spanish ambassador to the MRE, on the incidents involving the steamship *Cabo de Hornos*.

Nabuco’s letter is a document of great importance for the understanding of many aspects of the time, concerning the division of power within the *Estado Novo*, as well as the position of the MRE in relation to acts of diplomats involved in the revalidation of visas. The text clearly shows that the Brazilian authorities were aware that to prevent the landing of refugees could be condemning them to death. It makes clear that all orders relating to refugees were the direct responsibility of the dictator. And finally, it shows that within the bureaucratic wing of the MRE there was a complete coldness and indifference to the fate of refugees and an anti-Semitism fully extended to all of its staff, as some published studies have already suggested. It is true that the MRE intensely sought to greatly restrict the entry of Jews to Brazil during the *Estado Novo*, responding to the anxieties of a part of the ruling class and government, but the anti-Semitic convictions of most of the administrators were not deep enough to lead to a proposal that the group of refugees aboard the *Cabo de Hornos* be sent back to Europe. Concerning the ninety-seven passengers of the *Cabo de Hornos*, Nabucco explained that the issue was related:

“to the notorious case of the seven hundred refugees who, initially, were passengers of the French ship the *Alsina*, whose journey to Brazil was interrupted in the port of Dakar due to events that are in the public domain. The situation created because of such motives for several of these refugees was gradually being resolved as new cases linked to the affair presented themselves, individually or collectively.”

Nabuco said he believed that the ninety-seven passengers in whom the ambassador of Spain took an interest, were “perhaps the last remaining group of the former passengers of the *Alsina*, who had not yet found the way out of the transe in which they found themselves”. He added that the responsibility for the embarkment was in part that of the Brazilian authorities abroad, but in many cases, should be imputed to the passengers themselves, who had embarked despite “being made aware of the expiry of the visa they possessed in their passports and even after seeing rejected the requests they made for their revalidation”.

The Secretary-General pointed out that, even if the passengers were far from innocent on this matter, much of the blame for the facts mentioned by the Spanish ambassador, had to be laid at the doorstep of the Embassy of Brazil in Vichy, the Brazilian consulate in Cadiz, and the honorary Brazilian consulate in Casablanca, because these diplomats had acted without any legal authority, proceeding on their own account, without previously consulting the secretariat. In that way, they had contributed largely to “the coming to Brazil of unauthorized persons and to whom the MJNI would certainly have denied visas because they are not covered by the provisions of Decree-law no. 3,175”. Nabuco considered the consulate in Cadiz, where the *Cabo de Hornos* made a stopover and where the refugees began their journey to Brazil, bore the primary responsibility for what happened. At the time of the passengers embarking, he had received “Circular 1,522, dated May 6 of this year, with the aforementioned Decree -law no. 3,175 and instructions for how it should be applied”. Instructions established that visas already granted until the date of receipt of the circular by the consulates, would be valid for landing in Brazil since, “the date of embarkment, the terms of validity and extension already granted had not been exceeded. After the date of receipt of such instructions, revalidation would be subject to the restrictions contained therein”. Thus the consulate in Cadiz should have refused to sign the passenger list,

and also warned the navigation company that people would not be allowed to land in Brazil.

Nabucco drafted a bold comment that merited an underlining of the paragraph and a question mark by Vargas. Nabuco was of the opinion that with the removal from active service of the consul in Cadiz, on account of his:

“responsibility for the situation created for former refugees ‘Alsina’ and today the passengers ‘Cape Horn’ ... [It] would have been preferable, in order not to be diminished the authority of Brazilians overseas agents, that the landing in transit of those people had been permitted, at the time of the recent passage of the ‘Cabo de Hornos’ through the port of this capital.”

According to Nabuco, when the ship was still in Guanabara Bay, the MRE had been officially informed that the Paraguayan authorities were willing to allow the permanent entry of most refugees. He added that members of the MRE:

“propose the adoption of a measure which would in no way harm the interests of immigration policy in Brazil and would consist of the provisional internment, on the island of Flores, of most of the 97 passengers of the ‘Cabo de Hornos’ prevented from landing, so that they could only leave for Paraguay.”

He explained, however, that he had been unable to make his suggestion because “from the outset, he met with the opposition of the authorities subordinate to the MJNI” and because he had since learned Vargas did not agree with his position.

Nabuco concluded, making some extremely important points. Commenting on a request that the MRE had received from the ambassador of Spain, the Secretary-General judged that there was a:

“profound difference between the motives that determined the attitude, albeit illegal and culpable, of the Brazilian diplomatic and consular authorities and those that motivated the interest of the

ambassador of Spain for the 97 passengers of the ship 'Cabo de Hornos' [,] prevented from landing; while the Brazilian officials breached deliberately or unconsciously, national laws with the intention, which is until now the only apparent one, of saving individuals whose very lives were threatened as a terrible and inevitable consequence of current events arising from the war in Europe, in the letter he wrote to Your Excellency and whose terms seemed strange to me, the ambassador of Spain , was looking to defend – for that, in essence, was the purpose of the letter – to defend the economic interests of the owner of the steamship 'Cabo de Hornos', obliged, by force of circumstances, to maintain and to transport these unfortunates who mostly were only seeking a place to live.”

5: The Administrative Inquiry

The administrative inquiry would deal exclusively with what occurred on the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*. One explanation for this may be related to the fact that the passengers with irregular visas aboard the *Cabo de Hornos* were unable to land, so the revalidated visas had no practical outcome. Still, the logic would be that the authorities had included in the investigation of the diplomats the documentation concerning the foreigners aboard the *Cabo de Hornos*. Perhaps by having totally prevented the landing, the MJNI had not been able to gather the necessary data on those passengers, since the records were completed when the landing was made, or a request for a visa came through the Passport Division. When this did not occur, the names of foreigners were entered in the records of the MJNI only with the information regarding the denied landing, for reference in case of another inspection in the future.

On November 20, 1941, the MRE dismissed the honorary Consul in Casablanca, Antonio Porciúncula, and the consulate in that city

was closed “as long as the current international situation continues” and informed Souza Dantas about the decision.

Maurício Nabuco’s long letter did not convince the dictator, and on November 22, 1941, Vargas signed the dispatch sent to the the Administrative Department of the Public Service (DASP) “ ordering an administrative inquiry to “determine liability for any employees that normally deal with these matters who have contributed, in Brazil or abroad, the granting of illegal visas”.

If Vargas had personally punished the consul in Cadiz, Bordini, by signing the order for his retirement “in the interest of public service” and had also already been dismissed the honorary consul of in Casablanca, why did the dictator now insist on the holding of an investigation?

The MRE, through the Minister and the Secretary-General had made it clear that it was against an investigation. Of those under investigation, only Ambassador Souza Dantas remained in his post. Vargas’s decision could be linked to some personal resentment felt towards the ambassador, who would be blamed or held responsible for the troubles related to the *Alsina*. However, it is our conviction that Vargas’s decision was fueled by the “legalistic” sector of the MJNI, which since the early 1940s sought to indict a diplomat of importance on the issue of “excessive” entry of undesirables “ to Brazil. It was also a way to criticize Aranha, who appeared to tolerate the acts of Souza Dantas. Only the course of the war would prevent the investigation from turning into a list of accusations against the ambassador.

On November 24, 1941, Souza Dantas sent letter no. 199 to the MRE, containing his response to objections raised by Nabuco in the dispatch of October 23 of the same year. The ambassador addressed his three-page letter to Aranha, and denied at any point having authorized the consul in Casablanca, “or any other, to grant or prolong visas in passports”. But he admitted that it was:

“true that, on one occasion, responding to the anguished appeals

of bearers of Brazilian consular visas, duly authorized by that secretariat, I telegraphed to the Brazilian consulate in Casablanca, so that it would 'facilitate the continuation of the voyage of the people concerned'. That was in the case of the passengers of the *Alsina*. These unfortunate people, carrying all the necessary documents and Brazilian consular visas authorized by the secretariat, set out in the aforementioned steamship to Brazil. When they arrived, however, in Dakar, their voyage was interrupted by the British admiralty, which refused to allow the steamship to continue on its way, and, for this reason, it had to return to Casablanca. The local authorities, not knowing what to do with these unfortunate people, interned them in a concentration camp. Months later, an opportunity was offered to them to continue their journey aboard another steamship, sailing for Brazil. On this occasion, however, the consul in Casablanca informed the local shipping companies that the visas issued to those passengers were invalid. And that's when they called on this embassy."

Souza Dantas tried to defend Porciúncula, stating that he had informed the shipping companies about expired visas. We know that the former passengers of the *Alsina* who wanted to come to Brazil, had not boarded the ship in Africa, but mostly in Spain. Therefore, the visas granted and revalidated in Casablanca, were the means of enabling foreigners to get out of Morocco, and to continue their voyage to an Iberian port, where they could finally embark for Brazil. These visas were used for transit, and it fell to the consul in Cadiz, to sign the list of passengers and, in this way, to acknowledge implicitly the validity of the Porciúncula visas. Souza Dantas further reported that faced:

"with these appeals, which reached me by the dozens, I sent to Your Excellency telegram no. 125, of June, 27 of this year ... It's been two months, but since the secretariat has deemed fit to send me the instructions requested. Meanwhile, appeal follows appeal, each time more insistent, on the part of the passengers of the *Alsina*. Under

these conditions, and confident that I was interpreting governing the matter correctly, I sent the August 18 ... telegram to the consul in Casablanca.”

The ambassador tried to justify the decisions he took, apparently not unduly concerned with the clear contradictions in his arguments. He admitted that he was led to wire Casablanca because of the desperation of those people, at the same time as he refused to admit having sent instructions to Porciúncula to revalidate visas. With no valid visa for any country, the refugees would never manage to obtain a Spanish transit visa. The only means Porciúncula had “to facilitate the voyage”, was what he, in fact did: recognize as valid the expired visas.

Souza Dantas showed himself very irritated with the terms of the dispatch sent by Nabuco, and, in a way, made a complaint to Aranha, even going so far as to criticize the failure of the MRE to answer his telegrams dealing with the *Alsina*, as if this was, in part, the justification for his acts. He asked the question:

“Where, then, are the irregularities of which the secretariat says it is aware? What proofs does it have that the embassy authorized the honorary Brazilian consulate in Casablanca to grant and extend visas on passports [?] ... I did not excede, because I never have, my authority, trespassing on other jurisdictions, as the dispatch insinuates ... and if, on August 23 of this year, I telegraphed to the consul in Casablanca, asking him to facilitate the trip (and not issue or extend the date of validity of visas, which would have served little purpose), I did it because I felt that the secretariat had lost interest in the subject, to the point of finding that my telegram no. 125 did not call for an answer, and I felt that the case of the passengers of the ALSINA was crystal clear, since they had embarked for Brazil within the time indicated on their visas, it not seeming to me to be fair or equitable that they be sacrificed because events occurred that were beyond their control.”

Either by design, or because of the size of the text, Souza Dantas sent this letter by air and not by telegram, which meant that the text was received by the MRE only four months later, on the afternoon of March 28, 1942.

On December 11, 1941, the committee that would be responsible for the administrative case against the diplomats involved in the granting of illegal visas was named and approved. The committee would be chaired by the diplomat and Secretary General of the MRE, Maurício Nabuco, and consist of two other officials of the MJNI. They were the Commissioner of Police Democritus de Almeida, the statistician and the chairman of the Efficiency Commission of the MJNI, Bento Queiroz de Barros Júnior. Against the wishes of Aranha, Vargas formed a commission of inquiry consisting of a majority of funcionarios linked to the MJNI. Although named on that day, the commission only started work on February 3, 1942. On January 13, 1942, Maurício Nabuco requested of Vargas that the investigation start only after the closure of the “Third Meeting of Consultation of the Ministers of Foreign Relations of the American Republics”, since on account of the event, the General-Secretary would be very occupied. It is reasonable to assume that this was a strategic manoeuver by Nabuco and Aranha, to delay the investigation, and thus, Vargas could cool tempers, and more than that, the changes arising from the meeting of ministers could determine changes profound changes in Brazilian foreign policy since shortly after its closure, Brazil ended up breaking diplomatic relations with the Axis, a position already decided by Vargas after the Japanese attack on the United States in late 1941.

On December 15, 1941, Souza Dantas sent a telegram to the MRE stating that due to the attacks against German soldiers, the Nazi occupation authority would, in retaliation levy “a fine of 1 billion francs on Jews in the occupied zone and deportation to Russia, with a large numbers of Jews and Bolshevik criminal elements being sent into forced labour, and the shooting of 100 Jews, communists and

anarchists supposedly linked to the perpetrators of the attacks”. In a letter sent on December 31, Souza Dantas rectified that deportations would be for “the uttermost part of eastern Germany”, and that 100 people summarily shot were Jews “indicted for anarchic-Bolshevik plotting”.

On December, 16, the Polish tailor Jehuda Mojze Lowczy who had lived and worked in Brazil since 1939, sent a dramatic appeal to the president, in a letter in which he told about his wife Basia and her daughter Jenny Lowczy, only three year-old, former passengers of the *Alsina*, “ that after long months of suffering, finally had managed to board the *Cabo de Hornos*, but had been prevented from landing on October 19, 1941 when he:

“hoping to see them, found myself on the docks of the port, after such a long separation. But, here, another disappointment awaited me; they could not disembark because the consular visa ... had expired. On the same day the ship sailed to Argentina without me being able to embrace my poor wife and little daughter, having them so close to me. In Buenos Aires my daughter fell ill with measles and was so bad that maritime authorities allowed them to disembark in order that the little girl could get medical attention. Worse, the ship departed, leaving them in Argentina. Strangers, seeing them in such pitiable situation welcomed them, because I have no relatives or acquaintances in that country ... Mr. President, Have mercy on us, have mercy on a family that has already separated for three years. We appeal to your noble and good heart, so that Your Excellency listen to what we ask with bleeding hearts and do not refuse us this favor. Let Your Excellency be the father of my only daughter, since I can do no longer do anything. Your Excellency, make it so that they may come to this blessed land, this great country that is Brazil, so they can also enjoy the peace of this holy land. I am writing this letter with tears in my eyes.”

Both mother and daughter were carrying Polish passports with diplomatic visas granted by Souza Dantas, but this fact was not

mentioned at any time in the letter, and neither was it mentioned in the letter that Leitão da Cunha sent to Getúlio Vargas on December 26, 1941, responding to a query that was made to him on the subject, at which time he replied that “the appeal having no basis in the law governing the matter, only your Excellency, whose clemency is being appealed to, can grant an exception”. The matter remained pending until March 31, 1942, when Vargas sent the following dispatch: “Follow the requirement of Art. 2 of the Decree-law no 3.175 , of April 7, 1941”. This meant that the request had been rejected.

Souza Dantas continued to request authorization to grant visas, and sent a request to the MRE on behalf of two French hatmakers. The tone of the dispatch of the MRE in response to this request, sent to the ambassador on February 12, 1942, has a lot to say about the state of things: “Do not issue official visas, much less, diplomatic ones. Given the clearly commercial and private nature of the projected voyage. The only visa possible would be a consular one, subject to all the requirements of the legislation.”

For reason of space, it is impossible to go into all the details related to the administrative inquiry against Souza Dantas, Bordini and Porciúncula opened in February, 1942. The ambassador had already issued visas to hundred of people, the names of whom not even he had a list. The MRE did not possess any better information on the matter. One way of arriving at some estimate of the number of refugees Souza Dantas helped would be to look at that various official protests produced by the various authorities of the MRE, related to foreigners who arrived in Brazil with irregular visas, during the years 1940 and 1941. These complaints came especially from the marine police or the SRE. During the course of our reasearch, undertaken nearly sixty years after the facts, these data were extensively collected and organized. They were, however, compiled somewhat too late to be taken into consideration by the commission of inquiry whose president advocated a dismissal. Apparently, the MRE was willing to “offer as a sacrifice”, to appease the anger of the dictator (stirred up by

the members of MJNI), career consul Bordini, summarily dismissed, and the honorary consul in Casablanca, a person of little professional importance. The MRE was not willing, however, to allow Souza Dantas to be punished, although it knew he was guilty. Even less did the MRE want all the truth to come out at the investigation. The commission stated that the visas in question had been granted by the ambassador in response to an authorization that he had received from the MRE, on October 12, 1940, which had been suspended on 12 December of the same year, as Souza Dantas “had adopted a very elastic criteria for the granting of visas, extending the granting of visas to the stateless people to whom he referred in his telegram no. 45, and to a number of people of definite nationality, in large part Jews”. In the investigation, only the names of twelve former passengers of the *Alsina* issued visas by Souza Dantas were mentioned. It is important to note that some visas had been granted on November 15, commemorating the date of the “Proclamation of the Republic”, which is a national holiday and during which day there are no consular hours in Brazilian diplomatic representations, although this fact was not mentioned at the time of the administrative inquiry.

After detailing the incident, leaving out some of the facts, the commission of inquiry concluded its report and recommended the penalties applicable in each case. As for the ambassador, who was accused of granting unauthorized diplomatic visas to twelve people, the MRE had already taken the necessary steps with the suspension of the authorization, and came to the conclusion that the dispatch directed by Aranha to Souza Dantas on January 3, 1941, “evidently ... [represented] a formal reprimand, given the terms in which it was formulated and category of official concerned.” As for Souza Dantas requesting that Porciúncula revalidate lapsed visas, the commission decided that, at the time, the ambassador was already several months into retirement, and remained at the head of the embassy at the request of the government, given the abnormal situation, and for this reason, based on the statutes, there was no penalty applicable to Souza

Dantas, seeing as the only provision that called for the forfeiture of retirement demanded categorically that “serious misconduct must occur during the exercise of one’s functions, previous to the declaration of retirement”, conditions which were not met, seeing as the facts occurred when the ambassador was already retired. All this looks very much like technical manoeuvres so as not to punish Souza Dantas.

As for Porciúncula, the commission decided that, since he had already been stripped of his duties, and because he was not a regular public official, there was no further applicable punishment. As for the irregularities committed by Bordini, the commission also found that there was no applicable punishment since he had already been tried and punished by the MRE when he was retired because of acts committed.

In April, 1942, Vargas sent a dispatch to the DASP to finalize the investigation and to present the findings of the commission of inquiry. Ten days later, the commission ordered that the defendants be notified that they were to submit their defense in response to the accusations. On April 29, the MRE sent Souza Dantas telegram no. 57, signed impersonally “Foreign Relations” and stating that:

“Some time ago, the President of the Republic ordered an investigation into the granting of visas considered irregular. Among the names of the accused is that of Your Excellency and of the honorary consul in Casablanca. Now the Administrative Department of the Public Service asks us to inform Your Excellency that the record of these proceedings are at your disposition so that you may present a defense before May 10. Understanding the physical impossibility of you undertaking your own defence, I ask you to name a functionary of this ministry to represent you.”

In a “confidential” telegram, Souza Dantas answered the MRE, on the evening of May 1, 1942. From his response, it is apparent that the ambassador must have been startled by the content of telegram no. 57, and wondered if he was being disciplined for the hundreds

of visas he had granted to refugees, providing in his text, a valiant, emotional, and sincere “confession”, in which he indicates precisely the reasons why he interceded on behalf of the refugees:

“Response to Your Excellency’s telegram no. 57. I ask that Secretary Afrânio de Mello Franco Filho undertake my defense. I remind you that since there is no consulate here, I was obliged, without losing a minute, to assume consular functions to save, literally, human lives, because of the greatest catastrophe humanity has suffered until today. I did what the most cold-hearted of us would have done, with the nobility of soul of the Brazilians, moved by the most elementary sentiments of Christian piety. This I explained in a personal telegram to Your Excellency, on November 14, 1940, to which Your Excellency responded with your proverbial, generous and intelligent understanding of things. I refrained from giving a single visa from the moment I was no longer authorized to do so. Almost all were granted only to facilitate the exit from France of unfortunate beings contemplating suicide, and to just a few who managed to get here, as I have been informed by this ministry, without causing the least harm to the country. I ask Secretary Afrânio de Mello Franco Filho to read my letter no. 199, of last year.”

Souza Dantas’ telegram would not have been couched in these terms had he been informed that the charges against him in the investigation, were limited to the the issue of the revalidation of visas of the former passengers of the *Alsina* and the foreigners who had re-embarked on the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*, in which only twelve people carried visas originally granted by the ambassador. To justify the granting of twelve visas to members of three or four families, the forcefulness and expressive emotion of the arguments he used would not have been necessary.

Although Souza Dantas had named Afrânio de Mello Franco Filho to take on his defense, the actual defender was someone else. On May 14 Maurício Nabucco wrote a letter to Sebastião do Rego Barros,

who occupied the position of Legal Adviser of the MRE, stating that Mello Franco had been invited by Souza Dantas to assume his defense in the investigation into the “granting of numerous visas permitting entry into the country”, but, as he explained to Rego Barros that, seeing as that Mello Franco occupied:

“the post of Head of the the Passport Division of the ministry, his taking part in the investigation, as defense for the accused, was deemed unacceptable in view of the incompatibility between the position he was exercising and that obliged him to be zealous in ensuring strict compliance with legislation relating to passports, and the role of defence lawyer for a possible infractor of the same legislation.”

Maurício Nabuco requested that the the legal counsel assume the defense of Souza Dantas in the administrative inquiry. Rego Barros did his best to find arguments with which to defend the ambassador, concluding with his conviction that “Ambassador Souza Dantas will not see his brilliant career crowned with a conviction in an administrative proceeding, which would stain an edifying career of 45 years of service to Brazil“.

From Vichy, Souza Dantas continued sending his telegrams. On June 2, 1942, he reported that three days earlier, on May 29, the Commander of Armed Forces of the Nazi Occupation, had published in the newspapers the following edict, which would enter into force on 7 June 1942:

“It is forbidden to Jews from the age of six, to appear in public without the Jewish star, a distinctive sign of hexagonal shape, the size of a palm fringed in black. The Jewish star will carry on yellow fabric this inscription in black letters : ‘Jew’ and shall be worn on the left side of the chest, firmly sewn to the garment garment. Violators will be punished with imprisonment or a fine, or both penalties, which may also be increased or replaced by officers sanctions, particularly the internment of the Jews in a concentration camp.”

On August 18, 1942, the DASP, to whom Vargas had given the order to conclude the investigation, sent a report of thirty-nine pages to the president. The investigation commission had no intention in its report to agree with the results of the disciplinary hearing. For one thing, it did not agree that Souza Dantas had been reprimanded. The commission regarded the ambassador as responsible for Porciúncula's actions, since Porciúncula was carrying out the orders of his hierarchic superior, who was knowingly committing an irregularity, but was not punished because the only punishment possible was the removal of his pension, deemed excessive. The DASP concluded, however, that "no penalty could be imposed on him".

The DASP considered that the irregularities committed by the consul in Casablanca constituted "serious misconduct", but due to the fact that the accused had already been dismissed from office by decree, there was no way to carry out a punishment. As for Bordini, it concluded that, if indeed there was evidence that the consul followed orders – absent in his defense – the matter of his forced retirement could be reviewed. By proposing a revision of the matter of the forced retirement of Bordini, subject to production of documentary evidence, and no punishment for Souza Dantas and Porciúncula, the commission put the investigation back into the hands of Vargas. Two days later, on August 20, 1942, Vargas wrote in the upper left corner of the document "Shelve", noted the date, and signed.

6: Conclusion

Almost a year had passed since the events occurred that led to the opening of the investigation. Brazil had aligned itself unconditionally to the United States and Vargas was four days away from declaring war on the Axis. For complete lack of means, the Jewish refugees ceased to arrive in Brazilian ports, and were being massacred in Europe. Vargas certainly was already informed about the killing of

civilians carried out by the Germans, if not from another source, by itself Souza Dantas, who telegraphed the MRE on August 17, 1942, to the following effect:

“The ‘Gestapo’ has been engaging in occupied France, in the true enslavement and extermination of the Jews. Their families are literally separated: the husbands have their heads shorn and are herded off to work in Silesia; their wives are interned in concentration camps in Poland, without ever being able to know what happened to their husbands, all sent to unknown destinations; and the children, even from the most tender age, are violently torn from their mothers and confined to special asylums, the shoots of this cursed race succumb ... [The] Brazilian born Mendel Reicher, currently in Lisbon ... writes me that his wife Blima Reicher, for racist reasons, was deported to Poland, knowing nothing further of her son Theodore, 14, nor her daughter Teresa, 4. This Brazilian family lived in Montceau les – Mines, Department of Saône-et-Loire. Unable to give the help that they desperately ask me for, I fulfill my duty by referring the matter to Your Excellency.”

Even if the facts did not move the president, it was fitting for his war policy and the coming post-war not to bring to public attention any government stand taken previously that could be “mistaken as” or seen to reflect a “sympathy” for what was now the German enemy. Political expediency called for a concealment of the subject, and the shelving of the inquiry.

On August 21, 1942, Souza Dantas sent another telegram, in addition to that sent on the 17th, this time describing the deportation of Jews to their deaths, which was also occurring in the “Zone Libre”, unoccupied France:

“The foreign Jews who find themselves in unoccupied France, especially nationals of countries under Nazi military occupation, are being handed over to the Germans. A number of these people are penned up in locked wagons, suitable for the transport of animals. Men and women are sent in different directions, all separated from

their children, who are left abandoned. Numerous victims suicides are occurring among these victims and the most harrowing scenes at the time of the tearing apart of families ... This Government, which pretends to submit to German demands, in the interests of the French Jews, in order not to be compelled to extradite them too, which, incidentally, they will do, when the German want ... [These are] measures that violate the traditional right of asylum and the most elementary principles of humanity, dishonoring France.”

The two telegrams sent by Souza Dantas in mid-1942, are accurate accounts of events that led to the death of about 80 thousand Jews in France in concentration and extermination camps. The word “extermination” was used accurately by the ambassador. During the months that followed, Souza Dantas sent to the MRE, through regular correspondence, detailed records about the situation in France. The correspondence, when not sent by telegraph, took about two months on the average to get to Brazil. In many of these documents, one gets the distinct impression that, besides wanting to inform the MRE of the horrors of the war, the ambassador wanted to formally record, the horror and the tragedy which he had witnessed in Vichy in September 1942, at the same time as he was seeking to justify to the Brazilian government the irregular visas which had been granted in previous years.

On September 19, 1942, a Saturday, Souza Dantas telegraphed the MRE requesting that the consulate in Marseille be authorized to “facilitate the return to Brazil of the Brazilian Francisca Worms Weissweiler and her French husband, whose whole family is in São Paulo, and who are in great danger here for reasons of racist persecution”. We did not find any authorization or any other type of measure by the MRE in order to meet the request made by the ambassador.

On September 21, 1942 the diplomat sent the MRE a clipping from the newspaper *L’Oeuvre*, which claimed to document “Gestapo

terrorism, the servility of a press that suggests the summary execution of 116 hostages, false criminal confessions, and mass deportations carried out as ‘ measures intended to protect the French people’.

On the same day, he forwarded the text to the MRE of a pastoral message that was read “with no comment” in the churches of the Archdiocese of Toulouse, where the Archbishop Monsignor Jules – Gérard Saliège “fustigates on behalf of Christian morality, the enslavement and extermination of Jews, that the Gestapo has been carrying out, with the connivance of the government of Vichy, which deports Jewish refugees, who come from countries under Nazi military occupation, and find themselves in the so-called unoccupied zone”.

On September 24 , Souza Dantas sent to the MRE a letter containing:

“authentic copies, which, given the silence of the press, are being distributed here, clandestinely [:] two Manifestos in which are exposed the atrocities to which the foreign Jews living in this country are subjected. I fulfill, in the name of truth, the duty of assuring you that what is stated in these manifestos corresponds to what has reached me from other sources, and to the facts that, in part, I have witness to, and which only serve to sadden the final days of my already long career.”

The dramatic “Manifesto” has eight pages, and describes the “procedures” and humiliations that were being imposed on Jews in France, already in the process of being sent to concentration and extermination camps in Poland. The descriptions were so impressive that Souza Dantas appealed to the testimony of embassy counsellor Trajano Madeiros de Paço to authenticate their veracity, thinking the MRE might perhaps doubt the accuracy of such information.

The “The Politics of the Month” report of September, 1942, was sent on October first to the MRE, and the author was Medeiros do Paço. Item no. 9 of this report has its title “The Enslavement and

Extermination of the Jews”. The Counselor of the Embassy in Vichy reported that since the middle of that year, “Nazi racism” was already responsible in occupied France for “the most barbarous orgies, reproducing, in reduced scale, the catastrophes the racist Moloch has already celebrated in Eastern Europe”. Madeiros do Paço also informed:

“In the City of Light, 28,000 foreign Jews, from countries under German occupation, of all conditions and ages, were literally penned in the narrow precincts of the ‘Parc des Princes’ and the ‘Velodrome d’ Hiver’, as a preliminary step of their martyrdom. In the dead of the night, the Gestapo knocked on the door of private homes, and clinics and hospitals, sparing neither people who had just been operated on, or women about to give birth. Jews committed suicide by the hundreds.”

Medeiros do Paço wrote that among the Parisian population “horrified before such spectacles” some had tried to hide one or another of the persecuted, but that the Gestapo had counted on the help of the French police itself for the operation – even if elements of the police refused to “participate in the ignominious task” and had been dismissed for their “ ‘pro-Jewish mentality’ “. According to the counsellor:

“the statesman Laval, an apostle of Hitler Europe, took his collaborationist mentality to the point of surrendering to Germany more than 10,000 Jewish refugees in the unoccupied area, many of whom were already interned in Concentration Camps ... He handed over all the adults, without distinction of sex or age, and with them, 10 000 Jewish children were taken in by the French population, or by charitable institutions.”

Showing himself to be well informed, and putting it on the public record that the Brazilian government at that time was already fully informed of the extent of the disaster that was occurring in Europe, Medeiros do Paço described:

“Shattered and scattered families-men, if able-bodied, the Germans need for painful forced labor, in lead or salt mines; women, single or married, to take them to houses of tolerance; and all deemed useless because of disease or age, to cease to exist, not putting at risk with their mouths the feeding of the continent, not polluting with their life’s breath the air of the new Europe. When you know, by the revelations of the Swiss medical mission to the Russian front, that the Nazis choke in trains with hospital cars their own wounded, it is not foolhardy to believe they proceed in the same way with Jews.”

The Counsellor pointed out that the Apostolic Nuncio in Vichy had protested to Marshal Pétain, who replied “that France turned over the foreign Jews to Germany so as not to be forced to hand over the French Jews”. On this, Medeiros do Paço commented drily: “as if Hitler, who aims to exterminate all the Jews in Europe, was willing to save forever those of Pétain’s nationality.” This letter would be among the last sent from Vichy, for a little more than a month later, the embassy was invaded by German soldiers and the Gestapo.

Since May, 1941, Souza Dantas was legally retired. However, he remained in office waiting for his replacement. Until November 1942, German troops remained in the north-central part of the country, in occupied France. There was no need for military intervention in the south-central part of the country, the French “Free Zone” because of the collaborationist policy pursued by the Vichy government. The main factor that determined the complete military occupation of France by the German army was the conduct of the war itself, especially the battles fought against the allies. Soon after the United States invaded North Africa, the Axis troops tried to occupy the rest of the French territory. Brazil broke off diplomatic relations with Germany on 28 January 1942. However, the embassy in Vichy was on French territory, which meant that diplomatic relations between Brazil and France continued even after the formal declaration of war against the Germans on August 24, 1942.

On November 11, 1942, German troops invaded the “Free Zone”, and at the same time, officials of the Brazilian Embassy in Vichy burned their code and files, following instructions given by the MRE on December 17 of the previous year. On November 12, 1942, a German military platoon stationed itself before the building of the embassy, and was received by Counsellor Trajano Medeiros do Paço, who had lived during his youth in Germany, his father being, at the time, consul general in Berlin. He spoke fluent German. In rough fashion, the Germans demanded the handing over of the files of the embassy, and Trajan replied pointedly, that they had been burned. Questioned by the Gestapo on the reasons for the act, the diplomat replied “weil wir Euch kennen” (“because we know what you’re like”). The counsellor argued that they were in the Brazilian embassy, that Brazil was at war with Germany and that, therefore, the embassy was inviolable territory. In answer to that, the Nazis said they had orders and they would carry them out. The building was forcibly entered and a search began amid the protests of the officials present, who ended up being detained for three hours and held incommunicado. Souza Dantas, who at that time was in his residence, as soon as he was informed of what was happening, went quickly to the embassy, “where he protested, with dignity and indignation – putting in danger his own life – this unspeakable violation of the elementary principles of international law”. Screaming and furious, the old ambassador inveighed against the Nazis: “You, gentlemen, are violating the laws of international conventions. We are here on Brazilian soil. I ask you to depart immediately.” Given the strong protest, the immediate reaction of the Gestapo was to point their guns at Souza Dantas. Seeing that things could easily degenerate, Medeiros do Paço immediately stepped in to calm the waters, as far as that was possible. With all the Brazilian diplomatic agents being detained by the Nazi squad, Souza Dantas, went in person to the Hôtel du Parque to “lodge with the head of the French government his most energetic protest against the unspeakable violence to which

the Brazilian diplomatic representation, on territory still under French administration, was being subjected". The Germans carried out a thorough search of the embassy. They seized the correspondence between the embassy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France, and forced Medeiros the Palace to open the safe.

Protests by Souza Dantas to the French government were mere formalities, for he had a very clear idea of the facts and the consequences of the direct military occupation of the whole of France by the Germans. The events at the embassy occurred between 3:00 and 6:00 p.m. on November 12, 1942. Protests were made to the ambassador of France in Brazil, Count de Saint - Quentin, the MRE commenting that it was "evident that the violence committed against the Brazilian diplomatic agents on French soil ran to the account of any occurred because of any effective authority of the Vichy government of Vichy, forced to follow the directions of the Nazi authorities". The MRE sent instructions for Souza Dantas to leave France with all his assistants and consulate staff. The MRE sought from the French government guarantees that Brazilian diplomats could withdraw, but failed to obtain the necessary exit visas. The Portuguese diplomatic representation in Vichy took over the responsibility for looking after Brazilian interests in France. It took more than two months before the exit permits were issued by France. Souza Dantas asked the French government to allow the exit of Brazilian diplomats soon as he learned about the German invasion of the "free zone", but did not get it, because that office was totally dependent on the government of German occupation. The ambassador personally sent his last telegram from Vichy on November 27, 1942, stating that the Vichy government had lost "the power to grant exit visas from the French territory to any destination, in passports, even diplomatic ones". On January 23, 1943, Souza Dantas was ordered to leave Vichy in 24 hours, along with the staff of the embassy and consulates in the country, in order to be interned in Mont d'Or. The Brazilian diplomats and their families, totalling

twenty-eight people, travelled in a heavily-guarded train, with the doors of the wagons locked. They were detained in a hotel in town for about two weeks, guarded on a 24 hour basis by soldiers. From Mont d'Or, they drove on to the "Hotel Dressen" in the German town of Bad Godesberg, where they were held for fourteen months. In "Dressen" also were held under house arrest, along with some one hundred thirty-seven Spanish American diplomats, the representations of Mexico, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Santo Domingo, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia.

In April 1943, the MRE made efforts to exchange Souza Dantas for Germans interned in Brazil, but the ambassador made as a condition for his own freedom, the freedom of all the other Brazilians under house arrest in Bad Godesberg. On the initiative of the U.S. government, through the auspices of the Swiss government, negotiations took place for the exchange of Brazilians detained in Bad Godesberg for 132 Germans who were in the same situation in Brazil. The exchange took place in April 1944, in Lisbon. Shortly after, the Brazilian group embarked for Brazil.

A committee of notables in Brazil began to prepare tributes to Souza Dantas, because of his heroism in resisting the invasion of the embassy and because of his long detainment. The death of the ambassador of Brazil in Argentina, Rodrigues Alves, on May 6, 1944 and the grief arising from it, however, gave the Vargas regime the excuse it needed to suspend all celebrations for Souza Dantas. The body of Rodrigues Alves arrived in Brazil on May 13, 1944, and a period of official mourning was decreed. That same day, Souza Dantas arrived in Brazil.

The newspapers gave some but limited attention to the arrival "of the Brazilians who were prisoners of Hitler". There was a small tribute by the Polish representation in Brazil for the ambassador "for having saved the lives of many Poles, during the invasion of France" without any reference to refugees or Jews.

Up until the beginning, in 1998, of the divulgation of the present

research in the media, there would no explicit mention in the media of the humanitarian assistance given to refugees by Souza Dantas. The few honours he received in Brazil before his death in 1954 were modest and related to the “services rendered to the cause of Franco-Brazilian rapprochement”.

The *Estado Novo* dictatorship in Brazil and the subsequent zeal to protect the memory of Vargas would be sensitive to, and careful about, any reference, association, or memory that might reflect poorly on Vargas, and the story of Souza Dantas necessarily revealed an intolerant, perhaps even cruel, facet of the president. While the *Estado Novo* lasted, Vargas kept the Souza Dantas story a secret. With the fall of the dictatorship, on October 29, 1945, the old ambassador was no longer ostracized, due to the political influence of old colleagues in the MRE.

In December 1945 Souza Dantas was appointed head of the Brazilian delegation to the “Preparatory Committee for the United Nations”, which met in London. On January 14, 1946, the American Secretary of State, James Francis Byrnes, delivered the first speech in the history of the General Assembly of the United Nations. It fell to a Brazilian, Luiz Martins de Souza Dantas, “the dean of the diplomatic corps world”, to talk next, uttering a beautiful and expressive speech of his own.

The last years of his life the ambassador spent in Paris. After being hospitalized for months, Souza Dantas was discharged in April 1953. Once he left the hospital, he went to live in a tiny room described as “student’s room” in the “Grand Hotel”. He soon fell sick again.

On Good Friday, April 16, 1954, at 2:30 in the afternoon, still under the second Vargas government, Ambassador Luiz Martins de Souza Dantas died in Paris at age of 78. After tributes to Souza Dantas in Paris, his body went to Brazil. There, the funeral was held on May 15, 1954, at 9:00 a.m., in the Caju cemetery, in Rio de Janeiro. Despite significant tributes made on this occasion, when the mass of the 7th day of the death of the ambassador was held in a

church in the center of Rio de Janeiro, only five people attended. The artist Cicero Dias and his wife reported that the money Souza Dantas left at death was not enough to “buy a suit in which to bury the dead man”.

Souza Dantas had no children. The initiative of a posthumous tribute could have been the initiative of people whose lives were saved by Souza Dantas. But they did not even know one another. Before the list of names in the first study of Souza Dantas, *Quixote in the Darkness*, there was no such list. Moreover, it is not difficult to understand that foreigners who came to Brazil after a traumatic escape, preferred to remain “silent” and it never occurred to them to announce that they had entered the country with the help of the ambassador, who for his acts, had been severely reprimanded by the government.

It is our belief that Getúlio Vargas, his collaborators, heirs and political cultists hoped to bequeath to future generations a restricted, controlled and selective account and image of Ambassador Souza Dantas. This information filter, a form of censorship, was destroyed by the unrestricted access of researchers to ministerial archives of the 1940s. Time has gone by, and the memory of Souza Dantas, rehabilitated in the twenty-first century, can now occupy its rightful place in the historical record, and Souza Dantas can be the object of tributes to one who contributed to the rescue of those persecuted by the Nazis.

“RAOUL WALLENBERG”

Jill Blonsky

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The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation (IRWF) is a global-reach NGO based in New York, with offices also in Berlin, Buenos Aires and Jerusalem.

The IRWF's main mission is to preserve and divulge the legacy of Raoul Wallenberg and his likes, the courageous women and men who reached-out to the victims of the Holocaust.

The IRWF focuses on research and education, striving to instil the spirit of solidarity of the Rescuers in the hearts and minds of the young generations.

At the same time, the IRWF campaigns for Raoul Wallenberg, the victim, trying to shed light on his whereabouts. Amongst its most notable campaign, a petition to President Putin, signed by more than 20,000 people and the institution of a 500,000 Euro reward for reliable information about the fate of Raoul Wallenberg and his chauffer, Vilmos Langfelder, both of them abducted by the Soviets on January 17th, 1945.

Contents

The Lull before the Storm	131
Jewish Life in Hungary before 1944	131
Raoul Wallenberg: The Development of a Hero	139
Recruitment	148
The Mission	150
The Terror	161
The Growth of Section C	174
Dinner with Eichmann	177
Arrest and imprisonment	179
Why was Wallenberg arrested?	186
Alleged Sightings post 1947	188
The Wallenberg Family sues the USSR	196
Who was Prisoner No. 7?	200
Conclusion	203
Tributes	205
References	209

The Lull before the Storm: Jewish Life in Hungary before 1944

“The hand of fate shall also seize Hungarian Jewry. And the later this occurs, and the stronger this Jewry becomes, the more cruel and hard shall be the blow, which shall be delivered with greater savagery. There shall be no escape”¹

THEODORE HERZL, *March 10, 1903*

On January 20 1942 a conference was held in Wannsee, just outside of Berlin. Chaired by SS General Reinhardt Heydrich, it included a number of high ranking Nazi officials, including Heydrich’s assistant Lieutenant-Colonel Adolf Eichmann. The purpose of this conference was recorded in the minutes:

“In place of emigration, a further possible solution is the evacuation of Jews to the east, after appropriate prior discussion with the Fuhrer ... The number of Jews to be considered with regard to the final solution is around eleven million”.²

No-one present at the conference was in any doubt as to the meaning of “final solution”; it referred euphemistically to the destruction of the Jews in Europe. The veiled language continued – the eleven million ... would be used as labour in the east ... (where) doubtless a large proportion will drop out through natural wastage (die from natural causes). The residue that will inevitably be left at the end will certainly be those with the most stamina and representing a natural selection, they would, if released form the nucleus of regeneration. So they must be treated accordingly”.³ “Treated accordingly” was

1 (Braham in Cesarani, ed. 1997, p. 39)

2 (Knopp, 2003, p. 162)

3 (Knopp, 2003, p. 165)

another code for mass murder. The large-scale killings had been conducted for some time, but this conference marked the onset of the deliberate policy of the genocide of the Jewish people.

Although Hungary was the last country to institute persecution of the Jews it has been suggested that it was the most enthusiastic partner in this crime initiated by the Nazis. In 1941 approximately 825,000 Jews lived in Hungary; by 1945, this figure had shrunk to just 140,000. Eighty percent of Hungary's Jewish children had perished.⁴

Handler believes the roots of the growth in anti-Semitism lies in the anger felt towards the brief Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919 and in particular the Jewish origins of more than half its People's Commissars. Right wing factions in the country saw this period as a betrayal of their national sovereignty because it tied Hungary too closely to Soviet Russia. Anti-Semitism was not overtly practised by the ruling classes but was rife among the peasantry and the lower/middle classes in urban areas. As Handler writes "thus the same Jews that had been accused of being callous practitioners of capitalist exploitation, financial profiteering, and social elitism were now accused of promoting the tenets of a diametrically opposed revolutionary and egalitarian movement government. The conflict of interests implied here was lost on the majority of people. The communist-led government ruled for only a few months but during this time there were acts of violence and intimidation. This was relatively new to Hungary. However, when Bela Kun and many of his supporters fled, the violence accelerated into what is known as the White Terror of 1919-1920 when nationalists sought to destroy every trace of the hapless communist government.

In 1920, the Regent, Admiral Horthy, took power with the backing of the conservative nobility and the nationalist officers in the army. Under the guidance of the premier, Count Istvan Bethlen (1921-1932), the right wing was largely stifled and Jews enjoyed

⁴ (Handler, 1996, p. 1)

legal protection and economic prosperity⁵, contributing much in return to the national economy. This is not to say there were no restrictions against Jews. In 1920 a new law entitled “Numerous Clausus” limited the number of Jews allowed to enter higher education, stating that “the proportion of members of the various ethnic and national groups in the total number of students should amount to the proportion of such ethnic and national groups in the population”.⁶ Further anti-Jewish legislation followed in 1938 with the so-called First Jewish Law, which restricted the numbers of Jews allowed to enter certain professions and redefined the term “Jew”. A Second Jewish Law followed in 1939, declaring that Jewish converts to Christianity were also to be defined as “Jews” and the restrictions on their employment were severely curtailed. A quarter of a million Jews lost their jobs.⁷

Also a number of anti-Jewish organisations were established, most notably the fascist organisation, Nyilas, (known as the Arrow Cross owing to the sign of crossed arrows on their shirts). This group were to become willing and savage partners with the SS in the implementation of the destruction of Hungarian Jewry.

Nonetheless, compared to the Jewish populations of other countries, the Hungarian Jews still had a reasonable existence. Thousands, fleeing persecution in the Nazi occupied countries of Europe, entered Hungary. These refugees were assisted by the indigenous Jews who nevertheless were concerned by the swelling numbers and sought to scatter the influx throughout the country to avoid high concentrations in certain areas. This would have aggravated the local population.⁸

On top of this, a further one hundred and seventy-five thousand Jews were added to the Hungarian population after the territories in which they lived were ceded to Hungarian rule. As Rosenfeld explains,

5 (Handler, 1996, p. 4)

6 (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 5)

7 (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 6)

8 (Documents from the War Refugee Board, 1944, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, New York, p. 142)

this swelled the Jewish population in Hungary to some seven hundred thousand. These first two Jewish laws had been Hungarian initiatives and were directed against Jews who kept to their own religion. Jews who had converted to Christianity were not affected.

The laws were enacted at a time when the links between Hungary and her right-wing allies, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany were increasing. Humiliated by the post-World War I terms of the Treaty of Trianon (1920), which saw three quarters of its territory split between Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Romania, Hungary needed economic assistance from its more powerful allies⁹, and eventually joining the Axis countries in November 1940.

In 1941, the country introduced a Third Jewish law which was influenced by Nazi Germany and consequently was much harsher than the previous two laws and, arguably, even tougher than the German Nuremberg racial laws¹⁰. This law again redefined Jewishness but this time on racial grounds and banned marriages between Jews and non-Jews, affecting even the Christian Jews.

However, anti-Semitic sentiments did not necessarily mean that Horthy and other officials would be willing to comply with mass deportations, and subsequent extermination, which would have a serious economic effect on Hungary. Horthy declared pragmatically:

“It is therefore impossible to eliminate the Jews in one or two years, as they hold everything in their hand. I was perhaps the first openly to express my anti-Semitism but I cannot look on with indifference as the Jews are treated inhumanely and exposed to meaningless insults when we still need them”.¹¹

This implies a fully practical rather than sentimental reason for protecting the Jews in Hungary. But Horthy, ever the passionate patriot, also remarked that the Jews are linked to us “by their own interests and are more loyal to their new homeland than the

9 (Handler, 1996, p. 11)

10 (Vagi, 2013, p. 12)

11 (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 129)

Arrow Cross people, who with their disordered brains will cast us into the arms of the Germans". Thus the Hungarian government resisted German pressure and, despite the aforementioned legal discrimination, the Jews of Hungary felt safer than anywhere else in mainland Europe at that time. It is easy to see why. After all, Prime Minister Miklos Kallay himself publically stated that "the government will stand up not only against the destruction of the Jews but against those who see the Jewish question as the only problem in this country".¹² Their government did not even require them to wear the yellow star. Furthermore, it was looking more and more likely that Germany would lose the war so it was just a matter of time before the nightmare of persecution was over. Even so the pressure on the Hungarians to deport the Jews and to close its borders to non-Hungarian Jews fleeing from elsewhere was increasing.

The Nazis Enter Hungary

In March 1944, the situation changed dramatically. Hitler learned that Horthy was also intending to negotiate with the Allies and cut his ties with Nazi Germany. He needed Hungarian forces on the Eastern Front and could not allow Horthy to change sides. Furthermore, he was also frustrated at the continued delay in "dealing" with the Jews. On March 19 1944 German forces occupied Hungary, deposed Kallay and imposed the trusted General Dome Sztojaj, and the enforcement of the "solution to the Jewish problem" took on a new urgency. From this time onwards the Nazis dictated that all matters Jewish would be administered by German officials. SS General Edmund Veessenmayer, himself a veteran of Jewish "action" in Croatia became a Minister in Hungary.¹³ The day to day practical work was conducted by Adolf Eichmann, now head of the Gestapo's Jewish Unit, who had proved ruthlessly efficient in this task

¹² (ibid)

¹³ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 157)

elsewhere. Alongside him were his aides, Herman Krumei, Theodor Danneker, Anton Brunner, Otto Hunsche and Dieter Wisliceny, all experienced in this task.¹⁴ On 23 March, Sweden's Minister at the Legation in Budapest, Ivan Danielsson wrote to the Foreign Minister of Sweden, Christian Gunther that "Budapest is swarming with SS units and Gestapo agents and a ruthless pursuit of Jews in leading positions has got underway"¹⁵.

By the end of May 200,000 Jews had been deported from northern, eastern and north eastern Hungary. The speed and means of their transportations were savage. Herded into temporary holding areas, there was insufficient food, water and sanitary facilities. Those who survived the wait for the deportation trains were crammed into cattle trucks, usually 80 to a carriage. Even Auschwitz found it hard to cope with the number. Its commandant, Rudolf Hoess, complained that Eichmann was sending more Jews to him per day than he could murder in his death camp.

Eichmann's response was that he had to work fast because the Russians were advancing from the East.¹⁶ The deportations continued and, by the beginning of July, Veessenmayer was able to report that 437,402 Jews had been transported out of Hungary via 148 trains during the period 14 May–8 July 1944. Several thousand Jewish men were serving in labour brigades, leaving just the Jews of Budapest in line for the next level of "resettlement"¹⁷.

Eichmann's next plan was for a 24 hour blitz of Budapest after which the city would be *judenrein* (Jew-free). However before he could put his plan into action Admiral Horthy, under pressure from the Allies and veering towards making overtures of peace with the Allies, called a halt to the deportations. Eichmann was furious but was unable to oppose. Horthy had ordered his gendarmes back to the countryside and the Austrian SS Colonel simply did not have the

14 (Bierman, 1982, p. 40)

15 (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 130)

16 (Gersten, 2001, p. 42)

17 (Bierman, 1982, p. 39)

manpower to round up the Jewish population without them.¹⁸ On the 14th July, Eichmann sent an SS unit to the internment camp at Kistarcsa where they quickly overcame the Hungarian guard and the detainees were deported. When Horthy heard about the deportation from the Jewish Council he ordered the train to be returned. Five days later, on 19th July the Jewish Council were summoned to Eichmann's office at 8am where they were kept waiting until 7.30pm. The only contact they had had during their wait was from SS Captain Otto Hunsche who visited them after a few hours and began asking inane questions. It began to dawn on the Council that something was wrong. In fact, as they were sitting in Eichmann's office, the deportation of 1220 prisoners had taken place from Kistarcsa. Despite protests to the Hungarian government who assured them the Council would not happen again, another deportation of 1500 prisoners took place on 24 July.

The Allies wake up

Meanwhile the Allies and the neutral countries were waking up to the fate awaiting the Jews of Hungary. In Sweden, the Stockholm daily newspaper "Dagens Nyheter" wrote on April 1st:

"The Nazi regime's treatment of the Jews has a single goal: to exterminate them as far as is possible. This treatment cannot in any way be rationally justified. The large-scale massacre serves no political ends, its staging demands a massive amount of time, money and labour force, it in no way strengthens the war effort, it goes against all the sensible aspirations that German foreign policy could ever be thought to have had. But then the massacre is not politics. It is a blood ritual ... In the face of decisions of this sort the world outside the beleaguered fortress stands powerless. It is not unfeasible that there will be time for the decision to be implemented before deliverance arrives. An

¹⁸ (Bierman, 1982, p. 40)

army of executioners has been carefully put together for the purpose, a powerful perfect apparatus of execution, in which the constituent parts were once thought to be material for human beings”.¹⁹

Concern too was growing in the United States. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was coming under ever-increasing pressure from organisations, the media and the public in the United States to act. In January 1944 he established the War Refugee Board under Decree 9417 which declared that “It is the policy of this government to take all measures within its power to rescue the victims of enemy oppression who are in imminent danger of death and otherwise to afford such victims all possible relief and assistance consistent with the successful prosecution of the war.”²⁰ President Roosevelt also delivered a radio broadcast to Hungary declaring that anyone assisting efforts to round up, deport or kill Jews would be subject to post war retribution. But the Germans were already in Hungary and the Americans seemed far in the distance. Some form of humanitarian mission had to be launched locally in Budapest.

Norbert Masur, businessman and representative of the World Jewish Congress, wrote to Professor Marcus Ehrenpreis, the chief rabbi of Stockholm on 18th April 1944 making a vital suggestion:

“We ought to find a personality, clever, with a good reputation, a non-Jew who is willing to travel to Romania/Hungary to lead a rescue mission there for the Jews. The person in question must enjoy the trust of the foreign ministry and be equipped with a diplomatic passport, and the foreign ministry must ask the legations in Bucharest and Budapest to assist him as best they can. We just place a large sum of money at his disposal, for example 500,000 kronor (approximately \$1,500,000 today).

His task is to help the Jews to leave Romania/Hungary. In Romania many could be helped to flee (also by boat) to Turkey by bribes ... I believe that several hundred people can be saved by means of

¹⁹ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 130)

²⁰ (jewishvirtuallibrary.org)

this plan. The prerequisites are: the right man, support from the foreign ministry, money. The latter is perhaps the least of our worries for we could certainly obtain the greater part from the USA. The support of the foreign ministry also ought to be possible to obtain in view of the willingness to help that now characterises our authorities".²¹

The task now was to find someone who had all those qualities; someone suitable for this huge, difficult life-saving task.

Raoul Wallenberg: The Development of a Hero

"May all that come true which is always on my mind, that you shall become an able man and bring honour to our family"²²

GUSTAV WALLENBERG *to his grandson Raoul, August 4 1935.*

"An eternal glory surrounds his name and his memory. The refugee organization of the United States has also expressed its admiration for his achievement which is called one of this war's greatest individual performances".²³

On Raoul Wallenberg, extract from an editorial in Svenska Dagbladet, April 22 1945

Childhood

Raoul Gustav Wallenberg was born to Maj Wising Wallenberg on 4 August 1912. His father Raoul Oscar Wallenberg, a naval officer, had been an heir to one of Sweden's most prominent business and diplomatic families. Tragically, he had lost his battle with a rare

²¹ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 131)

²² (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. XI)

²³ (Anger, 1996, p. Foreword)

form of cancer just three months before his young son was born and Maj had to endure late pregnancy and birth without the support of her husband. In his short life, Raoul Oscar would display similar qualities as those later displayed by his son. When an epidemic broke out aboard his ship just off the coast of France, Raoul Oscar risked his own health by refusing to leave the vessel. Instead, he remained behind to keep vigil by the bedsides of his men and to help the doctors with interpreting.

After his father's premature death, the task of guiding baby Raoul's though life was shouldered by his paternal grandfather, Gustav Wallenberg, a diplomat and former naval officer. No longer able to project all his hopes and ambitions onto his son, Gustav transferred those energies on to his grandson. His enormous influence and the "programme" he developed to mould Raoul's character from an early age would make the young boy eminently suitable and prepared for his future role in Budapest.

After more than five years of widowhood Raoul's mother remarried. With her new husband Fredrik Von Dardel, Maj would have a son, Guy, and a daughter Nina. For his part Von Dardel, would view Raoul as his son and made no difference between him and his biological children. In their turn, Guy and Nina adored their older brother and would become very active on his behalf in later years.

Despite this close family unit, Raoul was formally adopted by his grandfather and began a programme of development that would span until Gustav's death. The elder Wallenberg would certainly find the young boy highly receptive to his ideas and interests although Raoul did display some individual traits of his own. During his early years Maj lamented the fact that Raoul could be defiant and that he had "acquired a large portion of stubbornness to work against".²⁴ But on the whole he became interested not in "the trifles of childhood, but of weighty matters: governmental reform, international relations, import-export trade and the like"²⁵ long before his age went into

²⁴ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 13)

²⁵ (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 18)

double figures. Along with the intensive study of music and the Bible, Raoul developed into a voracious reader, reading the entire thirty-five Swedish lexicon “A Nordiques’s Family Book” from cover to cover.²⁶

At age 9, Raoul began attending the New Elementary School in Stockholm where he demonstrated a flair for modern languages. Ironically as it would transpire, he rejected learning Latin in favour of Russian which he thought might have more relevance for the future. His general studiousness probably set him apart somewhat from his classmates as they remember him not being particularly interested in sports or in other boys’ games. However, he did have a mischievous streak which manifested itself when he freed some hunting dogs belonging to a Swedish writer, Axel Klinckowstrom²⁷. Unfortunately the act of kindness backfired somewhat when the dogs killed some chickens and left an unwanted “thank you gift” on Raoul’s apartment floor! But in general his interests were studious and from an early age he showed an interest in buildings and would even question Stockholm construction workers about brick-laying²⁸. At school his worst subjects were Maths and German. The family therefore decided to send him to spend a summer in Mecklenburg to improve his German. For a while he still struggled but eventually would become quite proficient in the language. Again, this would prove to be a crucial asset for him later.

When Raoul was 13, Gustav Wallenberg, by then Swedish Ambassador to Turkey, decided the boy should travel alone to Istanbul on the Orient Express in order to increase his independence. Of course, Gustav ensured that the train conductors were well paid to watch Raoul who, despite their secret supervision, managed to hop off the train in Belgrade. He spent a few hours watching demonstrations in the city and would relate excitedly the events later to his grandfather.

²⁶ (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 18)

²⁷ (Rosenfeld, 2005, pp. 17-18)

²⁸ (Marton, 1995, p. 19)

Raoul continued to travel quite widely during the school holiday periods from 1928–1930, mostly to improve his language skills. His trips included France and England. In 1930, after graduating from school, he was called up for national service. It was at this time that Raoul wrote to his uncle Marcus Senior, thanking him for the family's interest, saying it "was a strong incentive ... to do my best on whatever path I come to tread, and I hope I am not destined to be the one who besmirches the family name".²⁹ This fear of not living up to his family name was to be a recurring theme throughout Raoul's life.

Youth

As the son and grandson of naval officers, Raoul might have expected to enter the Navy, but this was ruled out when he was found to be colour-blind, specifically red-blind.³⁰ He decided therefore to become an office cadet in the Life Grenadier Guards. Although he began his military service with a sense of serious duty, he soon allowed his youth and humour to gain the upper hand and he finished his initial military service with a less than impressive grade. He clearly enjoyed parodying his military life. One of his entertaining letters home showed his developing sense of humour:

"The colonel inspected our platoon, and, you know, a colonel is something that for greatness and majesty almost exceeds a soldier's faculty of comprehension. You can appreciate, therefore, that his arrival was heralded by many mystical ceremonies, e.g. by three hours' cleaning of boots and weapons. The colonel came, saw and grunted.

The, to me, most enthralling moment in the firing which was ordered for the colonel's gracious inspection was when he himself, weighing 100 kilos had to get himself over a trench several metres wide which we others had to splash over as best we could.

Firing was suspended and the whole platoon held its breath when

²⁹ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 26)

³⁰ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 56)

the colonel strolled over the little bridge that the lieutenant, after ten minutes' frantic activity, managed to get erected.

The regiment goes from strength to strength. The other day we had a visit from no less a person than the divisional commander ... The difference in rank between him and the colonel was clearly shown by the fact that the visit was preceded by an even lengthier cleaning of equipment and weapons".³¹

His next step in life was to attend university. His grandfather continued his tactic of increasing Raoul's worldliness by refusing to allow him to attend a university in Sweden, where his life would be too carefree, in favour of the United States. Raoul had shown a passionate interest in art and buildings so chose to study Architecture, not a typical occupation for a Wallenberg, at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. This mid-west university well suited Gustav's plan for Raoul as he felt the "mentality" at East Coast universities was no longer what it had been but the USA generally was where he wanted Raoul to develop. Gustav wrote that "through his education in America, whose methods of nurture I have confidence in, to make a man of him".³²

Over the next three years Raoul excelled at most subjects in university, struggling only with sciences and mathematics as he had at school but shining in the more artistic and linguistic areas. One of his classmates, Sol King described Raoul as "a very talented yet modest person who showed great insight in finding simple solutions to complex problems". Neither his conduct nor his manner of dress gave anyone who knew him the slightest clue to his high station in life as a member of one of Sweden's most distinguished families. One of his professors remembered Raoul as "one of the brightest and best students I think I had in my thirty-year experience as a professor of drawing and painting."³³

31 (Jangfeldt, 2013, pp. 27-28)

32 (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 32)

33 (Bierman, 1982, p. 21)

During the university vacations, Raoul like to travel around the United States, visiting relatives, travelling to Mexico or hitchhiking around the United States. One episode stands out as an example of how Raoul had developed both a very cool temperament under duress and the ability to persuade people to do what he wanted. On one occasion, he was alone on a highway when he was picked up by a car containing four young men. He described what happened:

“Suddenly we heard a noise from the back of the car, and the driver stopped to see what it was. It surprised me that they all had to get out of the car for this. Suddenly another car passed us, and the four of them got back in. By now I had become very suspicious because of their questions about money, their lack of luggage and the sudden stop, I started to work my poverty into the conversation. Suddenly the car turned onto a country lane so abruptly that it almost turned over. Fearing the worst I tried to keep a cool head so as not to make things worse. After another couple of miles through a dark forest they stopped after a rather clumsy and theatrical bluff: ‘Get out and see what’s the matter with the gas tank, Joe’.

They got out one after the other and then I was asked to get out ‘so that they could take a look at me’. One of them had a large revolver in his hand. It might not have been loaded.

They demanded my money, and I gave them what I had in my breast pocket and said I had more in my suitcase. They opened it and took out an envelope that in addition to money contained some papers and the key to my safety-deposit box. The latter items, I managed to retrieve by bluffing, ‘Sentimental value to me, no value to you.’ I didn’t tell them it was the key to my bank deposit.

Maybe it was stupid of me to volunteer where I kept my money, but I’d heard so many stories about people being searched and occasionally left without any clothes at all. I did forget to tell them that I had three dollars in another pocket however. When they thought they had all my money, I decided it was their turn to show some goodwill, so I asked them to drive me back to the highway,

since it was late and my suitcases were heavy. They let me sit next to the driver and then put the luggage on top to keep me from jumping. By this time they were the ones who were frightened, maybe because I was so calm. I didn't really feel scared; I found the whole thing sort of interesting. Maybe they thought I was planning to lure them into a trap. The result was that all of a sudden they threw me into a ditch and then tossed my luggage after. I immediately flattened myself under a bush for fear that they might fire a farewell shot from the revolver".³⁴

Manhood

Raoul finally and reluctantly left the United States for Sweden on 26 February 1935. At this time Gustav wrote to him regarding his options – Raoul could either stay in Sweden and join the hundreds of others searching for work in the recession, or he could find something that would make him stand out from other job seekers in the future. Gustav was still seeking to instil in Raoul the need to attain “knowledge of the world and familiarity with other people, understand their way of thinking, their customs and their way of seeing”.³⁵ From Gustav's point of view university had provided the theoretical training but now Raoul needed practical training as part of the “programme”. This would involve leaving Sweden where the temptations to follow a dissolute life could prove overwhelming. Therefore, Gustav arranged for Raoul to work for a friend, Erwin Freund, in his bank in Haifa, Palestine. First though Raoul needed office experience so Gustav arranged for him to travel to Cape Town, South Africa where he began work in a timber and construction equipment factory. These first few months were not at all what Raoul wanted and he soon gave up that job and began selling sports equipment for the Swedish African Company. Here he found a talent and liking for sales work. He hoped to convince Gustav to allow him

³⁴ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 59)

³⁵ (ibid, p. 75)

to stay in South Africa where he could continue selling the sports equipment. He even managed to write his thoughts and impressions, complete with phonographs into a booklet entitled “South African Impressions” which was published in 1936.³⁶ But Gustav wanted no deviation from the “programme”.

Thus, the next stage he found Raoul in Haifa in March 1936. The day after his arrival he reported for duty at the Dutch Bank where he was greeted by a very surprised Erwin Freund who wasn't expecting Raoul for another year! He rented a room in a boarding house at 17 Arlozorov where he met several German Jews with whom he seems to have enjoyed a good relationship, describing them as “very nice and humorous”. Perhaps it was from these immigrants that he first learned about the horrors and humiliations imposed on Jews in Germany³⁷.

During the course of 1935–36 there were indications that Raoul was beginning to rebel a little against his grandfather's fairly rigid programme. He was tired of being a volunteer and wanted to have paid work, to make a living. Apart from the money aspect, Raoul felt that references written for volunteers differed greatly from those whom the employers have had to pay and so they would count for little with prospective employers. He also began to cool towards banking which he viewed as a kind of “glorified pawnshop”³⁸. At the beginning of September Raoul returned to Stockholm and joined the SVEA Life Guards to fulfil his compulsory military refresher course.

In 1937 Gustav Wallenberg died of kidney cancer at the age of 74. During this time, there had been little contact between him and Raoul because of his grandfather's illness. From Gustav, Raoul inherited around 70,000 krona (£200,000 today) plus furniture and an impressive wine collection. In theory, Raoul was now free to make his own decisions but he still felt keenly the responsibility of

36 (ibid, p. 90)

37 (ibid, p. 93)

38 (ibid, p. 102)

his family name which meant that he felt obliged to seek the advice of his uncles, specifically Jacob, with respect to his future career. However, the only jobs he was offered in the family businesses were in a consulting capacity. This again did not suit or challenge him. Despite several hints that there might be something available for him no position was ever found for Raoul in the family empire. He began to feel somewhat despondent.

To make things worse, war had broken out and many of the Raoul's work projects closed down. Much of the next year was spent in national service as Sweden, alarmed by the Soviet attack on Finland, and in 1940 Raoul joined the Home Guard where he became an instructor. The head of the Home Guard said of him:

“One of the hardest working instructors was conscript sergeant Raoul Wallenberg, who had been seized with such an interest in the Home Guard that he voluntarily stayed on in the emergency service for long periods so as to be able to devote himself to its training.”³⁹

In 1941 Raoul met a Hungarian businessman named Koloman Lauer. Originally a lawyer, Lauer became a businessman when the boundaries of Hungary shrank and there were too many lawyers for the remaining territory. In July that year Lauer established the Central European Trading Company with the plan to import-export foodstuffs between Sweden and Central Europe, particularly Hungary. A month after their meeting Raoul had a job. Lauer was impressed by the young man's business acumen, his talent for languages and his organisational skills. Raoul's pleasant negotiating ability was also a major plus. Over the next few years Raoul would travel extensively for the Trading Company, including three visits to Hungary where he made some very valuable contacts.

39 (ibid, p. 122)

Recruitment:

After receiving Masur's letter stating the need for someone to be selected to lead a rescue mission, Professor Ehrenpreis relayed the contents to his acquaintance Koloman Lauer. Coincidentally, the businessman had himself been having a similar discussion with his young work colleague Raoul Wallenberg. Lauer had been receiving distressing messages from his family back in Hungary and was desperately applying for Swedish citizenship in order to give his relatives back home a link to Sweden. He recommended Raoul Wallenberg to Ehrenpreis for the rescue mission and a meeting was arranged. It did not go well. Ehrenpreis was not impressed by Wallenberg's insistence that the task would require considerable funding and he found the young man rather immature. His first choice anyway was the Swedish aristocrat Count Folk Bernadotte, a relative of the Swedish King Gustav V.

By this time the War Refugee Board (WRB) had established a branch in Stockholm run by special attaché Iver Olsen, the financial attaché at the American Legation and an operative for the Office of Strategic Studies (OSS), the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency. His office was located in the same office as the shipping magnate, Sven Salen, a business partner of Koloman Lauer. When the subject of a suitable candidate arose again, Raoul Wallenberg's name was again suggested.

A second meeting was arranged and held at the Grand Hotel, Saltsjobaden on 10th June 1944 between Raoul Wallenberg, Iver Olsen, Koloman Lauer and Herschal Johnson, the American Minister to Stockholm. It was a marathon session, lasting between 7pm in the evening and continued until 5am the following morning. In the end, a three point plan was agreed. Firstly, Raoul would travel to Budapest on a purely humanitarian mission. Secondly, the USA

would support the mission and finally the mission would last two-three months only.

Three days later, on June 13, Raoul was summoned to the Foreign Ministry for talks that dragged on for no fewer than ten days. The negotiations must have been tough. Raoul, who hated bureaucracy in any case, insisted on being given a free hand without the constraints of diplomatic niceties and obstacles. The most difficult aspect of his demands for the Foreign Ministry was his insistence on having the authority to buy or pay off anyone who could enable him to achieve his goal, saving lives. The Ministry was uncomfortable with this as they did not want to compromise their relations with the Germans. Ironically, this attitude would have serious repercussions for Raoul later when the Swedes also did not want to compromise their relationship with the Russians over his arrest and imprisonment. By the end of the meeting, it was agreed that Raoul would be given absolute authority over decisions that could save lives; he would be both a secretary of the Legation and the special representative of the king, Gustav V; he would be free to come home for discussions with the authorities at any time; he would be supplied with a list of helpful officials; and he would have permission to seek an audience with Admiral Horthy.⁴⁰

Raoul intended to leave for Budapest at the end of July but with 2–3 trainloads of Jewish deportations taking place daily his departure date was brought forward as a matter of urgency. Wallenberg left on 6th July with the minimum of luggage and the lists of names of Swedes with Hungarian relatives. He also had lists of names of resistance agents and pro-Allied officials in Budapest. Into his bank account was paid 110,000 Swedish kronor donated by the War Refugee Board and the American-Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

What motivated this young, relatively successful businessman with a comfortable even privileged lifestyle to travel to a war-torn country where danger was a stark everyday reality? Certainly friends and family

⁴⁰ (Jangfeldt, 2013, pp. 139–140)

would have said it was his compassionate and kind nature, his general decency. These were certainly important. But his upbringing surely also played its part in his decision. He had been brought up by his grandfather to look beyond his borders, to become an international citizen and to show a keen interest in politics and the world in general. But perhaps there was something more too. Raoul always felt on the periphery of the family, the less successful relation with no real role in the business empire. Gustav Wallenberg had imprinted on him again and again the importance of his family name and its honour. Perhaps by going to Budapest at the behest of the United States as a special envoy he felt this was his chance to prove himself.

The Mission

Thus, with the backing of the US and Swedish governments, Raoul Wallenberg left Sweden for Budapest on 6 July 1944. His task was overwhelming. He had to “use all channels available” ... to gather “precise information concerning location of Hungarian detention centres for Jews and also about Auschwitz”; to report on the persecution of the Jews and to try to save as many lives as possible. For Koloman Lauer he was instructed to find and save his relatives and friends as well as those of other Hungarian Jews living in Sweden. Although he arrived too late to help Mrs Lauer’s relatives, he did manage to get passports for Koloman Lauer’s sister and her husband and daughter. Although they were unable to leave Hungary they were hidden in a convent by nuns. Lauer also requested that he oversee Central European’s interests in Hungary including the post-war period but Raoul does not seem to have done much with respect to this and in fact withdrew from the board of the firm, as he promised to the foreign ministry.

Raoul left Sweden on 6 July 1944 and flew first to Berlin where he was met by his sister, Nina, who was now married to Gunnar

Lagergren, head of the Foreign Interests section of the Swedish Legation in Berlin. Nina had hoped that Raoul would stay a couple of nights but he was irritated by the thought of a delay in his mission and insisted on leaving the following day by the first train possible.

Raoul Wallenberg arrived in Budapest on July 9th 1944 and was met at the station by a Legation clerk and taken to the Hotel Gellert, a luxurious hotel just a few moments from the Legation premises. After settling in, he met up with his old friend, Per Anger, now working as the second secretary and together they discussed the situation in Budapest. Wallenberg must have realised that he faced an uphill struggle, the extent of which was not lost on his colleague, Lars Berg who wrote:

“Raoul Wallenberg began from such a hopeless starting-point, with such small resources and with such a lack of actual force to back him up. When he arrived to organize help for the Hungarian Jews, he was nothing but a blank page. He was not a career diplomat. His knowledge of the Hungarian language was limited. He knew no one of importance in Budapest. However, he had a job to do: to stop the already initiated deportations of the Hungarian Jews, to give them food and shelter, and, above all, to save their lives”.⁴¹

Although the deportations had been halted just two days earlier but the threat to the Jews of Budapest was far from over. On 18th July Wallenberg was already able to file a detailed report regarding the horrors experienced by Hungary's Jews:

“The parents of one of my informants were sent away in the direction of Poland on July 1. For some reason, the train was returned to the infamous camp at Bekasmegyér – as the result it was thought of Archbishop Seredi's intervention at the time. My informant received a message smuggled from his parents, which indicated that they were lacking food and water. He then went there and managed to receive permission, through bribes, to hand over a parcel with food and

⁴¹ (Berg L. G., 1990)

water. According to his statement, his parents and the other prisoners were then half-dead. They were later taken to Poland.

Another informant visited the departure point at Kassa, on May 25th and was shown around by the person in charge, a Baron Fielder ... the camp which covered an area of about 1.5 acres had originally housed 16000–17000 individuals. The camp had been filled on or around May 12. On May 15, the inmates were taken to the newly created ghetto in Kassa. After three days, they were returned to the camp, and the deportations began sometime around May 19. When my informant visited the camp, about 8,000 persons in weakened condition remained. The temperature was about 50 degrees Fahrenheit and the weather rainy and windy. The prisoners were housed beneath narrow covers held up by wooden supports. As their names were called, they were loaded aboard the trains following an extremely invasive body search by the SS, for which both men and women were forced to disrobe. One woman tried surreptitiously to hide her infant under the railroad car, whereupon the child was seized by the leg and hurled headlong into the car. The car was packed so full that the passengers were forced to stand.

According to my informant, Baron Fielder reported that following an escape by several Jews he had ordered their relatives hung up by their feet and beaten around the crotch as a warning to those following behind.”⁴²

Wallenberg continued to describe the conditions:

“A civil servant in a position to provide an overall view of the transports describes them as horrible and unspeakably brutal. Food often consists of one loaf of bread per car, sometimes of a pound of bread per car, and 8 ounces of marmalade. One bucket is allotted to each car. The journey generally takes five days. There are many deaths.”⁴³

Nor was he under any illusion as to the fate of the prisoners upon reaching the camp. A copy of the “The Auschwitz Protocols” had

⁴² (Wallenberg, 1995, pp. 235-236)

⁴³ (Wallenberg, 1995, p. 236)

been made available to him upon his arrival and they made for grim reading. The situation he reported was indeed very bleak and seemingly insurmountable. But he also added a note of optimism, saying that somewhere in the range of 20,000–50,000 Jews were being hidden by their Christian friends.

In his two further memoranda of 29 July, Wallenberg reported that, although large-scale deportations had ceased, smaller numbers were being transported in third class carriages clandestinely, with their yellow stars removed. There was some frustration too in his feelings at the lack of opposition by the Hungarian Jews themselves, who whether through disbelief or a sense of hopelessness failed to resist their ill-treatment in any meaningful way. He wrote “The Jews of Budapest are completely apathetic and do virtually nothing to save themselves”⁴⁴. This view was probably second-hand, formed after his initial meeting with Per Anger, the Swedish trade attaché on July 11th. Anger had also shared his frustration on this issue with Iver Olsen when the young attaché visited Stockholm. Olsen further reported that:

“Anger lamented very much the total lack of courage among the Hungarian Jews, since they could do so much to help themselves even when they knew it was only a matter of a short time before they would be killed.”⁴⁵

The fact of the matter, however, is that the Jews of Hungary had largely been duped. Within a few days of German occupation, they had been ordered to set up Jewish councils throughout Hungary. They were assured by the Germans that the restrictions upon the Jewish population would be mild – nowhere near the persecution suffered by Jews elsewhere. They must report any ill-treatment of Jews as well as any attempt to rob them of their property. However, they would be forbidden to move home, their newspapers would be censored and they must wear the yellow star. The former restrictions would not apply to council members who would be

44 (Wallenberg, 1995:ed. Bent, p. 238)

45 (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 161)

exempt by virtue of their position. However, by the end of June, it was clear that they had been out-manoeuvred by the Nazis as only the Jews of Budapest remained. They were forced to relinquish their telephones, radios, and cars while the children even had to give up their bicycles. Jewish bank accounts were frozen and food rations were decreased.⁴⁶

It is difficult to imagine what they could have done. The speed with which the deportation took place after the Germany invasion in March gave little time for a concerted fight back and there had not been much international opposition, thereby heightening their sense of isolation and helplessness. Furthermore, many of the young men had been sent on labour battalions, leaving older men, women and children to face the SS and Arrow Cross. When they did receive help, as Raoul explained in his second memorandum of July 29, they began to feel more encouraged and such initiatives as a Red Cross camp might well “inspire hope in the breasts of a hundred thousand Jews and awaken their now paralyzed instincts of self-preservation”. Crucially, he recommended that Allied broadcasts focus more on the positive outcome of helping Jews rather than threats of retribution to those who take part in the persecution.⁴⁷

After assessing the situation his first task was to establish an office within the Legation. This was referred to as Section C (originally Section B). Wallenberg hired twenty staff, mostly Jewish lawyers and businessmen, who had been contacts of Per Anger. They included holders of the initial 650 provisional passports which had been issued by the Legation in the months before Wallenberg’s appointment and arrival. This arrangement had been agreed with the Hungarian Government as a means of affording protection to those Jews who had links with Sweden and who were to be “repatriated”. These were the sort of documents which would have been issued to Swedish citizens who had lost their original passports and they were, reluctantly recognised by KEOKH, the government department responsible for

⁴⁶ (Bierman, 1982, p. 42)

⁴⁷ (Wallenberg, 1995, p. 246)

foreigners in Hungary. The first of these passports had been granted to Hugo Wahl, the managing director of Orion, which also had a branch in Sweden. To ensure the validity of the protective passport Hugo Wahl, displaying considerable initiative, hired a lawyer who argued that the document made him a Swedish citizen and, therefore, he was not subject to the same laws as the Hungarian Jews, i.e. the requirements to live in (yellow) star-houses and to wear the Star of David. His case was successful and he was exempted.⁴⁸ This victory, of course, prompted ideas in Wallenberg's fertile mind as he realised this may show a weakness in the bureaucratic machine – the absolute respect for officialdom and official-looking documents, regardless of their dubious validity in international law.

His first idea was to improve the quality, and quantity, of these passports. As a talented architect he had no trouble designing a more official document complete with the Swedish coat-of-arms, the Three Crowns, the Legation stamp and the signature of the Minister, Ivan Danielsson ... The document along with an accompanying certificate requested that the holder be regarded as a Swedish citizen. KEOKH, in return, issued a further document exempting the holder from wearing the yellow star.⁴⁹ This document, called the Schutzpass, certified that the holder was expected to travel to Sweden “within the framework of the repatriation approved by the Swedish foreign ministry” and that his/her name had been entered into a collective passport. Until such time as the repatriation could take place, impossible under the political climate at that time, the holder was under the protection of the Royal Swedish Legation in Budapest.⁵⁰ Judging from Wallenberg's reports it would seem that the Schutzpasses were produced between August 6 and 15. Once issued, the holder could also retrieve any relatives being held in concentration camps or in labour brigades and return them to Budapest, claiming they were under the protection of Sweden. Not surprisingly, news of

48 (Lester, 1982, p. 86)

49 (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 170)

50 (ibid, p. 171)

the Schutzpasses soon spread through the Jewish community and the queues outside the Legation grew by thousands

Recognition of the passes, however, did come at a price and that price was to be paid by the remaining Jews of Budapest. In return for accepting the “Swedish” and other protected Jews, the Germans demanded that those lacking the protection of any of the neutral nations would be deported for labour. As has been noted, the impending fate of the deported Jews was no secret. Certainly the deportations had stopped but the situation was so unpredictable. Wallenberg decided not to accept the condition and transport the Jews to Sweden. Once the Jews had passed out of Hungary the control over their fate would belong entirely to the Germans.

In his dispatch dated 6 August 1944, Wallenberg again referred to further deportations taking place, although small-scale rather than entire railcar loads, and also to a number of Jews being taken away to serve in labour brigades. Rumours appeared to be flying around regarding an imminent wholesale action against Jews but up to that day, Wallenberg had been unable to verify them. He described his meeting with Admiral Horthy on 1 August 1944, informing Olsen that the Regent asked for suggestions as to what action should be taken. Wallenberg requested that the Jewish holders of passports be exempted from wearing the Star of David, thus affording them greater freedom of movement.

He also referred to his meeting on 3rd August with the Hungarian minister for the Interior. Apparently, the minister informed Wallenberg that he would be pleased to increase the number of Jews bound for Sweden. Crucially, he confirmed his willingness to allow the Jews to stay in houses which would be classed as being under Swedish protection. Even so, the deportation issue had not gone away although the Hungarian authorities were attempting to gain assurances from the Germans that the Jews would not be harmed

By 6 August Raoul had doubled the size of his staff who were now working flat out, wading through the four thousand applications the

Section had received. He wrote that they had had to halt the submission of further applications until the backlog was cleared. Raoul himself was working 16–17 hours a day and expected much from his staff. But they were happy to help him. One of his staff, Edith Wohl spoke of him:

“He gave us courage. He was so courageous that he made the rest of us ashamed to be afraid. Because of him we all became more optimistic.

He also shocked us by his behaviour. Here he was, an Aryan who didn't believe that Jews were something vile and despicable. He even socialised with us as if he were normal people. This was amazing.

After a while it became impossible for us to consider him to be a normal human being. We didn't ask ourselves the normal objective questions about his background. In fact, we didn't even know that he was a member of the famous Wallenberg family. Instead we came to see him as superhuman; someone who had come to Budapest to save us, a Messiah”.⁵¹

However, there was some disconcertion regarding his methods and his intention to increase the number of protective passports produced. The concerns were that the Schutzpasses would be devalued if too many were printed, that the neutrality of Sweden could be questioned by the Germans. But Wallenberg's “gift of the gab” again enabled him to win over the doubters. On 10 August Iver Olsen wrote to J. W. Pehle in Washington:

“I get the impression indirectly that the Swedish Foreign Office is somewhat uneasy about Wallenberg's activities in Budapest, and perhaps feel that he has jumped in with too big a splash. They would prefer, of course, to approach the Jewish problem in the finest traditions of European diplomacy, which wouldn't help too much. On the other hand there is much to be said for moving around quietly in this type of work. In any case, I feel that Wallenberg is working like hell and doing some good, which is the measure”.⁵²

51 (Werbell & Clarke, 1985, p. 40)

52 (Documents from the War Refugee Board, 1944, FDR Library, New York)

Wallenberg had reason for wanting to increase the number of passes. Time was against him. Rumours were flying around the city that the deportations were about to resume. Eichmann had set the date for August but again Horthy frustrated his ambitions by dismissing from office the Interior Minister Andor Jaross and his two secretaries of state in the gendarmerie, Lazlo Endre and Lazlo Baký. Without the gendarmerie, Eichmann did not have the manpower to round up the Jews and he could do nothing but put his plans on hold.

On 12 August Raoul had another meeting with Admiral Horthy and secured his permission to issue a further 5000 Schutzpasses. At the same time, the Swiss diplomat Carl Lutz was also issuing protective passes and had also opened an annexe to his country's Legation. Within that annexe a group of young Zionists, including a Polish Refugee Bronislaw (later Bruce) Teicholz, was printing their own forged Swedish documents. According to Teicholz, interviewed in January 1981, Wallenberg was informed of this and approved. It is thought that Wallenberg himself issued 3-4 times the number he agreed with Horthy⁵³.

Wallenberg's life had become hectic and full but he seemed to revel in the challenge. On 6th August he wrote to his mother:

"I have lived here through what are probably the 3-4 most interesting weeks of my life, even though we are surrounded by a tragedy of immeasurable proportions, and even though our days and nights are so filled with work that you are only able to react every now and then.

I have set up a large office of 40 employees. We have rented two houses, on either side of the embassy and the organization is growing day by day. It is obviously extremely uncertain whether it will be possible to achieve a positive outcome, given that everything ultimately depends on the general situation.

Many have disappeared, and no-one is left in the countryside. Budapest, which used to be so gay, has changed completely ..."⁵⁴

53 (Lester, 1982, p. 94)

54 (Wallenberg, 1995, pp. 273-274)

But there was time too for the occasional personal consideration. Raoul reported to his mother that he had moved out of the Hotel Gellert into a rented house at 9/11 Ostrom Street, Budapest. He had even been surprised and touched by his staff on his 32nd birthday when they presented him with a number of gifts.

But in the main Wallenberg's work was strenuous and multi-faceted. Among his achievements was the organisation of a section within his department to deal with securing the release of detained prisoners. For this purpose he required a large number of buildings to house them; a sort of camp under the protection of the Swedish Legation. In this endeavour he received help from an unlikely source. Lieutenant Colonel Lazlo Ferenczy of the Hungarian Gendarmerie, the official go-between for the Hungarians and the Eichmann Sonderkommando, who had taken part in the rounding up and deportation of the Jews in the countryside, was being to reflect on his own position and prospects should the Germans lose the war, an ever more likely scenario. A meeting with Ferenczy, Alexander Kasser of the Swedish Red Cross and his wife Elizabeth, acting as interpreter, was arranged. When they arrived, Ferenczy kept them waiting for a considerable time in an anteroom full of armed militia. This greatly irritated Raoul. Elizabeth Kasser in 1980 remembered the scene:

“Finally Ferenczy came to us and made a long speech about how we should be ashamed of ourselves for helping Jews, and what awful people Jews are”.

She chose not to translate all of the obscenities that accompanied Ferenczy's tirade as Raoul was already annoyed. Ferenczy requested a list of names of the Jews to be accommodated in the “assembly camp”. The outcome was favourable and the three walked away from Ferenczy with his promise to allot the Legation three houses on Pozsoni Road in Pest where they would be able to house the 650 “emigrating” Jews holding the protective passes. The Red Cross was also given some houses for the same purpose. They left with a feeling

of euphoria, put their arms around each other and danced with joy in the street.⁵⁵ It was a major breakthrough, one upon which they would build into a complex of internationally-protected houses known as the International Ghetto.

Despite this considerable progress August 25 was the date set for the resumption of the deportations. The days prior to this date were full of activity for the neutral countries as they sought to prevent the transports. Wallenberg was particularly busy at the time, holding meetings all over the capital. However, fate took a hand, not in Hungary but in its neighbour, Romania. On the 23rd August 1944 a coup overthrew the pro-German Ion Antonescu and Romania abandoned the Germans by joining with the Allies. This cost the German army more than a third of a million men. Himmler ordered Budapest Chief, SS General Otto Winkelmann, to halt the transports and Eichmann left for a retreat on the border with Austria to lick his wounds.⁵⁶ In Budapest, the Prime Minister Sztojay was replaced by General Lakatos whose task was to seek peace with the Allies.

A feeling of cautious optimism was felt in Budapest at this time. The condition under which the Jews had been held was discussed openly and the conclusion was reached that they should be allowed to work again and help with the clear up after Allied bombings. This would help them and the State at the same time. On 29 September Raoul wrote that "The Jews are very ill-equipped in all respects. Among other things the problem of finding accommodation will probably be insoluble. The authorities who are dealing with these problems seem however to be animated by a great deal of goodwill".⁵⁷ Wallenberg even set up a unit of "Swedish" Jews who reported for duty each day. They did not have to wear the yellow star.

The Legation was continuing to swell as the workload increased. Sweden was now the protecting power for seven other nations, including the USSR, Spain, Italy and the Netherlands.

55 (Lester, 1982, p. 92)

56 (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 176)

57 (ibid, p. 183)

This representation came under the title Section B. Wallenberg's Section was thus renamed Section C at this point. Applications for passports continued to flood it and numbered no fewer than 9000; his staff were working non-stop, often for 24 hours at a time to cope with the requests. Given that the political atmosphere was improving slightly for the Jews, the emphasis now turned away from the passports and more towards the provision of food, medicines and other humanitarian aid. Wallenberg wrote to Olsen on 12 September informing him that they had taken on new premises at 8A Tigris Street where they had a further ten rooms but that the Jewish Section would be scaled down from 17 September onwards. He continued by saying that they would still issue protective passports in case of isolated pogroms, but the overall tone of his report is that his tenure is coming to an end.

The Terror:

On 15 October Admiral Horthy announced on the radio that Hungary was to lay down its arms and cease fighting. This news understandably brought instant joy to the Jewish population of Budapest who began ripping off their yellow stars in the belief that they had been saved. Laszlo Szamosi, a young Jewish activist, wrote about the moments after the broadcast:

“This was the moment that we Jews had been awaiting so eagerly during the terrible months when we expected to be deported at any time. At first it seemed incredible that this meant our deliverance, our freedom. Hardly could we comprehend that we could now go out into the street and cast off our yellow stars, that we could go and look for our relatives. The ecstasy of the people living in our star-marked house was beyond description.”⁵⁸

⁵⁸ (Bierman, 1982, pp. 73-74)

But the celebrations were premature. Later that day a German coup ousted Horthy and handed power over to the Arrow Cross Chief, Ferenc Szalasi. Horthy's son was kidnapped en route to a bogus meeting with Tito's Yugoslavian partisans and sent to Mauthausen where he remained for seven months. Horthy himself was placed under "German protection" and taken to Germany. At this time Per Anger wrote:

"During the days that followed, things looked blacker than ever for the legation's continued assistance effort for the Jews. The city's streets were blocked, all traffic was forbidden, and everyone waited anxiously for what was coming.

Eichmann and his henchmen returned and for Wallenberg a hectic and dangerous period now began. But he never gave up, no matter how hopeless it looked".⁵⁹

Budapest Jews could no longer rely on their protective documents or on help from the neutrals. This was made brutally plain by the Minister for the Interior, Gabor Vajna, in his statement:

"I will not acknowledge the validity of any safe-conducts or foreign passports issued by whomsoever to a Hungarian Jew. At present all Jews living in Hungary are subject to the control and direction of the Hungarian State. And we will tolerate interference from nobody, whether in Hungary or abroad".⁶⁰

The first night of the coup saw horrific violence on the streets of Budapest. People were dragged from their safe houses to the River Danube and shot. Wallenberg himself estimated that some 100-200 people were killed that first night.⁶¹ Jews were forbidden to leave their houses and no-one, not even doctors or food supplies, were allowed into the safe houses. Many Jews fell victim to mass executions on the banks of the Danube. It has been estimated that the Arrow Cross murdered

59 (Anger, 1996, p. 57)

60 (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 49)

61 (Wallenberg, 1995, p. 262)

50–60 Jews a day in the days following the coup.⁶² To save bullets it was a tactic of the Arrow Cross to tie Jews together in groups of three, shoot just one of them, and then toss them into the river. The deceased person would pull the others down with his/her weight and the other two would drown. Sometimes Wallenberg would go down to the bank and pull back Jews about to be shot saying they were under Swedish protection. On one occasion he recruited some three strong swimmers, took them down to the Danube where ropes were tied around their waists. As shots were fired the men would jump into the water and save as many people as they could. The witness, Agnes Mandl, a colleague of Wallenberg's, declared that around 50 people were rescued that night.⁶³

In an attempt to ensure that the Jews under Swedish protection were kept safe, Wallenberg decided to work through the new Foreign Minister, Baron Gabor Kemeny. There is some evidence that Wallenberg had met the Baron during earlier trips to Hungary and this might have made his task a little easier and quicker. His tactics were to play on the Szalasi regime's desire for international recognition and the rivalry between Kemeny and Vajna. There was also a third, potent, ploy and that was the Baroness Kemeny. Born Erzebet von Fuchs, the Baroness was herself of Jewish descent and appears to have had considerable admiration for Wallenberg. In the apartment of a mutual friend, he met with Baroness Kemeny where he explained his deep concern at the situation of those with protective passes. He warned her that the regime would never get international recognition while these passes were not recognised; that the leaders of the Arrow Cross would be executed at the end of the war, which could not be far away now that the Russians were knocking at the door of Budapest. She was at this time at an advanced stage of pregnancy, a fact which Wallenberg brought into the argument as he warned that she might have to bring up her child without a father if Kemeny were to be indicted for war crimes. The first thing she had to get her husband to do was to overturn the Vajna's ruling regarding the non-recognition

⁶² (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 240)

⁶³ (ibid, p. 241)

of the neutral countries protective passes. Wallenberg's reasoning was that this should be a matter for the Foreign Ministry anyway because the holders of these passes were foreigners – stretching the truth a little.

When Kemeny did raise the issue Szalasi was reluctant to agree. He had seen how irritated the Germans had been with Horthy on this issue and was eager for them not to think he was backpedalling. But Kemeny persisted, arguing that if they were to recognise the protective passes again, they would be able to insist that the neutral countries repatriate their citizens, thereby solving the problem of the Jewish presence in Hungary. Also, they would be getting the much-desired recognition of their regime from the neutrals. Szalasi saw the logic in this.

Wallenberg insisted on a public radio announcement, just as Vajna had made. It had to include an assurance that the safe houses would be respected and that there would be no attacks on the residents. A radio broadcast ensured that the order reached the widest possible audience. Again, the baroness was instrumental in persuading her husband to make the public statement.

On November 1st, Kemeny summoned Raoul and the Swiss diplomat, Carl Lutz to the Foreign Ministry. He instructed them to remove their “citizens” by the end of November at which time they would have the same status as non-protected Jews. This presented a dilemma for both rescuers. If they proceeded to evacuate the protected Jews then once that had been achieved, they would no longer be able to issue protective passports to other Jews. Their roles would be defunct. Furthermore, the fear was that once the protected Jews had left the jurisdiction of Hungary, there would be no guarantee that they would not be prevented from continuing their journey and sent to death camps anyway. Wallenberg and Lutz decided to play for time and hope that the Russians would occupy Budapest before the deadline.

There is some evidence too that the deportations resumed although on a much smaller scale. It was during these deportations that Raoul performed some of his most audacious acts. On 28th

October a number of people were assembled at Hegyeshalom ready to be transported by train for labour. Dr. Stephen Lazarovitz described the day he was saved by Wallenberg:

“I was an intern, just before my final exams. When the Arrow Cross came to power I was not allowed to continue my studies and was drafted to a forced labour camp in Budapest. On October 28 we were yanked to the freight railway station of Jozefvaros, where we boarded the freight wagons. The doors of the wagons were locked from the outside. Suddenly two cars drove up between the railway tracks. Wallenberg jumped out from the first car, accompanied by his Hungarian aides. He went to the commanding police officer in charge, talked to him and presented official papers. Soon the officer made an announcement. He said that those who had authentic Swedish protective passports should step down from the wagon and stand in line to show their papers. Should anybody step down from the cattle cars who had no Swedish protective passport, he would be executed on the spot. The authenticity of the passports would be checked by him and by Wallenberg from the books of the Swedish embassy, which Mr. Wallenberg had brought with him.

In the meantime Mr. Wallenberg's aides pulled out a folding table from the car, opened it, placed it between the rail tracks and put the big embassy books on top of it. . . . I did not know what to do because my protective passport was not authentic but forged. Suddenly I saw from the window that one of the aides was Leslie Geiger, a member of the Hungarian national hockey team, a patient of my father and a personal friend. I decided to step down from the cattle car. It was one of the most difficult decisions of my life.

I stood in line for about an hour because I was at the end of the line. When I was close to the table, I stepped forward, went to Leslie Geiger and whispered in his ear that my passport was forged. I asked him if he could help me. He said that he would try. When it was my turn, Leslie Geiger whispered a few words in Wallenberg's ear. Raoul Wallenberg looked at me, holding my forged passport in his hand,

and said, 'I remember this doctor. I gave him his passport personally. Let's not waste our time because it's late. We need him now at the Emergency Hospital of the Swedish embassy. The Nazi commanding officer then said let's not waste our time! Next.'

My feeling was then and still is that what happened was a miracle. Had the commanding officer insisted to check the books, I probably would not be alive. Raoul Wallenberg was certainly a courageous person who fought for the life of each person".⁶⁴

Some doubts have been voiced as to whether Wallenberg actually did snatch people from trains, claiming that the deportations had halted before Wallenberg arrived in Budapest. However, Wallenberg himself refers in his dispatches that sneaky deportations had taken place. Two transports secretly smuggled out of the country by Eichmann from Kistarcsa and Sárvár internment camps with a total of 2720 persons arrived on July 22 and July 26. Of the 445 thousand Hungarian Jews deported between the end of April and the end of July, 10–15 thousand ended up in Strasshof, Austria. The rest were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. In addition, smaller Hungarian groups continued to arrive until October 1944, so the number of Hungarian Jews deported to the Auschwitz complex exceeded 430 thousand persons in total.⁶⁵

Moreover, Per Anger himself states he "witnessed his (Wallenberg's) stopping the deportation of a total of several thousand Jews at train stations, from the Swedish houses, and during the death march to the Austrian border."⁶⁶ Jangfeldt believes that it is unlikely that Raoul would have jumped up onto trains himself as he was a diplomat and that the person seen jumping from car to car was probably one of his aides. Yet Raoul was neither a normal nor a career diplomat. Sandor Ar dai, a driver attached to the Legation, knew Wallenberg well and describes his actions⁶⁷:

64 (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 50)

65 (Social Conflict Research Centre: <http://konfliktuskutato.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=288:hungarian-jews-in-auschwitz-birkenau&catid=36:english>)

66 (Anger, 1996, p83)

67 (Bierman, 1982, p. 91)

“Then he climbed to the roof of the train and began handing in protective passes through the doors which were not yet sealed. He ignored orders from the Germans for him to get down, then the Arrow Cross men began shooting and shouting at him to go away. He ignored them and calmly continued handing out passports to the hands that were reaching out for them. I believe the Arrow Cross men deliberately aimed over his head, as not one shot him, which would have been impossible otherwise. I think this is what they did because they were so impressed by his courage.

After Wallenberg had handed over the last of the passports he ordered all those who had one to leave the train and walk to a caravan of cars parked nearby, all marked in Swedish colours. I don't remember exactly how many, but he saved dozens off that train, and the Germans and Arrow Cross were so dumbfounded they let him get away with it.”⁶⁸

Death Marches

Following his return on 16th October, Eichmann decided to resume the deportations but had some problems acquiring the necessary railway stock. Years later he shamelessly boasted that “... a lesser man would have called off the deportations.”⁶⁹ On 20th October 1944 Eichmann began rounding up male Jews aged 16–60 for work in the Hungarian Army labour service. The 50,000 men were given just one hour to prepare before being marched off to assembly points where they were formed into brigades and sent to dig trenches to slow down the Russian advance. The conditions were horrible and hundreds died.

On 8th November, having sent away the men, Eichmann turned his attention to the women. Thus began the infamous death marches where thousands of women were forced to walk more than one hundred miles to the Austrian border at Hegyeshalom. Again the

⁶⁸ (Bierman, 1982, p. 91)

⁶⁹ (ibid, p. 86)

conditions were savage. One survivor, Miriam Herzog graphically describes the scene:

“The conditions were frightful. We walked thirty to forty kilometres a day in freezing rain, driven on all the time by the Hungarian gendarmes. We were all women and girls. I was seventeen at the time. The gendarmes were brutal, beating those who could not keep up, leaving others to die in the ditches. It was terrible for the older women. Sometimes at night we didn’t have any shelter, let alone anything to eat or drink. One night we stopped in a square in the middle of a village. We just lay down on the ground to rest. There was a frost in the night and in the morning many of the older women were dead. It was so cold, it was as though we were frozen into the ground. The thirst was even worse than the hunger; I recall that somewhere along the road a villager came out with water for us. The gendarmes tried to stop him, but he just fixed them with a stare. “I’d like to see you try to make me”, he said – and went on giving us water. The gendarmes were so amazed, they did nothing about it.

There were some good people in Hungary but the gendarmes were absolute animals. I hate them even worse than the Germans. At one point along the road we met a convoy of German soldiers going the other way, towards the front. Ordinary Wehrmacht men, not SS. When they saw how the Hungarian gendarmes were treating us, they appeared horrified. “You’ll be all right when you get to Germany”, they told us. “We don’t treat women like this, there”. I suppose they didn’t know about the extermination camps”.⁷⁰

Miriam managed to sneak away from the others when they reached the frontier where trains were waiting. She hid in a barn where women with Swedish protection were being housed:

“... suddenly I heard a great commotion among the women. “It’s Wallenberg,” they said. I didn’t know this name, but somebody told me he was a Swedish diplomat who had saved many Jews already ... dozens of women clustered around him crying “Save us, save us ... he said to

70 (ibid, p. 81)

them: "Please, you must forgive me, but I cannot help all of you. I can only provide certificates for a hundred of you. Then he said something which really surprised me. He said "I feel I have a mission to save the Jewish nation and so I must rescue the young ones first" ... Anyway, he looked around the room and began putting names on a list, and when he saw me lying on the floor he came over to me. He asked my name and added it to the list. After a day or two, the hundred of us whose names had been taken were moved out and put into a cattle truck on a train bound for Budapest. I don't know how Wallenberg managed it ... I suppose he must have bribed the railway officials and guards ... There were a lot more dangers and hardships ahead of us, but we were alive – and it was thanks entirely to Wallenberg".⁷¹

Such rescues were a frequent event during that month for Wallenberg and his colleagues. They travelled up and down the road to Hegyeshalom carrying medicines, food and warm clothing. Wallenberg also took along his book which listed all the names of protected Jews.

Another account was relayed by Zvi Eres who was a fourteen year old boy when he was rescued by Wallenberg:

"As we approached Hegyeshalom at the end of the march, we saw two men standing by the side of the road. One of them, wearing a long leather coat and a fur hat, told us he was from the Swedish legation and asked if we had Swedish passports. If we hadn't, he said, perhaps they have been taken away from us or torn up by the Arrow Cross men ... He put our names down on a list and we walked on. At the station later we again saw Wallenberg ... brandishing his list, obviously demanding that everybody on it should be allowed to go. Voices were raised and they were shouting at each other in German. In the end, to our amazement, Wallenberg won his point and between 280 and 300 of us were allowed to go back to Budapest."⁷²

71 (ibid, pp. 80-82)

72 (ibid, pp. 83-84)

On 16 November Wallenberg formally complained to the government about the death marches. However, Szalasi was in no mood either to listen or compromise.

Eventually the women on the death marches were joined by the younger men who had been digging trenches. They had been brought from various places along different routes and they were in poor condition, having been beaten and starved along the way. The Swiss and the International Red Cross talk of the hopelessness and despair of the marchers, many of whom committed suicide rather than suffer any further.

Wallenberg himself wrote about the increasingly desperate situation in his memorandum of December 12 1944:

“Since the last report the situation of the Hungarian Jews has further deteriorated.

Probably in the vicinity of 40,000 Jews, of whom 15,000 men from the Labour Service and 25,000 of both sexes seized in their homes or in the street, have been forced to march on foot to Germany. It is a distance of 240 kilometres. The weather has been cold and rainy ever since these death marches began. They have had to sleep under rain shelters and drink three or four times. Many have died. I learned in Mosonmagyaróvár that 7 persons had died that day and 7 persons the day before. The Portuguese secretary to the legation had observed 42 dead persons along the route and, Deputy Prime Minister Szalasi admitted to me that he had seen 2 dead. Those who were too tired to walk were shot. On the border, they were received with kicks and blows by the Eichmann Special SS Command and were taken away to hard labour on the border fortifications”.⁷³

The situation was so bad that it reached the ears of Himmler who sent SS General Hans Juettner to investigate. Upon his arrival he failed to find Eichmann so berated Theo Danneker instead. At Hegyeshalom Juettner quizzed Dieter Wisliceny who claimed that Eichmann

73 (Wallenberg, 1995, p. 265)

refused to allow any exemptions to deportation based on age, illness or protective passes. However, Himmler by this time was making overtures to the Allies. Eichmann was summoned to Berlin where he was ordered, amid protests, to begin fostering Jews rather than exterminating them. But it was too late; the situation in Budapest was descending into chaos.

At the beginning of November the Russians were closing in on Budapest. The Arrow Cross rounded up Jews for digging trenches to halt the Russian advance. Any Jew who failed to keep up was shot. This was just one instance of barbarity as Budapest descended into chaos. The Arrow Cross broke into the Swedish Red Cross and arrested the staff. The Swedish Legation immediately threatened to cut off diplomatic relations and to withdraw their diplomats but Per Anger explained that this was just a bluff. The neutral diplomats would not have left the safe houses at the mercy of the Arrow Cross.⁷⁴

Sweden itself was not really aiding the situation at this time because it persistently refused to acknowledge the Szalasi government. Despite this, Wallenberg kept informing the Arrow Cross that recognition was imminent. He was of course playing for time.

The Ghettos

A significant number of Jews, possibly more than 100,000, still remained in Budapest. These could be divided into two categories – the protected and the unprotected Jews, the latter consisting mainly of the very young, the old and the sick. On 18 November the Jewish Council were informed that all Jews, not under the protection of any of the neutral nations, would be forced into a ghetto in the VII district of Pest measuring approximately one tenth of a square mile. The Christians currently living in that area would be evacuated and moved into the yellow star houses presently occupied by the

⁷⁴ (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 52)

evicted Jews. This exchange of accommodation took place between the end of November and the beginning of December. The Jews were not allowed to take any furniture, and only those belongings they could carry.

The move was completed by 7 December and the ghetto, with its 243 liveable houses accommodated approximately 70,000 people. Thus 288 people, or 14 per room, were packed tightly together. The Ghetto was then encircled by a high wooden fence with four gates, each at the point of a compass and each guarded by the Arrow Cross. Jews could enter but not exit the ghetto. On 10 December, it was sealed entirely. This suited Eichmann. The Jews were in one concentrated area from which he could move them quickly or, should the Russians take Budapest, he could order an aerial bombardment of the ghetto. At the same time, Gabor Vajna visited Berlin where he was instructed to remove all the Jews by whatever means.

That left only the 15,000 or so protected Jews. On the orders of Szalasi they were ordered to move into the Yellow Star buildings, recently vacated by unprotected Jews, in and around Pozsonyi Street, Pannonia, and Tatra Street in St Istvan district. There they were segregated according to which country was protecting them. This was now the so-called "International Ghetto" which officially comprised of 4,500 "Swedish" Jews; 7,800 "Swiss" 700 "Portuguese", 100 "Spanish" and 250 under the protection of the Vatican. However because of the overproduction of the protective passes the actual number living in the International Ghetto was nearer to 35,000.⁷⁵

The insanitary conditions in the ghetto prompted the need for more specialised medical help Wallenberg established two hospitals in the area of the safe houses – at 14/16 Tatra Street and later an epidemic hospital at 29 Wahrman Street. The Tatra street hospital was put together in just five days, opening on 2 December 1944.

⁷⁵ (Werbell & Clarke, 1985, p. 110)

Six apartments comprising eleven rooms on the second floor were prepared for the purpose and at least ten doctors were on duty at any given time. The Wahrmann St hospital dealt with epidemics such as dysentery. All protected Jews and staff were inoculated against typhoid, paratyphoid and cholera. Wallenberg wanted to increase the number of beds from 150 to 200. He also set up soup kitchens and crèches.

A further 6,000 children were living in Red Cross shelters where their conditions were pitiful. One Red Cross worker described their plight:

“Children of two to fourteen years, famished, ragged, emaciated to mere skeletons, frightened to death by the droning and the detonation of bombs had crept into corners; their bodies were eaten by filth and scabies, their rags were infested with lice. Huddled up in fear and infinite misery, they made inarticulate sounds. They had not eaten for days, and for many days there had been nobody to look after them. Nobody knows where their nurses had gone and that when it was they ran away”.⁷⁶

Towards the end of 1944 the food situation in Budapest was becoming critical for everyone. However, for the Jews it was even worse as they were not allowed to leave the house to search for food. Wallenberg had foreseen the problem and had set up six stockpiles, three in Buda and three in Pest. The largest hoard was located in a chocolate company at 8 Szentikirali Street where there was a cold storage room available for Legation use.

⁷⁶ (Werbell & Clarke, 1985, pp. 109-110)

The Growth of Section C

Protective passes were still being issued at 1A Minerva Street but the operational issues were moved to 4 Ulloi Road in Pest which was where the Hungarian-Dutch Insurance Company had its offices. It was a large building with around 700–800 square metres of space divided into 30 rooms. It had two large kitchens and several toilets and was ready for use on 4 November 1944. It housed 100 employees and their families but when the number of employees rose to 340 plus families, the building was home and work to 700 people, making do with the floor for sleeping. Ration cards were issued and staff accommodation allocated from the office at 16 Arany Janos Street.

No. 1 Jokai Street housed the “Client Reception” area; the legal section; the food distribution, dispatch, technical (repairs) and heating Sections; the book-keeping and central pay offices.

No. 6 Tatra Street held the administrative division and consisted of four distribution bureaux with the following responsibilities:

- a. Food deliveries to its own kitchen and those in the safe houses.
- b. The finance bureau dealt with the running of the storehouses, the collection of ration cards, control of food deliveries and other errands.
- c. The social bureau covered the hospitals, children’s homes, old people’s homes, workshops, etc.
- d. Housing issues. These included dealing with the house commandants and controllers and contained a sub-section entitled the Schützling Protocol.

The Schützling Protocol

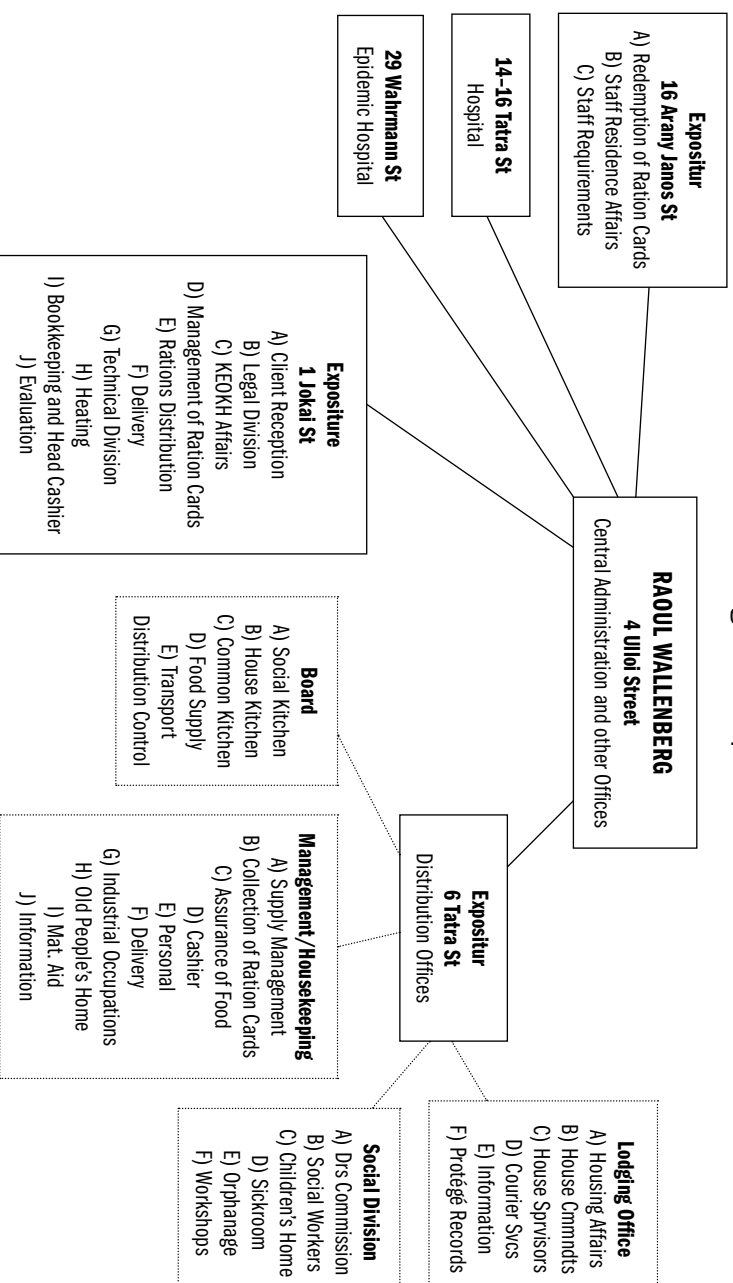
In October 1944 the Section set up the “Schützling” (Protection) Protocol to deal with matters concerning all those people who came under the protection of Sweden. The task was to document and report any assaults of protected people and any other breaches of agreements between the Swedish Legation and the Hungarian government. Some of the really courageous acts carried out by those working in this department included dressing up in disguises, SS or Arrow Cross, and would often go to the Gestapo or the Arrow Cross to free any Jews who had been arrested. This would invariably involve bribes.⁷⁷

Attacks on Jewish houses were increasing as law and order broke down in Budapest. Several young women were abducted for Pozsonyi Street and raped. The Arrow Cross also stormed the Isteni Szeretet-Leanyai monastery and took off a further 27 who were executed at the River Danube. Red Cross buildings were also targeted. One was a children’s home from which 39 youngsters disappeared without further trace.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 238)

⁷⁸ (ibid, p. 266)

WALLENBERG'S SECTION
Swedish Legation Department C



Dinner with Eichmann

Various reports refer to meetings Wallenberg held with Adolf Eichmann. No written records of any meetings exist so there is no proof they ever took place. There is, however, anecdotal evidence from credible witnesses and this would suggest at least two occasions of direct communication between the two men. The first is said to have taken place probably in August 1944 at the Arizona nightclub in Nagymezo Street, Budapest. It was here that Raoul apparently offered Eichmann \$200,000 for forty houses in the city. Eichmann apparently scoffed at the offer, claiming that the Americans had offered him £2 million for the Jews of Slovakia. The story goes that \$800,000 was agreed upon and it may have referred to those already under Swedish protection but it is not clear.⁷⁹

A second meeting appears to have taken place sometime in December 1944. Although not listed in his diary, and this may be why Raoul forgot the appointment, he arrived home at his villa one night just as Eichmann and his deputy Hermann Krumej were pulling up for their dinner date with him. Forgetting the arrangement was embarrassing enough but to make matters worse Wallenberg had given his cook the night off. Unperturbed, the Swede invited his guests in for drinks and hastily rang Lars Berg and asked him to hold an impromptu dinner party in his house on Hunfalvy Street, just a few moments' walk away. During the course of the evening the subject turned to Nazism. Lars Berg described the evening's events:

“Raoul was very relaxed that evening, since there were no emergencies or interventions which required his attention at the moment. Our little salon became a battlefield for one of Eichmann's many defeats against Raoul Wallenberg ... With clarity and logical precision, Wallenberg fearlessly tore Nazi doctrines into shreds and predicted that Nazism

⁷⁹ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 263)

and its leaders would meet a speedy and complete destruction. I must say that these were rather unusual, caustic words from a Swede who was far away from his country and totally at the mercy of the powerful German antagonist Eichmann and his henchmen . . . In his prediction of the imminent doom of Nazism there was also a sincere exhortation to Eichmann to bring to an end the senseless deportations and the unnecessary killing of Hungarian Jews”.⁸⁰

Not many had addressed Eichmann in such a way for many years so it must have rather disconcerted him for, according to Berg, he opened up quite frankly to Wallenberg:

“I admit you are right, Mr. Wallenberg. I actually never believed in Nazism as such, but it has given me power and wealth. I know that this pleasant life will soon be over. My planes will no longer bring me women and wines from Paris nor any other delicacies from the Orient. My horses, my dogs, my palace, here in Budapest will soon be taken over by the Russians, and I myself, an SS officer will be shot on the spot. But for me there is no rescue any more. If I obey my orders from Berlin and exercise my power ruthlessly enough here in Budapest, I shall be able to prolong my days of grace”.⁸¹

Listening to these words, Wallenberg could have been in no doubt as to the moral bankruptcy of his adversary. The evening drew to a close with politeness and the veiled threat from Eichmann that he would do everything he could to stop Wallenberg. A few days later, when Wallenberg’s car was rammed by a German truck, the Swede realised the extent to which Eichmann was prepared to go to stop his work. Fortunately, Wallenberg had not been in his car at the time. Within a week, Eichmann had fled as the Russian closed in on the Hungarian capital.

It was during his travels around the city that Wallenberg learned that before leaving Budapest Eichmann gave the order for the total

⁸⁰ (Rosenfeld, 2005, pp. 190-191)

⁸¹ (Rosenfeld, 2005, pp. 90-91)

annihilation of the Central ghetto and its 69,000 inhabitants. This would be achieved via aerial bombardment with Hungarian policemen and German soldiers surrounding all exits to shoot any escapees. Wallenberg rushed to the offices of Dr. Gabor Vajna, the Minister of the Interior, who was aware of the order but refused to rescind it, despite Wallenberg's threats that he would be arrested as a war criminal. Having failed with Vajna, Wallenberg then sent a message to the SS German General August Schmidhuber. He was unable to go to the General in person as the SS were still hunting for him. In his message he repeated the threat that Schmidhuber would hang for war crimes if he allowed this order to be carried out. This time the threat hit home and Schmidhuber called a subordinate and the order to liquidate the ghetto was cancelled.⁸²

Arrest and imprisonment

By the end of 1944 Wallenberg had been considering a post war recovery strategy for Hungary for some weeks. The inspiration for this plan probably came from the example set by Norwegian explorer, Fridtjof Nansen who was responsible for the refugee issues in the League of Nations following the First World War.⁸³ Raoul envisaged the establishment of a "Wallenberg Institute for Aid and Reconstruction" to help returning Jews to find jobs, housing etc. In this connection Wallenberg had set up a separate section within his department led by a young economist Reszo Muller who produced a lengthy report on the feasibility of such an organization.⁸⁴

It is not known for certain if Wallenberg made contact with the Russians specifically to discuss this issue or whether there was another reason. It may be that he wanted assurances that the Swedish Legation, the safe houses and the Ghetto would be protected

82 (Gersten, 2001, pp. 72-73)

83 (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 239)

84 (Bierman, 1982, p. 117)

from bombardment. If, however, he wanted to discuss his plan for reconstruction it now, with the benefit of hindsight, seems naive to assume the Russians would be enthusiastic about his ideas. What is known is that Wallenberg and his driver, the engineer Wilmos Langfelder, drove out of Budapest on 17th January 1944 on their way to Debrecen, about 140 miles away, to meet with Field Marshal Rodion Malinovsky. He told colleagues that he expected to be back in around a week- ten days. But, according to reports, Wallenberg and Langfelder did not reach Debrecen, but were arrested by SMERSH (Soviet Counter Espionage) officials just outside of Budapest. From information provided by later cellmates, Wallenberg was questioned over a period of three days, during which time he was allowed to visit his offices and friends around the city accompanied by a Russian protective guard. Further evidence indicates that both men were initially held in a former police station in the VII district of Budapest. Wallenberg is said to have told one friend that he was not sure if he was being treated as a guest or as a prisoner but this was most probably said in jest. He probably felt that his diplomatic status was the reason for his being able to travel, albeit with an escort, but it is also likely that the Russians were awaiting further instructions from Moscow. The arrest warrant was signed by Nikolai Bulganin, the Deputy Defence Commissar and sent to Marshal Malinovsky and the head of SMERSH, Viktor Abakumov and was probably formalised on 19th January 1944.

On 20th January according to an eye-witness, Wallenberg was taken to the town of Godollo, some 20 miles from Budapest before being transported to Moscow, probably by truck and train. Upon reaching Moscow the story goes that they were shown the Moscow Metro, famous for its interior design, before finally being imprisoned in the Lubyanka holding prison in Moscow on 6th February 1945.⁸⁵ Here the two men were separated and probably never saw one another again.

⁸⁵ (Jangfeldt, 2013, pp. 303-307)

Inside the Lubyanka, Wallenberg was initially placed in cell 121 with former SS Captain Gustav Richter, who organized the deportation of Jews in Romania and who had been handed over to the Russians when Romania changed sides, and Otto Scheur, a radio operator, who had served on the Eastern Front. On 8 February between the hours of 1.15 and 3.45am, Wallenberg was questioned by interrogator Yakov Sverchuk who he described as “an awful man”. Sverchuk told him “We know all about you. You belong to that great capitalist family”.⁸⁶ That was another black mark against Wallenberg in Soviet minds.

Thrown together, the prisoners – and former enemies – in cell 121 now had to cope with a very much different type of foe. Based on the theory that my enemy’s enemy is my friend”, they forged a relationship for the length of their shared confinement. This cooperation included helping Wallenberg compose a letter on 25th February 1945 to the Russian authorities, demanding the right to contact the Swedish Embassy in Moscow. Marton here states that Wallenberg would have dealt with the Russians in the same way as he would the Nazis – “as a civilised, law-abiding, rational authority”. While this may have worked with the Nazis, it was a different case with the Russians who Marton describes as suffering from “institutionalized apathy”.⁸⁷ They were not interested; they did not care. They were just doing a job.

According to Richter in testimony provided after his release in 1955, Raoul was at this time still in good spirits, probably believing that his arrest had been a mistake that would be quickly rectified. He exercised in the cell, sang songs and was generally very humorous. The men kept themselves occupied by lecturing to each other; Raoul on Sweden and Swedish history while Richter spoke about Romania. During this time, however, Wallenberg still worried about what effect his imprisonment would have on his reputation within the family.

⁸⁶ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p 319)

⁸⁷ (Marton, 1995, p. 170)

Langfelder in the meantime had been placed in cell no. 123 with Jan Loyda, a Czech born German national, and Willy Roedel who had worked for the German Legation in Bucharest. Like Wallenberg, Langfelder felt that their arrest had been a mistake and that it was only a matter of time before this was corrected. It is known that he was interrogated on February 9th by Alexander Kuzmishin. After spending six weeks with Loyda and Roedel, Langfelder was transferred to the old Lefortovo prison, located in the Baumansky region of Moscow.

On May 24th Wallenberg was also moved to Lefortovo and was incarcerated in Langfelder's old cell no. 203 with Roedel and Loyda. Conditions at Lefortovo are described as worse than at the Lubyanka. The diet there consisting almost totally of bread, boiled cabbage and Russian kasha (a type of porridge). Exercise consisted of 20 minutes per day if they were lucky; baths, clean underwear and sheets were rationed to every 10 days. But, unlike in Lubyanka, communication with other prisoners was possible as the Lefortovo pipes facilitated "tapping" with either a toothbrush or dried soap. Such communication was forbidden so a prisoner had to be confident that his cellmates were not informers or that he was not caught by the guards.

The "tapping" systems were simple, time-consuming, but effective; the first and most tedious method was just tapping letters according to their order in the alphabet. One tap = A, two taps = B, and so on. A more sophisticated technique known as the 5-by-5 system was developed. The alphabet was divided into five rows with five letters in each row (the letter W was omitted). The first tap indicates the line, then after a pause, the letter in the row is indicated. The row A-E is in row 1, so requires one tap, and the columns down indicate the letter according to its position. For instance, the letter M would be represented first by three knocks for column 3, pause, then a further 3 for the third row.

	1	2	3	4	5
1	A	B	C	D	E
2	F	G	H	I	J
3	K	L	M	N	O
4	P	Q	R	S	T
5	U	V	X	Y	Z

Using this method, Wallenberg was able to communicate with other prisoners, notably Major Heinz-Helmut Von Hinckeldey of the German General staff. Wallenberg tried to give him the address of his cousins' bank in Stockholm and said he had repeatedly asked to see the Swedish Consulate. He also told the German that he had refused to answer questions, claiming diplomatic immunity.⁸⁸ Willi Bergemann from cell 202 communicated often with Raoul: He testified that the Swede was a "very keen knocker, using perfect German. If he wanted to speak to us he would knock five times in succession before commencing".⁸⁹

In 1946 Wallenberg wrote to Stalin to request an interview. Unsure of how to word this letter he sought advice from some of his "tapping friends". The letter was composed in French and was handed to the guards for forwarding on to Stalin. He received no direct reply but during a subsequent an interrogation he was told "that his case was quite clear, that his was a "political case". If he considered himself innocent, it was his responsibility to prove it. The best proof of his guilt was the fact that the Swedish Embassy in Moscow had done nothing to help his case. "Nobody cares about you. If the Swedish government or its embassy had any interest in you, they would long ago have contacted you".⁹⁰ It is to be hoped that Raoul was sceptical about this statement

⁸⁸ (Bierman, 1982, p. 145)

⁸⁹ (ibid, p. 146)

⁹⁰ (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 120)

for if he believed it to be true it surely must have filled him with despair.

The fact is that people most certainly were searching for him, not least his mother, Maj von Dardel. She petitioned the then Soviet Ambassador to Sweden, Alexandra Kollontai, a former revolutionary who assured Mrs Von Dardel that Raoul was safe in Soviet hands and would be returned to Sweden before long but she warned that the Swedish government should not make a fuss about it. The Swedish government were also making enquiries via its Ambassador to the USSR, Staffan Söderblom. Sadly, Söderblom was not up to the task. One example of his ineptitude on this issue occurred during a rare meeting with Stalin on July 15 1945. Söderblom admitted later that he felt overwhelmed by Stalin's presence and blustered his way through an enquiry about Raoul Wallenberg. Tragically for Raoul and for completely inexplicable reasons, Söderblom offered his own personal opinion that Raoul had been the victim of bandits in Hungary. This was despite the fact that the Russians had notified Söderblom earlier in the year that Wallenberg was in Soviet hands, and that Ambassador Kollontai had also stated that he was in protective custody. Ambassador Söderblom compounded the issue later in 1945 when the US displayed "great concern and sore distress" at the disappearance of Raoul Wallenberg and offered to help the Swedes. He curtly told the Americans that it was a Swedish problem and that Sweden would deal with it. Apparently he retorted that "the Russians are doing everything they can already."⁹¹ As he spoke, Wallenberg was languishing in a prison cell just a few miles away.

However, his Ministry was not so dismissive and ordered Söderblom to raise the issue with Soviet Foreign Minister Dekanosov, but the Ambassador held back from doing so amongst rumours that Raoul was living incognito and in disguise in Budapest. Apparently, he did not want to be embarrassed by broaching the subject with the Russians if the rumours were found to be true. His decision seems

⁹¹ (Korey, 2000, p. 13)

to have been governed by political expediency and may well have cost Raoul his freedom. For more than ten years, the Russians would continue to deny that Wallenberg had ever been in the USSR. Later Söderblom admitted to being haunted by the Wallenberg affair⁹², as well he might.

Over the decades the Swedish and American governments requested information but did not force the issue and many opportunities to secure the release, or discover the fate, of Raoul Wallenberg were lost. The failures would fill a book in themselves. It is difficult not to be judgemental about them. Old fashioned diplomacy and statesmanlike behaviours were no longer the way to deal effectively with brutal dictators like Hitler and Stalin, as Britain's Neville Chamberlain found to his cost when he tried to negotiate peace with Hitler in 1938.

A turn in the fate of Raoul Wallenberg took place on the 22nd and 23rd July 1947. Any prisoner who had ever shared a cell with either Wallenberg or Langfelder was interrogated vigorously before being placed in isolation. They were told never to discuss the two men with anyone. It must have been a harrowing ordeal because one of the prisoners, a Finn by the name of Pelkonen, attempted suicide and refused to discuss Wallenberg even after his release from custody.

The decision had clearly been taken to deny all knowledge of Raoul Wallenberg. On August 18th 1947, the Deputy Foreign Minister, Andrei Vishinsky, who as State Prosecutor during the great Show Trials of the 1930s would famously shout "shoot the rabid dogs", wrote to Staffan Söderblom with the words "As a result of careful investigation it has been established that Wallenberg is not in the Soviet Union and that he is unknown to us".⁹³

In years to come the Russians would apologise for this blatant lie.

92 (Bierman, 1982, p. 130)

93 (Werbell & Clarke, 1985, p. 199)

Why was Wallenberg arrested?

“I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest.”

WINSTON CHURCHILL, *October 1939*

To this day it is unclear why Wallenberg and Langfelder were arrested. Certainly Wallenberg's altruistic motives would be regarded as highly suspicious by the Russians, who would not conceive of any valid reason as to why a wealthy young Swede would want to go a foreign country to save Jewish lives. They would almost certainly have seen this action as a cover for his “real purpose” – espionage. From the evidence that does exist, it would appear that the Russians became more suspicious of Wallenberg as his questioning went on. His very good German language skills and his notebook with the names and telephone numbers of high-ranking Nazi officers, including three different phone numbers for Eichmann, would have added credence to their suspicions. He appeared able to get the Germans to bend to his will. Furthermore, he seemed to have unlimited resources provided by the US government. In December 1944 a worker for the International Red Cross, Dr Francis Zold was advised to have nothing to do with Wallenberg. A colleague warned him “Take my advice, avoid Wallenberg. He's under cover for the Anglo-American secret services”.⁹⁴ This was a popular rumour in Budapest and would surely have reached the ears of the NKVD (the forerunner of the KGB) via some of those they would have interrogated. It has also been suggested that this information had been provided by an informer within Wallenberg's inner circle.⁹⁵

When he was captured, Wallenberg is thought to have been in the

⁹⁴ (Marion, 1995, p. 157)

⁹⁵ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 304)

possession of a large amount of jewellery and money with which he had been entrusted for safe-keeping by some of his protégés. This was never recovered and it is not known what happened to it if indeed it existed which seems likely.

Another possible reason for his arrest and incarceration, and one well worth considering, is that given the wealth and prestige of his family, Stalin may have considered him a possible pawn for future use either for exchanges with genuine spies or some other reason.

Present day Russia insists that Wallenberg and Langfelder were casualties of a brutal regime. Of course they are right. But this explanation would be more convincing if the authorities were to yield up all documents and not continue to withdraw papers from files.

On 17 July 1957, all denials that Wallenberg and Langfelder had been held in the USSR ended when Deputy Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko, sent what has become known as the Gromyko Memorandum to the Swedish Ambassador, Rolf Sohlman. In this letter, Gromyko acknowledged that Wallenberg had been incarcerated in the USSR but that he had died. Apparently a thorough investigation into the matter brought to light a handwritten note dated 17 July 1947 signed by Colonel A.L. Smoltsov, chief of the Lubyanka medical department and addressed to Viktor Abakumov. It read:

“It report that the prisoner Walenberg (sic), who is known to you, died suddenly in his cell last night probably as the result of a myocardial infarction. In connection with your instructions that I maintain personal supervision of Walenberg, I request instructions as to who shall make the post-mortem examination to establish the cause of death”.

Scribbled on the note were instructions for the corpse to be cremated without post mortem. According to the Soviet government in 1957 the blame for Wallenberg's arrest and imprisonment lay with Abakumov, who by this time had been shot. However, it is

unthinkable that the arrest of such a high profile diplomat from a neutral nation would have taken place without the direct order from Stalin himself.

Langfelder apparently also died of a heart attack on March 2 1948. He completely vanishes without further trace.

Alleged Sightings post 1947

What happened to Wallenberg and Langfelder from this time onwards is unknown for sure. As stated, Langfelder is lost to history. As to Wallenberg, the only information comes from the testimony of those who are said to have communicated with them or known about him over the decades. Many are simply rumours of his presence in this or that prison but a considerable number claim to have had direct contact with Wallenberg after his “death” in July 1947. They cannot be dismissed so lightly.

Following Khrushchev’s speech to the Communist Party Congress in 1956 in which he denounced the Stalin era, many people were “rehabilitated” and released from the prison camps including a number of foreigners who returned to their native countries. Some reported meeting or tapping with Raoul well into the 1950s. From the information they provided it seems that Wallenberg was interred in Korpus II, the hospital wing of Vladimir Prison, for quite some considerable time. One Swiss citizen named Brugger claimed that he tapped with Wallenberg during the summer of 1954 and was urged to go to the Swedish Embassy and inform them he was not allowed to receive or send mail. An anonymous Austrian prisoner stated that he met Wallenberg who again urged him to go to the Swedish Embassy. Should the Austrian forget his name, he should just say that he met a Swede from Budapest was the instruction he was given.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ (Bierman, 1982, p. 155)

There have been many other sightings worthy of mention:

The Italian cultural attaché Dr. Claudio de Mohr who had worked in Bulgaria informed a Polish woman that he had tapped with Wallenberg in Lefortovo from April 1945 to early 1948.

French student Andre Shimkevich met Wallenberg in the winter of 1947 when he was placed in the Swede's Lubyanka cell in error. It was two days before the guards realised their mistake and removed him. No foreigners were allowed to share a cell with Wallenberg.

General Willi Moser, General in the Wehrmacht, said that he was held in the same section of the Lubyanka as Wallenberg from Christmas 1947 – summer 1948.

Theodore von Dufving, a German officer who claimed to have met Wallenberg in February 1949 at a transit camp in Kirov when the former was on his way to a camp in Vorkuta. He said that Wallenberg told him that he had been arrested in error and that he had worked in Eastern Europe.

Two unnamed German prisoners of war learned of Wallenberg's presence in the prison at Vladimir. In fact many people, who left Vladimir prison during the 1950s all independently of each other, stated that Wallenberg was confined there in a hospital isolation ward.⁹⁷

One of the most credible and puzzling accounts of Raoul Wallenberg's disappearance was that told by Professor Nana Schwarz, a doctor at the Stockholm Karolinska hospital and a friend of the Von Dardels. In January 1961 Dr. Schwarz travelled to Moscow to attend a medical conference. She had been many times before. At the conference she met a colleague, Dr. Alexander Myasnikov, with whom she had held many discussions previously, conversing in German which both spoke at quite a technical level. In her own words she described what happened:

“I asked him to pardon me if I brought up the question which was very close to my heart and to the heart of other Swedes. I gave him

⁹⁷ (Rosenfeld, 2005, pp. 122-124)

an account of the Raoul Wallenberg case and asked whether he knew about it, whereupon he nodded in the affirmative.

I asked him whether he could give me some advice on how I might go about finding where Wallenberg might be. I told him that we in Sweden had information to the effect that Wallenberg was alive only two years earlier and that his next of kin had received reports that indicated he was still alive. My informant then suddenly said that he knew about the case and that the person I was asking about was in poor condition.

He asked what I wanted, and I replied that the main thing was that Wallenberg be brought home, no matter in what condition. My informant then said in a very low voice that the person inquired about was in a mental hospital”.

Dr. Schwartz was advised by a Dr. Danishevsky who was invited to join the conversation to contact the Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Semyonov about the possibility of taking Wallenberg back home to Sweden. She also contacted the Prime Minister, Tage Erlander, who summoned the Soviet Ambassador and handed over to him a letter for Khrushchev. Neither the Prime Minister nor Nana Schwartz received a response. She did however receive a letter from Alexander Myasnikov who wrote the following:

“I write to you in connection with new statements appearing in Stockholm concerning Mr. Wallenberg’s fate. I was cited in these statements in a way such as to indicate that I had given you some sort of information about him during your visit to Moscow in 1961.

As you will surely recall, I told you then that I knew nothing about Mr. Wallenberg, had never heard his name, and had not the slightest idea whether or not he was alive.

I advised you to address yourself to our Foreign Ministry on this matter, through your ambassador or in person. Upon your request that I inquire about the fate of this person with our Chief of Government, N.S. Khrushchev, whose doctor I was according to your account. I

replied to you that N. S. Khrushchev, as everyone knew full well, was in absolutely good health and that I was not his doctor.

Owing to some misunderstanding inconceivable to me, this short talk with you (it was carried on in the German language of which I may not be fully master) has come to be erroneously interpreted in official Swedish quarters".⁹⁸

Dr. Schwartz did respond to his letter, stating that they had known each other for years and had never had problems communicating before, even on highly technical issues.

The two doctors did meet once more, in 1965. Dr. Schwartz was accompanied by the Swedish Ambassador, Gunnar Jarring while Dr. Myasnikov was in the company of two officials from the Soviet Foreign Ministry. Although the meeting lasted three hours there was no progress on the case of Raoul Wallenberg. Myasnikov claimed that he had nothing to do with prisoners and therefore could not have known about Wallenberg. Four months later, in November 1965, Alexander Myasnikov died.

One of the most extraordinary sightings came from a recent immigrant to Israel, Efim Moshinsky. He not only claimed to be a former SMERSH agent but the very official who actually arrested Wallenberg in Budapest. He claimed the reason for Wallenberg's arrest was so that the NKVD could get their hands on the jewellery and cash with which he had been entrusted. He further stated that Wallenberg had been interrogated for nine days before being flown to Moscow. Bierman rightly finds this account suspect particularly since it contravenes what was already known about the arrest and transportation of Wallenberg and Moshinsky did not mention Langfelder at any time. He did make an interesting claim however – that Wallenberg, probably after the trouble with Myasnikov in 1961, was transported to a prison on Wrangel Island in the Arctic Circle. Moshinsky was also imprisoned on Wrangel Island where he

⁹⁸ (Bierman, 1982, pp. 163-164)

was given the task of distributing food and he was able to learn the names of several of the inmates. Of the Italian names he remembered, two were later discovered as being those of two Italian officers who had been declared missing. Among other foreign prisoners were two German Generals, Spanish officers, and Alexander Trushnovich, leader of the Russian anti-Communist group NTS. Apparently he and Wallenberg shared a two-roomed wooden hut.⁹⁹

Although he was never able to speak to Wallenberg who was there until the following year, he claims to have been able to get notes to Wallenberg via books and that Raoul had written letters to his mother and passed them on to him. The letters begin “Dear Mother Von Dardel”, which is not a form of address Raoul ever used to his mother and the entire story does sound fanciful. This is not to say that Raoul was not on Wrangel Island. It was indeed a place where foreigners were sent from time to time. Moshinsky claim that but it seems unlikely that he had the contact with Wallenberg he claims. The matter of Wrangel Island is further substantiated by Hungarian who met Wallenberg in a foreigners’ prison in Irkutsk. Wallenberg informed the Hungarian that he had been transferred there from Wrangel Island.¹⁰⁰

One alleged sighting also came from the British Spy, Greville Wynne. While imprisoned in the Lubyanka in 1963, he was taken as normal for his exercise routine on the roof of the building where there were small pens for prisoners to walk around. He recalled:

“One day in early 1963, I was up on the roof when I heard a cage coming into the next pen. As the gate opened I heard a voice call out “Taxi”. Given the filthy condition of the lifts, this struck me as a piece of defiant humour, which I greatly appreciated. About five days after that, the same thing happened – the cage came up and the same voice called out “Taxi” and this time I heard some conversation between the prisoner and his guard. I could tell from the accent that this was another foreigner, so I called out, ‘Are you American?’

99 (Werbell & Clarke, 1985, p. 227)

100 (Marton, 1995, p. 202)

The voice answered, 'No, I'm Swedish'.

That was all I could learn, because at that moment my guard put his hand over my mouth and shoved me against the corner of the pen. Prisoners were not allowed to communicate with each other".¹⁰¹

If this voice was indeed Raoul Wallenberg then, 18 years on, he had still not lost his sense of humour.

Another intriguing instance arose in 1977 when a Russian Jewish émigré in Tel Aviv, Israel, received a telephone call from her father, Jan Kaplan, who was still in the Soviet Union but trying to emigrate also. He had been imprisoned for "economic crimes" or "currency charges" which were linked with his attempts to emigrate but was released early owing to a heart condition. During their conversation about the prison he told her "It wasn't so bad. When I was in the prison infirmary at the Butyrka in 1975 I met a Swede who'd been in different prisons for thirty years and he was in pretty good condition". For some time Kaplan carried with him a letter about Wallenberg which he tried to smuggle out with a foreigner. Sadly the letter was intercepted and Kaplan was again arrested on February 3 1979. His wife Yevgenia wrote to their daughter again and this time the letter arrived via a new immigrant to Israel. Mrs Kaplan wrote:

"I write this letter but I am not sure it will reach you and that the same thing will not happen because of the letter about this Swiss or Swede Wallberg (sic) whom he met in the prison infirmary ...

Father wrote a long letter about this Wallberg and for a long time he carried it around with him looking for a chance to send it to you through a foreign tourist. Every Saturday he went to the synagogue where many tourists visit, but for a long time he had no success ...

One Saturday, father came back in a very good mood and told me that at long last he had succeeded in giving the letter to a young foreign tourist who promised to send the letter from Vienna or Germany, I don't remember which ...

¹⁰¹ (Bierman, 1982, p. 174)

Why did your father have to interfere in this business? He never had anything to do with politics and wouldn't even listen to political jokes. Because of that letter about a poor prisoner they arrest a man and kept him for a year and a half so what good can you expect here?"¹⁰²

In August 1979 the National Review reported that Kaplan had been sent to Komi camp in the northern Urals.

A further incident described by Rosenfeld involves General Gennady Kupriyanov who had served time in prison in connection with what was known as the Leningrad Affair, when several high-ranking officials were arrested for a series of fabricated crimes, committed allegedly to boost the power of Leningrad over Moscow. Kupriyanov served seven years in prison camps until his release in 1956. On January 1st, 1979, an article appeared in The New Russian Word, an American-Russian immigrant paper about Kupriyanov and his co-prisoner Raoul Wallenberg with whom he claimed to have spent time in 1953 when they spent three weeks together travelling between the prisons of Verchneursk and Alexandrovsky Central, nr Irkutsk in Siberia. In 1955 they met again during another transfer between Verchneursk and Vladimir prisons which took several weeks and finally they met in the dental clinic in 1956 presumably in Vladimir still but they were not allowed to communicate.

After the article appeared in the National Review, Kupriyanov was taken in for questioning by the KGB. When asked why he has spoken about Wallenberg when he had been expressly forbidden to do so upon his release, He replied that Wallenberg had been sentenced in 1945 or 1946 to 25 years which should have been over by 1971 and he genuinely believed that Wallenberg had been released. He failed to understand why the USSR could admit the crimes of Beria but not the one committed against Wallenberg. After his third interrogation,

¹⁰² (Rosenfeld, 2005, pp. 177-178)

Kupriyanov fell ill and his wife was told to attend the hospital. By the time she arrived her husband had died of “infarctus of the heart”. She was not permitted to see him but, during the visit, her flat was searched.¹⁰³

A final intriguing witness is the Polish prisoner, Abraham Kalinsky, who is described in detail by Bierman.¹⁰⁴ A former Polish Army officer, Kalinsky claimed that he was sentenced by the USSR for sending a letter to the USA exposing the truth about Soviet involvement in the massacre of the Katyn forest when 20,000 Polish officers were massacred. Until 1992 the Soviet Union always maintained it was a German atrocity. Kalinsky claimed that when he was serving time in the prison at Verkhne Uralsk, a fellow prisoner by the name of David Vendrovsky told him he had been sharing a cell with Raoul Wallenberg and Wilhelm Munters, who had served as a Latvian cabinet minister. Vendrovsky had described Raoul as “a very interesting and exceedingly sympathetic man”. Kalinsky claimed that from his cell window he frequently saw Wallenberg in the exercise yard. He stated that the prison was later cleared to make room for the new enemies of the people following the death of Stalin, and he was transferred to Alexandrov Central prison. He did not see Wallenberg at this prison. However, in 1955 when travelling to Vladimir prison they were taken en route to the transit prison in Gorky. As they were being assembled in a hall, he saw Wallenberg again. He was still in the company of Munters.

In Vladimir prison, after a period in isolation, Kalinsky shared a cell with a Georgian prisoner by the name of Simon Gogoberidze, a former political refugee who had been kidnapped by the KGB in Paris. Gogoberidze had just been transferred from Korpus III where he claimed to have shared a cell with Wallenberg and disgraced KGB General Mamulov. Later Wallenberg shared cell no. 23 with a Georgian Central Committee Member by the name of Shariyev. Kalinsky claimed that Wallenberg “was always made to share a cell

103 (Ibid, pp. 179-180)

104 (Bierman, 1982, pp. 176-181)

with Soviet citizens serving long sentences, never with foreigners. This was done to reduce the evidence of him getting out. If he were to have shared a cell with a foreigner who was later released the Russians would find it impossible to keep it quiet.

Bierman describes some interesting supporting evidence for Kalinsky's claims. While he was in prison, he sent numerous postcards to his sister in Haifa, northern Israel; postcards which she kept. One of these cards, dated March 1959, informs her that all the Germans have been released and that the only foreigners remaining are an Italian and a Swede "who saved many Jews in Romania (sic) during the war".¹⁰⁵

The Wallenberg Family sues the USSR

In 1984 the Wallenberg family took the decision to sue USSR for \$39 million, one for each year of Raoul's captivity. The lawsuit was issued under the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act of 1977, which makes foreign governments liable in US courts for "wrongful" acts, and served on Andrei Gromyko, the Foreign Secretary and the man whose announcement in 1957 has remained the Soviet position on the Wallenberg affair. It was presented to the US District Court in Washington D.C. on February 2, 1984.

If alive, the compensation would go to Raoul if not to his family. Guy von Dardel claimed that he had evidence that Raoul was still alive in 1975 so something had to be done to hasten his release. Senator Tom Lantos, whose life and that of his wife was saved by Wallenberg, felt it was necessary to force the issue because relations between the USA and the USSR were not good at this time.¹⁰⁶

Not surprisingly the USSR failed to attend the hearing but sent a note asserting their absolute sovereign immunity. The judge issued a default judgement which could have led to Soviet assets in the USA

¹⁰⁵ (Ibid, pp. 179.180)

¹⁰⁶ (Rosenfeld, 2005, pp. xviii-xix)

being seized. In April 1986, the Wallenberg family sought to hold the USSR in civil contempt.

But when Mikhail Gorbachev was elected as General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party a new dawn entered relations between the two countries. This brought new hope to the world and to the Wallenberg case. When asked to provide a Statement of Interest, the USA stated that it had no jurisdiction and that there would be problems enforcing any contempt order.

But in 1989 Gorbachev invited Wallenberg's family to Moscow. They were naturally full of expectation. Was the mystery of Raoul Wallenberg's fate about to be resolved? Their optimism grew when the Soviet Ambassador to Belgium attended the Wallenberg commemoration of his arrest in Brussels. When they arrived in Moscow the family were presented with some personal belongings of Raoul's; his passport, notebooks, registration card and some cash. By happy coincidence these belongings fell off a shelf in the Lubyanka prison just prior to the visit. William Korey describes the event:

“The way the Wallenberg materials were allegedly discovered is hardly credible. Presumably the various articles were contained in a parcel located on a top shelf. When the shelves were being cleaned in order to transfer the KGB records from wooden files to metal files, the parcel accidentally fell to the floor. Could this be the way that material belonging to one of the gulag's prized prisoners was stored? How could official archivists not know anything about this parcel? Indeed as Canadian researcher David Matas learned, the reported form of storage was contrary to rules and regulations of the Soviet system. Even more revealing was the fact that the various items in the parcel were not likely to have come from one file but rather from four separate files”.¹⁰⁷

They were also shown the Lubyanka Prison Doctor's notification of Raoul's cremation after his death in 1947. The family dismissed this

¹⁰⁷ (Korey, 2000, p. 33)

as nothing new and certainly not evidence. In return, they presented the Russian authorities with a list of witnesses who had seen Raoul later than his alleged date of death in 1947. The Russians equally dismissed this as unreliable evidence.

The family were also given access to Vladimir prison where Raoul was rumoured to have been incarcerated for several years in the 1950s. There they were shown cards pertaining to “important prisoners”. However, some were missing and there was no card for Raoul.

There were encouraging signs, however. Soviet forensic scientists examining the KGB reports made the interesting comment that their investigations were “discreet but rewarding” without elaboration. Also, a public appeal led to numerous calls to the Wallenberg Society in Stockholm from people who had been imprisoned during the 40s and 50s.

One of these contacts is fascinating. A 72 year old woman, Vavara Larina, who worked as an orderly at Vladimir prison remembers a foreign occupant of an isolation cell on the third floor of the hospital wing Korpus II. She remembered him because he was constantly complaining about his food being cold and she was told by the prison authorities to feed him first in future. She remembers his presence there when a prisoner named Kirill Osmak died in the cell opposite. Evidence showed that happened in May 1960. Several photographs of men, including an unpublished picture of Wallenberg, were shown to her. She picked out the picture of Raoul Wallenberg.¹⁰⁸

In the summer of 1990 the USSR offered to open up its archives and prisons to the Soviet-International Commission which consisted of 10 members: Professor Guy von Dardel, Swedish, organizer and maternal brother of Raoul Wallenberg; Dr. Vadim Birstein, Russian, member of Memorial Society; Dr. Rolf Bjornerstedt, Swedish, former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations; Dr. Mikhail Chlenov, Russian, director of VAAD, an organization of Soviet

108 (Makinen M. W. & Kaplan, 2000, pp. 7-8)

Jews; Professor Irving Cotler, Canadian, Professor of International Law at McGill University; Alexei Kartsev, Russian, journalist and reporter for *Komsomolskaya Pravda*; author of first newspaper article about Raoul Wallenberg in the Soviet press in 1988; Dr. Kronid Lyubarski, Russian, former Political Prisoner in Soviet labour camps and in Vladimir, and editor living in Munich, Germany; Professor Marvin W. Makinen American, former prisoner in Vladimir and Soviet labour camps, November, 1961, – October, 1963; Professor and Chairman of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at University of Chicago; Alexander Rodnyansky, Russian, Film director and producer, (he directed the first Soviet documentary film about Raoul Wallenberg, released in late 1990); Arsenii Roginski, Russian, Senior Researcher, Memorial Society, and former political prisoner in Soviet labour camps.

Their conclusion was that at no time had the USSR investigated the possibility that Wallenberg had been imprisoned in Vladimir. Their report read:

“The Commission has learned that foreigners imprisoned at Vladimir – particularly those in the status of diplomats – were usually registered not under their own name but under a number of false identity (sic).

The Commission examined some 104,000 prisoner registration cards and selected 1328 for further computer analysis and videotaping. Of these some 30 cards were in the “numbered” category ... if Raoul Wallenberg’s prison registration card is a numbered one or registered under a false identity, it makes its discovery well nigh impossible.

The Commission has learned that the personal prison dossiers of foreigners imprisoned at Vladimir have been preserved, but that they have been transferred from Vladimir to KGB Files in Moscow”.¹⁰⁹

Furthermore, Professor Makinen noted that “the investigative commission is often thwarted in following previous leads because

¹⁰⁹ (Rosenfeld, 2005, pp. xxx-xxxi)

not all documents it requests are made available. Some KGB files remain totally inaccessible to the commission. In fact, the KGB does not acknowledge that these archives exist¹¹⁰.

The Commission further discovered that there had been a Soviet “Emergency Committee” looking into the case in 1988 but that for some reason it had closed quickly. The Committee itself included no fewer than 8 of the hardliners who were to stage an attempted coup against Gorbachev in 1991.

The Commission again felt a sense of optimism as the collapse of the Soviet Union led to the independence of each of the member nations. Boris Yeltsin became President of the Russian Federation and promised to support the search for Wallenberg. Despite this, the hardliners were still prominent in Russia and the line taken remained that Wallenberg died on July 17, 1947.

In 2004 the Swedish-Russian Commission produced two reports, one from each “side”. The Russian Project Director, Vyacheslav Tuchnin stated that he was 99 % sure that Wallenberg was killed on July 12th 1947, 5 days earlier than his reported death in the Gromyko Memorandum of 1957. The Swedes, led by Hans Magnusson, however published a 362 page document which concluded that no definitive documentation of Raoul Wallenberg’s death has been found. The conclusion of the Russians was depressingly unchanged. Wallenberg died in 1947.

Who was Prisoner No. 7?

Yet the debate continues! Susan Mesinai, the director of ARK, which searches for lost American prisoners of war in the former Soviet Union, argues that, even if there had been no instances of direct contact with Wallenberg:

“There are a number of problems with the Smoltsov document. The

110 (Korey, 2000, p. 35)

description used for Raoul's heart attack (myocardial infarction) was a term first used in the '50s. Secondly, the time of Raoul's supposed death was a time of much quiet, judging by the Lubyanka registry. And yet, this handwritten, unofficial document stands as the one single piece of so-called evidence against decades of verifiable sightings and the Soviets' own declassified material".¹¹¹

That Raoul does not appear in any prison records after 1947 is not proof of death either. Citing her own discovery of American defector Victor Hamilton who spent 20 years in the Troitskoye Psychiatric hospital near Moscow where he was known only as "K", she continued:

"If Hamilton is a "K" in a Russian psychiatric hospital, there may be others throughout the Gulag, including Wallenberg ... Since my personal commitment is to the Wallenberg case, I was painfully conscious throughout my meetings with Victor Hamilton that Raoul Wallenberg – who has been repeatedly sighted in psychiatric prison hospitals – may be one of those forbidden to disclose his true identity and known only as a letter or a number. While I have high hopes that Raoul has been well treated, I also have to face the reality of inevitable attrition that comes from decades of isolation".¹¹²

Furthermore, an examination of the files of Wallenberg's cellmates Gustav Richter and Grosheim-Krysko asks more questions:

"I, deputy head of a section of the Investigation Department of the 2nd Main Directorate of the MGB of the USSR, Major SOLOVOV, having considered the materials of the Investigation Case NO. 5062 on the accusations against Richter, Gustav, HAVE DETERMINED that the investigation of the case has established that RICHTER while being a member of the criminal Fascist Party, SS-units and holding leading positions within the SD organs, headed punitive measures against anti-Fascists, as well as actively worked in intelligence ...

¹¹¹ (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. xxxix)

¹¹² (ibid)

Taking the aforesaid into consideration and the fact that RICHTER was connected to an *especially important prisoner*.

I HAVE DECIDED (THAT) RICHTER Gustav, as an especially dangerous German war criminal, after conviction should be sent to an MGB Special Prison to serve his punishment where he should be kept in strict isolation from the other prisoners ...”¹¹³(Taken from Richter’s KGB file) Also

“During the investigation GROSHEIM-KRYSKO testified that, while having been a German businessman in Hungary in 1941–1944, he was a middle-man who supplied the German Army with food and participated in mobilization of the Hungarian economical resources for the war, and in this way he assisted the realization of the military political plans of Germany against the Soviet Union. Taking the aforesaid into consideration and the fact that GROSHEIM-KRYSKO was connected to *an especially important prisoner ...*

GROSHEIM-KRYSKO German Genrikh as an especially dangerous German war criminal, after conviction should be sent to an MGB Special Prison”.

Who was the especially important prisoner? At the time of the Swedish-Russian Committee the author of the recommendations, Major Solovov, was still alive and he testified before the Russian side of the Committee in 1992:

“He (Solovov) first heard about Raoul Wallenberg some time in 1947 ... This was when Kuleshov, head of (a) section under Kartashov, drew up a list and diagram indicating the prisoners who had been Raoul Wallenberg’s cellmates. Every detail of their cell numbers, etc. was noted on the diagram.

At that time the case was creating quite a stir. Kuleshov gave the above-mentioned informant (Solovov) a parcel and told him to take it personally to Gertsovsky, the head of MGB archives. A handwritten note on the parcel said, ‘Contains material relating to detainee No. 7.

¹¹³ (Birstein, April 25 1991)

Not to be opened without permission from the head of the MGB'. The parcel contained some papers and personal documents (but not the personal file) relating to Raoul Wallenberg. The informant (Solovov) knew that 'detainee No. 7' referred to Raoul Wallenberg".¹¹⁴

Then, in 2010 an unexpected revelation!! Archivists at the FSB (formerly the KGB) wrote to Wallenberg researchers Susanne Berger and Vadim Birstein stating that the Prisoner No. 7 interrogated for 16 hours on 23rd July 1947 was "in all likelihood" Raoul Wallenberg. This is an astonishing admission, given that for more than 50 years the Soviet Union and Russia has not budged from the stance that Raoul Wallenberg died on 17th July 1947. Once the death date has been discredited, it opens up a whole new area of possibilities. If Wallenberg was still alive 6 days after his "death", there is no reason why he could not have still been alive 6 years later?

Or 16 years later? Or 36 years later? If the "proof of death" i.e. the Smolstov note, has been discredited, where then is the true death certificate?

Conclusion

Thus we are no nearer to learning the fate of this remarkable young man. The official Russian stance seems unlikely. It is stretching credibility to suggest that two strong and healthy young men in their mid-thirties, who had received relatively gentle treatment from their captors, would have succumbed to heart attacks within a few months of each other. It is unlikely they died of natural causes. Execution is another matter. Either way, it could certainly explain why they were not rehabilitated along with others after the Stalin era. But, with respect to Wallenberg, the Russians had a high profile Western diplomat in their hands; a prisoner who could prove to be

¹¹⁴ (Swedish-Russian Working Group, 2000)

a significant bargaining chip in the years ahead. Russians are master chess players: why sacrifice a pawn for no gain? Executing him would serve no obvious purpose. It has been argued that they did not know what to do with him. That may well be true but what benefit would result from executing him? Keeping him in reserve might. When tens of thousands of people are in prison, what would be the problem about keeping just one more? As has been seen, overtures were made to make a swap of people between Sweden and the USSR on a couple of occasions during the 1960s. Why offer Wallenberg for Wennerstrom if the former had already died? It does not make sense.

If, therefore, it can be assumed that he was alive in the 1950s, it begs the question why would they not release him after the 1956 Secret Speech and subsequent rehabilitation? Of course, it is all guess work but one possibility is that at the time of the Gromyko Memorandum, the Hungarian Uprising was still a raw issue. Would the Russians have wanted to release such a person as Wallenberg back to where he could be the focal point of further unrest? Was this a sticking point? Furthermore, Gromyko continued in high position in the USSR until the year before his death in 1989. Would the authorities have embarrassed Gromyko, who so publically announced Wallenberg's death, by declaring he was alive all that time? Probably not. By the time of Gromyko's death Wallenberg would have been imprisoned for 44 years and would be almost 77 years of age. Surely even his indomitable spirit would have relinquished hope after so many years. If Wallenberg had already died by then, there was little point in changing the decades-old story of the 1947 death.

Expectations that after the fall of the Soviet Union and the dawn of Glasnost, the truth about the fate of Wallenberg and his loyal driver Wilmos Langfelder could have been released proved optimistic. Approaches to Gorbachev and his subsequent reaction suggest that he too was not necessarily in control of answers regarding Wallenberg.

One thing is for certain: Given that he was never released it would have been a mercy if Raoul had died in 1947. The thought that this

gentle, kind man had to suffer decades of incarceration is too much to bear, especially for his family who valiantly fought for him, and do still.

Tributes

Raoul Wallenberg is remembered the world over for his courage and compassion at a time of unprecedented barbarity and inhumanity. He was probably never told of the awards given to him; the streets and buildings called after him; and the scholarships awarded in his name. He did not hear the songs dedicated to him; nor did he read the many books written about him. He would never have heard of the foundations and committee formed in his name. He was probably never told that he was far from forgotten and abandoned. Even today, decades after his triumph and tragedy, the anniversary of his birthday and the day of his arrest are commemorated annually in many places throughout the world.

The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation was founded some twenty years ago by the late Tom Lantos, who as mentioned was saved by Wallenberg, and Baruch Tenenbaum, a teacher and businessman, who has worked tirelessly over decades to perpetuate the ideals and legacy of Raoul Wallenberg and other saviours from the time of the Holocaust. The aims of the Foundation are to raise public awareness and produce educational programmes devoted to such acts of civic courage as Wallenberg displayed. Of Raoul, Dr. Yoav Tenenbaum, son of the founder, wrote:

“Challenging the entire machinery of Germany and its Hungarian allies, employing his imagination as an offensive weapon, Wallenberg resolved to do the impossible. With the help of people, some of them diplomats, of good will, Wallenberg demonstrated that human courage has no limits. Through a process of persuasion, threats and an unmatched dose of diplomatic creativity, this young 32 year old Swede managed to save the lives of tens of thousands of Hungarian

Jews. His heroism was crowned by tragedy. Although the Germans and their Hungarian allies endeavored to cause an accidental death to Wallenberg, he survived this ordeal in order to be subsequently arrested by the Soviet troops, who had just liberated Budapest, never to be seen alive again. Wallenberg is, then, a hero without a grave”.

In the Holocaust Research Centre of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, Israel, a tree was planted on the Avenue of the Righteous, an award to all those Gentiles who helped Jews during the Holocaust. Near Haifa a forest of 10,000 trees carries his name.

Raoul Wallenberg has also been made an honorary citizen of the USA (1981), Israel (1984), Canada, (1985), Budapest (2003) and became Australia’s first honorary citizen (2013).

In the summer of 1945 the writer Rudolph Phillip, a passionate devotee, wrote:

“The aura which surrounded him fascinated and enchanted his collaborators. In the middle of the hopeless dirt of a night hostel or in a moist dark cave he inspired thought towards the west, towards Sweden, where man was still considered a man. His protégés felt this magic, these refugees who in desperation gathered around this Swede on their flight from the police; these unhappy souls whose sufferings sometimes broke the last limits of civilisation, people who lived in utter anguish. By his presence they were calmed, not by calculation or in respect for Raoul’s person – because he never tried to inspire respect – but only because they felt in his presence an inflexible personality, without fright, who did not recoil even from death ... He demanded of himself and of his collaborators complete self-sacrifice ... Hero worship was completely foreign to him ... The waves of the war lifted him high, but at last these waves engulfed him, only a step from the victory. Wallenberg disappeared before the eyes of the people he had saved, like a hero in the legend. An unjust but a heroic end”.¹¹⁵

115 (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 108)

In the middle of what was the International Ghetto an area is named after him plaque there today reads “Raoul Wallenberg, Secretary of the Swedish Legation with courage and determination helped the escape of thousands during the reign of the Arrow Cross”.

In Pest, in 1945, the Israelite Congregation of Pest declared:

“The time of horror is still fresh in our memory when the Jews of this country were hunted animals, when thousands of Jewish prisoners were in the temple preparing for death. We recall all the atrocities of the concentration camps, the departure of the people who were to die, the sufferings in the ghettos and the attacks against the houses which had been placed under international protection. But we also remember one of the greatest heroes of those terrible times, the Secretary of the Royal Swedish Legation, who defied the intruding government and its armed executioners. We witnessed the redemption of prisoners and the relief of those who suffered when Mr. Wallenberg came among the persecuted to help. In a superhuman effort, not yielding to fatigue and exposing himself to all sorts of dangers, he brought home children who had been dragged away and he liberated aged parents. We saw him give food to the starving and medicine to the ailing.

We shall never forget him and shall be forever grateful to him and to the end the Swedish nation because it was the Swedish flag which warranted undisturbed slumber of thousands of Jews in protected houses. He was a righteous man. God bless him”.¹¹⁶

This heartfelt tribute shows the debt which many felt they owed to Raoul Wallenberg. Although it is written in the name of the Jewish people, it could be attributed to any minority group in any country at any time in history.

But the final word belongs perhaps to the Russian version of such heroes from one of their own, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who, in 2009, wrote the following:

¹¹⁶ (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 109)

“There is a law in the Archipelago that those who have been treated the most harshly and who have withstood the most bravely, who are the most honest, the most courageous, the most unbending, never again come out into the world. They are never again shown to the world because they will tell tales that the human mind can barely accept ... These are your best people. These are your foremost heroes who, in solitary combat, have stood the test. And today unfortunately, they cannot take courage from our applause. They cannot hear it from their solitary cells where they may either die or remain for thirty years, like Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who was seized in 1945 in the Soviet Union. He has been imprisoned for thirty years and they will not yield him up”.¹¹⁷

And they still have not.

117 (Solzhenitsyn, 2009, p. 46)

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