

*Flight  
through  
Hell*

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In memory of Aristides de Sousa Mendes  
and his wife Angelina

The story which follows was originally published in 1951. It was a humble, and dedicated, attempt to disseminate a sublime act on the part of a good, and great man and his wife. Their lives were inclined toward a magnificent goal: the ease of the misfortune of mankind within their reach. It was their way of serving God in their own comprehension.

"My desire is to be with God against Man - rather than with Man and against God." This was the philosophy of Dr. Mendes - a great humanitarian whom I was privileged to know in my youth. As he believed, so did he speak. He was great insofar as his ideology regarding humanity was concerned. What he did made him everlasting great in the hearts of those who knew of his deeds.

In imposed retirement and without pay - and in degradation, he was fast disposing of his assets; a family heritage for generations. In the early morning, as in the late evening, he would survey the heart of his family's earthly possessions. He would pick weeds devotedly, as though he were removing from the face of the earth the compassionate, the cruel - the heartless, who sentenced, who killed, and who subjugated, without regard for the Sublime Creator - the unfortunate victims of the time.

In the afternoons he would go for long walks through the woods. Aristide Briand and Emile Zola were his favorite subjects referent to humane frailty and compassion - his symbols of justice and his inspiration. Two great philosophers!

Occasionally he would recall that the Portuguese ambassador in Madrid, who came to remove him from his post at Bordeaux, called him insane for having saved that great multitude of refugees - as though one had to be demented to do the right thing. • •

To anyone of his children he would say: "Things cannot remain as they are. Surely, Salazar will realize his injustice and the necessity for my having acted as I did. Certainly, some of those whom I have saved will come forth and demand justice for me, for your mother, and for all of you, our children. • •

In those days the foreign press had, continually, praised the Portuguese Government for having given shelter to the thousands of refugees from the European holocaust. • • • little did they know. • • all the flattering words, all the prestige, all the gratitude were won by Dr. Mendes, and only he was deserving of them - and grandly so!

Among those he had saved were members of the Belgian and French Governments. Prominent individuals such as Baron Maurice de Rothschild, of European banking fame, the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg and her family and entourage, as well as Archduke Otto of Hapsburg and his family. There were thousands upon thousands of humble people - the massive bulk of the refugees, and they too, were magnanimously helped. • saved from the deadly enemy. • • Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society director Mr. Dijour, as well as Sorbonne Professor Dr. Oulmont, Madame Rollin, Mr. Elias, and Rabbi Krueger whose testimonials appear at the end of the book.

Dr. Mendes would, upon occasion, suggest and advise his children on how best they might find a place in life - now that he was unable to provide for them as he had always done - in a magnanimous and magnificient manner. His career had been shattered and the future of his children obscured. • irreparably so. • The emotional and spiritual impact had been tremendous. • Dr. Mendes had made, in the early years after 1940, several appeals to the National Assembly, the Supreme Court, and, yes, to Salazar himself. All was in vain even though, in his efforts he had mentioned those clauses in the Portuguese Constitution which he had safeguarded and which Salazar had violated in declining to aid the Jewish refugees. • Still, the Portuguese Government had never denied having given Dr. Mendes telegraphic instructions against the Jewish. • •

Dr. Mendes had also provided, at his mansion in Portugal, shelter to Belgian cabinet members such as Camu, Van Zeeland, and De Vleschauer and his family. This further act by Dr. Mendes was also closely investigated and censored by the Portuguese International Police. The refugees had gone on to safer and happier places and they did not know. • •

Dr. Mendes had not wanted anyone to make it known that he, his wife and children had paid the price. • Those few who did know, did not realize the extreme hardships and the pressure imposed upon their Savior and his family - the cost of having cared for the safety of the Jews and of the many other refugees. • •

His belief in Justice, and in the Mercy of God, was his hope. • • his fortitude. • • and he was able to face the adverse circumstances. His serenity and peace of mind derived from his trust in God - the Ununderstandable, were his bulwark. • .

In subsequent, and recent years, Salazar of Portugal, and Franco of Spain, were, internationally, acclaimed as the saviors of the refugees once again. Lack of information or facts, and time, do change true, unwritten history. As in this case, villains became heroes - heroes are overlooked or forgotten. Certainly, the rumor has it that, in 1945, Franco had asked Hitler to release to his keeping several thousand Jewish refugees who were destined for the gas chambers. It was, then, easy for Franco to help the Jews - the allied armies were winning the war, and the Axis being run back to an undoubtable and permanent defeat. • • Dr. Mendes's unselfish action had also caused Salazar to be lenient in the matter of the issuance of visas in later years. • • The two dictators were saving face and protecting themselves. • • What had happened in 1940?

In 1961, twenty trees were planted in Yaar Matznuv in recognition of and in memory of Dr. Mendes by the "Tree Fund of the Keren Kayemet LeIsrael Reaforest the Hills of the Land of Israel in Memory of Theodore Herzl, founder of the Zionist Organization." This was done by order of Prime Minister Ben Gurion. Plaques commemorating the occasion were issued to Dr. Mendes's children. And, in 1967, the Mendes children, living in the United States and in Canada, congregated at the offices of the Israeli Consulate General in New York City to accept a posthumous special commemorative medallion on behalf of "Yad Vashem" which was especially created to honor Christians who saved Jews in the Nazi era. Present were several former refugees Dr. Mendes had saved in those long gone days.

After the story, there follow newspaper and magazine articles and photographs. Also included are letters and translations of letters by some of the refugees who still remember, gratefully and affectionately — they were witnesses to the facts. . . . These are the homages they paid their benefactor!

The author is everlastingly grateful that his efforts were so instrumental in the achievement of the recognition so immensely deserved by Dr. and Mrs. Mendes. No more needs to be said. . . .

Today, presumably alive and happy, the refugees of long ago give little or no thought to those far gone tragic days. They did not know then and they do not know now, that once they had been sentenced to concentration camps or to death itself at the hands of the conquering enemy. They did not know then and they do not know now that one man thought of them and delivered them. Today, the man who sacrificed all he ever had is dead and buried — but not forgotten! He had never regretted his action and he died a true Christian.

Acknowledgement and rectification on the part of the Portuguese Government is now hoped for. • • expected. • Dr. Mendes was a great credit to the Portuguese Nation, her traditions and values. • • a truly great credit to Mankind. • •

The author extends his undying gratitude to Cesar and Joana Mendes, as well as to John Paul Abrantes for their support without which the subsequent recognition of Dr. Mendes's act would have been impossible.

"• • • For Life is. • • but. . . a milestone in the eternity of the soul. • • • "

A Flight Through Hell.



Angelina and Aristides Mendes

# *Part One*

**T**HE other day was May 10, a date which I will forever remember. On May 10, 1940, I lost something which I have since learned to value very highly: Love. It was the start of a very short but very impressive period in my life. It was then that I lost the woman who has dwelt in my memory for the past ten years and who will remain there forever. It was then that I, through the force of circumstances, witnessed a sad episode in the debacle of the allied armies in Europe: the flight of the refugees from the intruding enemy.

In the early part of the month of May 1940, I went to Brussels to visit my sister Isabel. Naturally, I had some difficulty in securing a visa to enter the country inasmuch as Europe was then at war and the event of an invasion by the Germans was imminent. However, after overcoming the official red tape, I was granted a visa. I was anxious to see Isabel at that time because I feared that I would not be able to see her again for many years to come. I had arranged to go to the United States of America, of which I am a citizen. Isabel was then residing with her parents-in-law because her husband, Jules, was in Antwerp endeavoring to complete a specialization course which would enable him to secure a prominent position in the Belgian Congo. Isabel had met Jules while attending the University of Louvain a few years before. Jules's father, a man of medium height, round face and rosy cheeks, was a retired career officer of the Belgian army. His wife was a kindly, greying lady, middle-aged like her husband.

The train was now nearing Brussels and I was thrilled at the thought that I was about to see, again, the city of Brussels

where I had once lived. The train came to a stop at the Gare du Nord, and, as I alighted from it, I decided to walk to Isabel's home rather than take a taxi cab. So I checked my luggage.

This was the end of a journey which was to bring me much happiness for I was about to experience a feeling I had never felt before; so much happiness that I would never be able to express in words and which I was unable to interpret to the one who had so unexpectedly brought me so much joy. The part she was to take in my life lasted only a short space of time, although the memory of her was to remain deep within my heart. It was also the end of a journey which would enable me to see more tragic events than I could have ever imagined or cared to behold. These were days which would forever remain marked in my life.

The streets were familiar to me and, although it was a few years since I had left, I could easily find my way around. The town did not seem to have changed much since then. I walked a few blocks and then came into Avenue Louise, the street on which Isabel lived. I walked up to her house and rang the door bell. The maid who opened the door showed me in and went to inform Isabel of my arrival.

"Hello, Michael," said Isabel as she came into the drawing room. "I am so happy to see you, but I had no idea you were coming so soon."

I embraced Isabel. "It is good to see you again, too."

"Are you going to stay long? How is everyone at home?"

"All are all right and send you their regards. I do not plan on staying more than two or three days. I think that will give me enough time to see some old friends and to discuss my plans with you."

"That is a rather short visit, if you ask me. Before you know it, the three days will have gone by and you will not have done half as much as you would wish."

"I know that time goes by quickly and that probably I will not be able to carry out my plans fully, but you must

realize my position here. There is a war on for one thing, and, then, I would not like to find myself here if and when the Germans invade Belgium. I do not imagine it would be any too good an experience if I had to flee from here were Belgium to be invaded. There is a lot more to being a refugee than one can imagine."

"You sound too pessimistic, Michael. I understand that the Germans will probably invade Belgium, rather than try to overcome the Maginot Line in France. But I do not think it will be so soon."

"It will never be too soon. Things usually happen all of a sudden and when you less expect them to happen. You call me pessimistic. You should see what the newspapers are saying in the countries that are not likely to enter this conflict. Perhaps here they do not keep the people fully informed of the circumstances."

"I would not say that. Every so often the news items sound quite discouraging, but we do not worry too much because Germany has two strong enemies in France and Great Britain. Here, we do not think that the Germans would care to involve more countries in the war. They would be taking on more than they can handle."

Isabel walked to the liquor cabinet and opened it. "Take a look and see how well supplied this cabinet is. See, things are not as bad as they make you believe wherever you have read those newspapers you talk about. What would you like to have—gin, whiskey, cointreau, anisette, benedictine, curaçao or just plain beer?" she asked with a teasing smile as she took two glasses from the cabinet.

"Make mine beer. I feel thirsty."

Isabel came back with two glasses in her hands. "Here is your beer, and here is my vermouth," she said as we sat down.

"I am sorry I haven't yet asked about Jules and his parents. How is everyone?"

"We are all fine. I just wish Jules did not have to be away

so often. He has been in Antwerp for six months now and only comes home on weekends."

"How much longer does he have to stay there?"

"Oh, about three more months. Then, if he is successful in his course, we will be able to leave for the Congo in another month. He will be given the position of Government Agent. That will give him charge of a district, a rent-free house, Negro servants and a car—and a handsome salary and a six-month vacation every three years."

"Do you think you will like living in Africa? I know that they have very sanitary conditions there, but there is always the possibility of your contracting some of those bad African diseases. Sleeping sickness and malaria, for instance. Besides that, they have plagues like the tsetse . . ."

"Oh, come now, Michael. Be a little more enthusiastic about the whole thing. We are in the twentieth century. Civilization has reached there. There are many ways for one to protect himself against all those terrible African evils you seem so afraid of."

"You know something, Isabel, you are making me seem very ignorant. I know that there are hospitals in Africa and that along the coast there are quite hygienic conditions. I know that things are worse, farther in the interior. You want to know the truth? Well, I just like the life I have been leading too well to care to turn colonist. I will be a colonist in America," I answered with a laugh. "After all, America is the new world and people still do go there . . ."

"Yes, tell me what makes you want to go to America? You have no friends over there and you know no one. You do not even speak the English language. You are going to have a pretty rough time, if you ask me. Perhaps you just feel attracted by Hollywood?"

"You insult me. What kind of a man do you think I am anyway? I know Europe only too well to believe that I will ever be happy here. I am an American citizen and so why should I not try life in the new world? Not that I imagine that America is a paradise. Far from it. But I know, and you who

were older than I when we left California, can remember some things about America. You have read about America and you have heard our parents speak about life in California. Does it not sound better than here? Anyway, even if I am just dreaming, it will be a good experience to go there for a few years and try it out."

"All right, I got even with you. You sounded unfavorable to my plans, so I just decided to be as unfavorable to yours," replied Isabel, grinning at me.

"Yes, I should have remembered when we were children, not so long ago, you always won over me and you did it again now. Oh, but my day will come. I will put one over on you yet." "Tell me now, what friends do you plan to visit? Andree, Jacqueline, Paulette . . . do not tell me that you only thought about Pierre, Alphonse or Jean, when you said you wanted to visit old friends."

"To tell you the truth, I do not even know who those girls you just mentioned are. But tell me, now that you mention Pierre, how is his sister, Jeannine? She seems to be the only girl I can remember meeting here."

"Oh, so that is it—Jeannine! So you still remember her, huh?"

"I think right now I can only remember that there is such a thing as food. I am hungry, starved in fact."

"Jules's parents have gone out, but they should not be gone long. Make yourself at home. Dinner will be ready soon. You may as well go upstairs to your room and get cleaned up. You can do with a shave, too, you know," said Isabel as she went to hang away my coat. "Your room is upstairs, the last one on the left."

So I went upstairs and shortly returned to the drawing room where I found with Isabel, Mr. and Mrs. d'Aout.

"How do you do," I said as I shook hands with the d'Aouts.

"Hello, Michael," said Mr. d'Aout, "are you not rather imprudent to come to Belgium at such a time as this? Ah, impetuous youth, always daring. I hear you are planning to go to America."

"Yes, that is correct. I have always considered America my home though I was but a baby when I left there. My parents always told me that it was the best country in which they had ever lived; and, from the books I have read about the United States, I know that in America and only there will I find the kind of life I hope to have. The free and carefree life for which one strives in Europe, I will find in America."

"I quite agree with you. In America, more than in Europe or anywhere else for that matter, one can fulfill one's aspirations. There is more opportunity and far more possibilities. . . ."

"Pardon me, dinner is now served," announced the maid. We went into the dining room. The table was oval-shaped and quite large. Our meal consisted of a vegetable soup, and, for a main entree, fried potatoes with breaded veal cutlets and a salad. Then, for dessert, we were served pudding and strong aromatic coffee. A typical Belgian meal. During the course of dinner we did not talk much. The d'Aouts, like many Belgian families, believed in eating a meal in silence. When we ended our dinner, we adjourned to the drawing room after saying the usual thanksgiving prayer.

As we left the dining room Isabel stopped me. "I wish you would not retire too early tonight. I have invited Jeannine and Pierre for the evening. Do not tell me that you mind. Jeannine is very happy to be able to see you again and I know that you will like to see her, too."

"All right, Isabel, I think it will be nice to see them again tonight. How is Jeannine these days? What does Pierre do now?"

"Do you know that Jeannine has not forgotten you? She often asks about you. She has turned into a lovely woman. You will enjoy seeing her again."

"Come on in, Michael," said Mr. d'Aout. "Tell us about your plans for your trip to the United States."

"Somebody is at the entrance door. It must be Pierre and Jeannine," Isabel said as she stood near the door while the maid opened it.

"How are you, Isabel? I hope I am not too early. Pierre was unable to come tonight. He is very busy preparing for his examination. But he said he would come over just as soon as he can spare the time," said Jeannine, coming in. "And where is Michael?" she asked as she took off her coat and hat and handed them to the maid.

"I am right here, Jeannine. Don't you recognize me?"

"Oh, yes, there you are. No, you have not changed much. You have grown and you now have a beard. You are a man, but you still have the same face."

"Why, Jeannine, you certainly have changed. If I passed you in the street I would not have known who you were although I surely would have noticed you, if not for your lovely hair, then for your exquisite beauty. To think that you are the little girl I used to tease in school!"

"Thank you very much for the compliment, Michael," Jeannine said smiling. "But tell me all about yourself. What have you been doing and where have you been? Isabel used to tell me about you, but you never wrote much and so we were never able to figure out exactly what you were doing. I know that you are now living in Bordeaux, but how about the time before you went to Bordeaux?"

We were now in the living room, seated before the fire place. Jeannine had become a very beautiful woman. I could hardly believe my eyes. Her long, dark hair glistened, her features were very correct, and her alluring figure was fascinating indeed.

"And now, you were going to tell me about your life these past few years. Tell me, I am anxious to hear."

"Could we not let that go until later? I would much rather just look at you and see your sweet smile. And then I want to hear your voice, too. It has been so long."

"Oh, please, you start telling me about yourself and I shall then tell you all about myself."

"If you insist, I believe I have no choice. Well, was it five or six years ago that I left? Oh, yes, five. Well, from here I went to Hamburg where I stayed for about a year. Then I

went on to Warsaw. From there I went to Bordeaux where I have established my permanent home. Since then, I have been to Germany again, to Denmark, Spain and Portugal, but only for short visits each time. I have been in Bordeaux for a year now and am attending the university there."

"That is very interesting. I wish I could travel as much as you do. And now you are taking a course to enter the diplomatic service, I suppose."

"Well, I would like to follow in my father's footsteps but I do not think I like that kind of life. One roams most of the time and often meets trouble, political trouble that is, and having political enemies is a serious matter. Truly, I do not know what I would like to do. Perhaps I shall become a judge like my grandfather. Yes, I think administering justice would be a fascinating life. Well, I still have a few years to go before I complete my course and I certainly will have my mind made up by then. Still, I do not know what I really am going to do. You see, I will soon be in America and what will happen once I arrive there is anybody's guess. Life there is going to be altogether different from what it has been so far for me. I will have to become adjusted to the American ways and learn how to speak English. It may be a long time before I continue my schooling."

"You are taking law, then?"  
"Yes, I am, but now let me hear about you."

"Oh, my life has been rather dull compared with yours. After high school, I just stayed home for a year. Perhaps you might say that I had a good time. I spent a while in Ostende, went to the casino lots and had a few proposals which I, of course, rejected. Then I went to stay with my aunt at her chateau near Antwerp. After that I flew to Paris where I spent a week. I suppose you know the points of interest in Paris better than I and so I will not mention them. Well, that is about all I did that first year. When the fall came I decided to get an education and so I enrolled at the university which I attended for the next three years. I majored in philosophy and languages. I do not know if you can call that an exciting

life—not as exciting as yours at any rate. Oh, yes, tell me about that incident about which you wrote Isabel. I believe it took place in Denmark."

"So you still recall that, huh? Well, several months ago, all of us went to visit Germany, Holland and Denmark. All went well until we arrived in Denmark, at the Danish border, that is. As you know we have what you might call a family bus. My parents, the twelve of us and our four maids, went on that trip together. I do not know what the Danish police at the border thought, but the truth is that they must have taken us for some kind of spies. They detained us for over two hours which is rather unusual. Our passports were in order, diplomatic ones at that. Well, they made long distance phone calls to different places. After about two hours, all of a sudden they changed their suspicious attitude and not only did they let us enter the country, but they sent with us a police escort and saw to it that we were lodged at the best hotels and received the best of service. As you can imagine, we were all very surprised because never before had anything like that happened."

"That is very interesting and I think you have a very interesting life, Michael."

"It may sound that way, but it really is not. But now, you tell me about our school chums. What of them?"

"Oh, I see only Jeannette occasionally; I do not know what has become of all of them. Jeannette is married and had a baby a few months ago. That is all I know and do not ask me about any of our teachers because I know even less about them."

"Well, that still leaves me two of them about whom you can tell me—Jeannine and Pierre. Oh, but of course, you have already told me about yourself. Pardon my rudeness. Well, anyway, tell me about Pierre."

"He is slowly, but surely, taking engineering at the university. He is ambitious all right but his ambitions go beyond just becoming an engineer, if you know what I mean."

"Not exactly. Are you referring to girl friends?"

"Yes, he seems to change with the phases of the moon."

"Well, that is proper for a man, I would say. If he is not

serious about any girl in particular, why should he not have a good time?"

"So you, too, you are that kind. You surprise me, Michael. Oh, it is getting late. I better go in and speak with Mr. and Mrs. d'Aout and Isabel for a while. Then I will have to go home."

"Jeannine, before you go, I want to ask you if you will come with me tomorrow for a walk. And then, in the evening, we could have dinner together somewhere and go to a night club." "I would love to, Michael, and I know just the place for us to go. But now I really must go in for a few minutes to say good night. My car is parked outside and so you will not have to bother about seeing me home."

"But it would be a pleasure to see you home, Jeannine." "Oh, no, thank you, Michael. I know you must feel very tired tonight after such a long trip. You may call for me tomorrow afternoon at around three o'clock."

While talking, we went into the drawing room. Jeannine said good night to my hosts and then left.

The d'Aout home was palatial. It was quite large and had beautiful rooms. It had been built early in 1800 by a noble family who, according to Mr. d'Aout, had been forced to sell it when they had found themselves in serious financial difficulties in 1918. When Isabel and Mrs. d'Aout had retired, Mr. d'Aout asked me to join him in the library. It was early, he said, and we might go there and talk while we helped ourselves to some benedictine. In there I found many good books dealing with all kinds of subjects, from movies to science.

"This is where I come and relax after a day's work. You will have to spend some time here yourself, Michael. I am sure you will enjoy thumbing through some of these books. Here," he said, taking a book from a shelf, "here is a book that will tell you all about the last world conflict. I think it is a timely one for I am afraid we will have to experience those same days again. I wish I were still young so that I could once again fight the Germans. I did not have much of a chance in 1914 because I became their prisoner soon after their attack on us and

I was not released until Armistice Day. Ah, but this time we shall play for keeps. Although the Germans are very well equipped to wage a long and devastating war on us, they will once again end in failure. What would become of Europe if they ever were victorious? They would enslave all of Europe and sacrifice all of us for the glory of their land. When will the world know real lasting peace? I am afraid such will never happen. Just go back in the history of the world. Go to the first creatures God placed on earth. There you find the first war. Why was there enmity between Cain and Abel? Fundamentally, for the same reason that there is unfriendliness among the nations of the world nowadays and has been all through the centuries. Jealousy and ill ambition, that is what it is. Why can man not live and let live? Man could have peace if he only tried. It is lack of faith in himself and in his fellow man that leads him into war; lack of good will and understanding. If it were not for man's unlimited and selfish ambition, and his spirit of competition which, in my opinion, is irrational and without sound foundations, earth could be a real Eden for all of us. It is true that, according to the Bible, God denied that privilege to Adam and Eve and their descendants, but could we not strive for it? Why not seek a solution to our trials and tribulations in the holy teachings? Why not learn the cost of our boundless faults in the history of universe. History repeats itself over and over again, the just being paid his rightful tribute and the unjust being cursed all through the centuries."

"But to return to today's conflict, I am certain that Germany has once again risen with the aim of dominating the world, and, once again, only to see her efforts shattered. They may go as far as to conquer most of Europe, all of it even; but a day will come when the forces of justice will rise and pound heavily on the pride and egoism of the Teutonics and render them, once and for all, harmless. Well, here I go again talking and not making sense. They call me idealistic. Maybe I am. Anyway, what good does it do us to dream? Enough of that. Let us enjoy our drinks while we may."

"Yes, we may as well. Maybe it will be a long time before any one around here will be able to taste it. You know, the times I went to Germany, I was never able to find any real bread, butter or several other things, not necessarily food items, but some others that I can not seem to recall right now. That ersatz bread I ate over there was very dry and tasteless."

"Oh, I know what you mean. We too, we had that bread in 1914. Even worse. It was made of saw dust combined with something else."

"You know, there is one thing that I admire about the Germans and that is their helpfulness. One day in Hamburg, a man spent more than two hours showing us around the city. He was well-dressed and exceedingly polite, and so we did not know whether or not he expected to be tipped. We tried to find out by asking him different questions about visitors to Hamburg to see if he made it his business to guide people about. Apparently, he did not and when we were to part with him, we hinted that we did not know what his charge was, upon which he said that he merely wanted to welcome us and that he was really happy to spend that time with us."

"I know they can be very nice when they want. You say you find them to be very helpful and to that I have to add that they are very courteous, too. Ah, but once they mean business they are quite different."

"This was not the only time a German was kind to us. We have had the same experience at different times and under quite different circumstances."

"Well, let us talk about something more interesting, shall we? It is one o'clock now and I should think you would feel tired after such a busy day."

"Yes, I think I had better go to bed now. I am tired and the drink was rather strong. I think I will sleep soundly tonight. Well, I hope you will sleep well. Good night."

"Good night, Michael."

At this time everybody expected the Germans to strike at any moment at any undetermined spot. Spring had arrived. Yet, as a whole, the Belgian people seemed to be in pretty high

spirits. They were confident that, should the Germans attack Belgium, their king, Leopold III, at the example of his father, Albert I, would abide by the mottoes proudly borne in the Belgian coat of arms "L'Union Fait La Force" and "Honneur, Foi et Patrie" and would, fearlessly, lead the Belgian troops and the whole nation into a sure fight which would eventually end in certain victory over the Germans.

The following morning I woke up late after having spent a restless night. The sight of Jeannine and the taste of Benedictine, added to the tedious train ride of the previous day kept me awake till early morning hours. Jeannine's sweet eyes haunted me. In my thoughts, her hair looked divine and when I finally was able to sleep, I had a strange dream. I found myself walking up a high hill on top of which stood a magnificent Palace. From far, the palace had the appearance of Jeannine's hair. As I drew closer it became more and more complex, until it became something beyond my understanding. Jeannine was standing by the entrance near a wishing well and staring into it. She did not seem to notice my presence and, as I laid my hand on her shoulder, she disappeared and, with her, the wishing well. Then the palace vanished and I was left in an immense desert. Now, after all these years, when I think of this dream, I feel that it was a forecast of what the future held for Jeannine and for myself. I remained in bed for a while and then, as I was dressing, I heard a knock on my door.

"Yes," I said.

"Better get up and come down to have your breakfast. Hurry up," said Isabel.

I was now all dressed and followed Isabel who kept me company while I had my morning meal.

"Shall we go into the garden after I have breakfast?" I suggested to Isabel.

"Why, did you not notice that it is raining outside?"

"Well, we can always stay right here and talk, can we not?"

"Too bad," I thought to myself, "this means no walk with Jeannine, not today anyway."

I finished breakfast and walked to the window as I lit my

pipe. From there I could see the typical intermittent rain of Belgium. The water ran fast along the gutter and carried with it the debris it found on its way. I felt nostalgic, comparing humanity to the debris; fate and time to the running water. Then Jeannine came back to my mind. I was angry. "Why should it rain, today of all days? Still I can visit her in her apartment if I can not go out with her. Just as well." Now a good feeling and hope entered me: a sun ray seeped through the dark clouds. "I may, after all, be able to go out with Jeannine today."

Then I began wondering why I was so concerned with Jeannine. She never had been more than a friend to me. We were children together and I had not seen her in years. It is true that her presence last night affected me to some extent, but what of it? She is a very charming woman. It is only natural. But as I told myself these things, I realized that something in which I had not believed until then, had just proved itself to me: I was in love. But how could it be? It must have been that I was in love with her in a sort of immature way the day I left Brussels and this love must have reached its maturity when I again saw her last night. How else can I explain this? My heart beat fast. I tried to make a move but felt frozen. After regaining my self-control I walked up to Isabel who was rearranging the flowers on the mantel.

"Isabel, if you do not mind I would like to go out. I do not know how long I will be gone, but if my intuition is correct, I will be back soon and I will not be alone either, goodbye."

"Where are you going? What is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing at all. I just feel that I must get some fresh air," I said as I went out of the room.

Jeannine did not live far from the d'Aout residence and I covered that distance in about ten minutes which seemed an eternity. As I arrived I did not have the courage to ring the bell and as I was deciding to ring, a man came out of the building and held the door open for me. Automatically, I went in and took the elevator to the second floor to Jeannine's

apartment. The elevator came to a stop as it reached its destination. Still undecided, I stood there for a minute and, finally, I found myself ringing the door bell. I woke up to reality and my heart stood still when I heard steps inside approaching the door. It was Jeannine herself.

"Good morning, Jeannine, may I come in? I need to speak with you."

"Please do come in, Michael. I was expecting you, you might say. I do not know why, but something kept telling me that you would come here to see me this morning," she said as we entered the living room. We sat down on the divan. Jeannine was wearing a very becoming robe which quite enhanced her charms.

"And to what do I owe the pleasure of having you here this morning, Michael? You seem nervous. What is wrong?" she asked as she regained her composure.

"Well, you see . . . I thought . . . This is not easy to say, but well . . . I knew you quite well a few years ago. We were children, but I guess that, not realizing it, I was in love with you . . ."

As I spoke, the smile on her face disappeared and she, now, looked prudishly at me.

" . . . last night, after you had gone, I could not seem to get you out of my mind. I slept uncomfortably and had a bad dream. Now I realize that I love you most tenderly. Think what you will, but I am confessing that I love you; I am asking if you will marry me."

"My dearest Michael, how I have longed to hear you say that since I saw you last night. Truly, this is the moment for which I have lived for a long time. Why do you think I have kept in touch with your sister for so long and always asked her about you? I always had the hope of seeing you return here. Do I love you? How much do I love you? God only knows."

Tears came down her cheeks, she was quivering. "My most cherished hope is to be able to become your wife and to go on through life showing you in every little thing how much

you mean to me. All I shall await now is the opportunity of being united to you in marriage and to be yours till the end of time."

When she stopped speaking, I drew her into my arms. Her head fell back, her eyes were half-closed and her generous lips seemed to ask to be kissed. I held her like this for a moment and contemplated her delicate throat and the whiteness of her shoulders through the décolleté of her robe. Then I put my lips on hers, and she threw her arms around my neck and pressed herself close to me. We remained in each other's arms for a long while. I wanted to express my feelings to Jeannine but the intense happiness I felt kept me from finding words. She looked up at me as if though she, too, wanted to say something. The clock chimed. It was one o'clock in the afternoon. We woke up to reality.

"My Jeannine, are you not hungry yet? How would you like to come with me and break the news to Isabel while we have lunch with her?"

Jeannine smiled in agreement.

"All right then, go in and get yourself dressed."

She stood up before me, still in an ecstatic mood. Her eyes were warm and tender. I took her hands and pulled her onto my lap and kissed her. Then I helped her back to her feet and she went into her bedroom. While she was dressing, I observed with interest the simple, attractive manner in which she had arranged the room. On the right, above the fireplace, was a vase with flowers, and knickknacks; hanging on the wall above, was a mirror and, directly across was a large floor lamp and French doors which led out onto a veranda. By the divan was a small table with a radio, and underneath, on a rack, were a few books by some of the masters of the French literature. The floor was covered with a large rug that harmonized with the light green of the walls. The door to Jeannine's room was at the left, and on each side were a clock and a reproduction of one of Degas' ballerinas. When Jeannine returned I put out the cigarette I had been smoking. She was wearing a black suit which was suitable to her indeed.

"Shall we go now?" she asked.

I clasped her hand in mine and led her outside.

"Oh, there you are," said Isabel as we entered the room. "Jeannine, I am so glad you came. But I had no idea he was going to see you. I thought his behaviour was strange when, all of a sudden, he left the house. Well, I am happy he had you in mind. What, the two of you look suspicious. What is the matter? Why, you are holding hands too. Do not tell me . . . I know . . . you are in love."

"Yes, Isabel, and I am supremely happy" said Jeannine, glancing at me with her sweet smile.

"We will be married as soon as we can," I said as I placed my arm around Jeannine's waist. "Jeannine, I have known you for a very long time and I believe that the two of you are just suited for each other. I am sure Jules's parents will be very happy to hear the news. Oh, say, Michael, I have kept your lunch in the dining room and there is enough for the two of you. Let us go in and you tell me all about your plans, will you not? Or did the two of you already have lunch?"

"No, we have not had anything to eat, yet. Michael was anxious to tell you about us and so we came straight over here."

"Well, here we are now. Jeannine, you and Michael just sit down while I go and fetch your lunch. I think it is still hot." Isabel placed on the table a large bowl of fried potatoes, a dish with a salad, ham and a large bottle of beer.

"You two ate like birds. I know, you are too much in love to think of anything else. See what love does for you!"

"I am afraid we will have to leave you now, Isabel. Jeannine promised she would go out with me tonight."

"You will have to excuse us, Isabel, because I still have to stop at my place and change clothes."

I picked up my hat and asked Isabel to let the d'Aouts know that I would have dinner with them the following evening. Then Jeannine and I left.

It was six o'clock when, after having gone for a walk, we arrived at Jeannine's. The atmosphere in the apartment was very inviting. We sat on the divan and the room looked very cozy with the dim light from the lamp beside us.

"You know what, my darling, I will wear a formal dress tonight."

"But I do not have my tuxedo with me."

"Oh, but you do not need to wear a tuxedo. It is true that the Paon Doré is a swank place, but I know that it will not be noticeable if you go as you are. You see people nowadays cannot find all the things they wish. You will find many a woman there wearing a formal dress while her escort will be informal and vice versa."

"I will grant that perhaps it will not matter, but still I wish I could do it for you."

"It is quite all right, my sweetheart, I do not mind. Besides, I will be wearing my formal merely so that you may see what I look like in such an attire and also to give you an idea of what kind of a bride you will be taking up to the altar someday . . . soon . . . I hope."

"As you wish, darling," I said as I held her in my arms and gave her a furtive kiss on the neck just below the ear.

"Hum, that gives me such chills," said Jeannine as she clung to me, trembling. "Oh, I am so happy that at last I have you, that at last I am yours; but still, there seems to be something somewhere to make me afraid . . . at times it all seems just like a dream . . . sometimes I feel very much this is real but I only seem to be able to go so far in my thoughts and then I cannot see any further. The future seems so dark. Oh, press me in your arms, beloved, let us stay like this forever, let not fate take us apart. Fate . . . do you believe in fate, Michael dear? God set us free here on earth, I know, to do with our souls as we please. He gave us the power to distinguish between right and wrong. I have been taught to believe this. I have been taught to believe, also, that life here and beyond is what we make it, but somehow, I feel that everything I do was planned so it would happen just the way it does.

I even, at times, have a premonition of what is going to take place in the immediate future and just as the picture passes from my mind, I see it all happen in reality. Is this not very strange?"

"Oh, do not worry beloved, what can possibly stop us from being happy together? The war? No, because we are going to be married just as soon as the priest is willing to unite us in holy matrimony, to unite us in an indissoluble vow . . . a union which neither man nor time can destroy . . . a union that will blend us spiritually as well as physically and will have God's blessings which will, in turn, protect us through life. What have we to fear? As you become my wife you lose your citizenship and automatically acquire mine. Then I will take you away from this old Europe . . . this corrupt land . . . this withering old world. We will be courageous and start a new life in America far away from this cursed territory. Everything will be new to us and we will learn all over again how to be good citizens . . . good citizens to a good homeland."

"Darling, I am happy wherever I may find myself so long as you are there with me. Going out dancing with you would be most delightful, but there will be others there, intruding into our happiness. Maybe you would not mind just staying home tonight and talking? We could postpone our dance date, could we not?"

There was something more powerful than I or my will hovering over us, an indication, no doubt, that the time for me to please Jeannine and to make her as happy as I possibly could was then, for I would not have a chance later. The truth is that, unwillingly to a certain extent, I agreed not to go out that night. I could not seem to do anything I wanted. To the smallest detail our actions were guided by Jeannine's most endearing personality. I was, one might say, under a spell—conscious of all that was taking place and, yet unable to direct or suggest. Under a spell? I certainly was. Under the spell emanated from Jeannine's beauty, sensibility and deep affection. Now, when I remember that long-gone evening with

the woman who taught me that there was such a thing as true undying love, I can clearly see what she meant when asking if I believed in fate. We were very much the victims of fate, very much conscious of it and yet, being unable to foretell what would so soon separate us so harshly, we just stood by and let destiny take its course, we poor mortals.

So we had stayed home that night and Jeannine made it as attractive and comfortable as she could. She soon had overcome her inner fears and conflicts and remained rather gay and happy the rest of the evening. In fact, I too, forgot the outside world and I do not think anyone ever lived so much and so happily in as short a time as we did—six short hours, six long hours. We were never to be together again, but that precious evening was far better than years of life in longing and loneliness. I might as well have gone with her.

"Michael, dear, it is rather late and I think you should go home now. We both need a rest, this has been a very strenuous day and besides what will your sister think?" Jeannine said as she cuddled up to me and I put my arms around her, holding her head against my cheek.

"Why must I go when all I want is to be near you? Why, when my heart only beats for you. You see the mere sight of you makes me shake. I am afraid to hold your hand and, yet, I want so much the rapture of holding you against my heart."

"My beloved, we must not . . . not until that fine day comes. Then we will have a lifetime of bliss together, we will raise children, maybe four or six. Please go, dearest. I do not want to succumb. Oh, please, do not kiss me tonight . . . tomorrow . . ."

"As you wish, Jeannine, I shall go," I walked out of the apartment my heart aching.

"Do not look back, sweetheart, just go on."

I walked to the elevator and just as I was pressing the button to open the door to the elevator, Jeannine rushed over with her arms open and, as she fell in my arms, she began weeping and speaking in a delirious manner. Her voice sounded lugubrious . . . doom had set in.

Jeannine now acted as though she knew that this was the last time we were ever to be together again. She managed to smile. I could not resist any longer and so I pulled her into my arms and kissed her violently. The fever of that last kiss did not feel like that of the many others. The atmosphere was haunted by destiny. I flung myself into the elevator and Jeannine ran back to her apartment.

Outside it was dark and there was no one to be seen around. I walked slowly and in a dejected manner. Had Jeannine's fears and forecasts of what was to come taken possession of me? I had but one thought in mind: my tender Jeannine, my angel. After some fifteen minutes I arrived home. It was around one in the morning. As I was going upstairs to my room I saw a light on in the library and thought that perhaps the Major was still reading. So, I went back downstairs and into the library. I was right. Major d'Aout was there. However, he was not reading at all. He was just sitting in a large armchair, smoking his pipe. He seemed very deep in thought.

"May I come in?" I asked as I entered the room.

Surprised, the Major answered, "Certainly, do come in, Michael. Let me congratulate you on your choice of Jeannine. We are very happy for you. But, if I may ask, what are your plans, that is, how soon do you intend being married? If the two of you are serious about one another, I see no reason why you should delay being married. After all, you will have to be going home soon and anyway, how are we to know that we will not be fighting next week, even tomorrow? I know you will not feel hurt at my meddling in your affairs but, if you ask me, I think it is high time you returned home. Do not misunderstand me, there is nothing personal in this. In fact, we have grown very fond of you, but I feel that you would be out of place here if, tomorrow, the Germans began their offensive, or if in some way we were carried into the conflict. Follow my advice and take Jeannine with you; the sooner the better."

"I do not mind at all your advising me. Indeed, I appreciate it very much because by being frank towards me you are

showing how highly I rate in your estimation. Besides, you are a much older and more experienced man. I respect you for that and for other reasons. I truly welcome your sage advice and, in fact, I have decided to arrange to be married tomorrow, if the church will waive the banns.

"Perhaps we had better go to bed now," said the Major as he brought his hand up to his mouth to cover a yawn.

We walked up the stairs and bid each other goodnight as he went into his room and I, to mine. I shut my door but did not feel like going to bed. I was not sleepy and felt restless on account of the agitated state of mind in which I had left Jeannine. I lit a cigarette and sat at the desk in the center of the room. From there I could see, through the window, the neighborhood in which Jeannine lived. The sky was clear and the moonlight resplendent. I began thinking: "Why did Jeannine behave so strangely tonight? What had so suddenly affected her? Why did she sound so morbid, tonight of all nights? She had to mention, of all things, fate. Well, I will ask her to go with me to the Parish and see what our prospects for being married tomorrow are. From then on, I will always be with her and I shall try and show her the good things of life only. Oh, how wonderful a day tomorrow will be. We will belong to each other forever. We will spend our honeymoon in Portugal while awaiting passage to the United States. By then she will certainly have a better outlook on life. She is so divine. Those dark, long eyelashes make her eyes so mysterious. Her refined figure is so irresistible, but most of all, her sweet and calm disposition reveals a very generous and understanding heart."

After smoking several cigarettes my eyes felt heavy. I was tired and sleepy at last. I went to the window to bring down the shade and stopped there for a moment to look towards the area where Jeannine lived. I brought down the shade, turned out the light and went to bed.

Something I did not know what, woke me up early at dawn the next morning. In my drowsiness, I was unable to realize what had awakened me. A few seconds later I was sound

asleep again. Then, again, something caused me to wake up. This time it had been a sharp loud sound which quite awakened me. I turned over. A deafening sound could be heard away. "What can this be now?" I wondered. Then I found myself thinking of my Jeannine again. All of a sudden, I heard the echo of what sounded like an explosion. My heart-beat accelerated. I could hear intermittent sounds, the roaring sound of planes high above at some distance. Then an explosion here and there. I felt very warm and began perspiring. "Oh, no, this cannot be the Germans. Cannot possibly be." Now the anti-aircraft guns began sounding. "Yes, the Germans are bombing Brussels. What else can this be? Not air raid practise," I thought to myself. Strangely enough, although I knew, like everyone else did, that the Germans would soon begin their offensive, I could not accustom myself to the idea, to the truth which so unfortunately was before me. I kept telling myself, "This is it." Yet, I could not believe it. A heavy explosion nearby convinced me that this was no practise, that I was not having a nightmare and that, in fact, the Germans were bombing Brussels. The windows in my room as well as the furniture vibrated.

I jumped out of bed and, after partially clothing myself, ran downstairs where I found Isabel and the d'Aouis. I shall always remember their consternation, the panic in their eyes. As I came in, Isabel rushed towards me and said as she wept, "What am I going to do now? Jules is in Antwerp. I wonder if they are bombing there, too. When will I see him again? Will you take me to Antwerp in the morning to bring him back?"

She was quite nervous and I had to reassure her. "Take it easy now, Isabel, Jules will be all right. He is a man who can take care of himself. He will be here tomorrow. You know he will. Do not alarm yourself. He will be all right."

"Maybe he will be wounded and hospitalized. Maybe he will be killed. Maybe he will not find a vehicle to return here. What shall I do then?"

"Calm down now, Isabel," I said as I embraced her.

"We will be safe at our farm, why not go there as soon as

"possible?" asked Mrs. d'Aout. "Besides it will be the only place where we will find food; we have our own there. Here we will probably be unable to get any and besides we will be subject to the air raids. . . ."

Two explosions close by put an end to Mrs. d'Aout's remarks. We all glanced at one another horrified. The windows were shattered. Major d'Aout hurried towards the door as he said, "Let us go downstairs to the basement."

We followed him. The German planes could be heard distinctly above now and multiple explosions caused by the falling bombs kept the building in constant vibration. Although the house was over a hundred years old, it still was sturdy enough and the basement was formed by thick concrete with several pillars.

While all this was taking place I did not, for a moment, stop thinking of my Jeannine. I felt that, although this was a serious matter, I should reflect upon the situation before taking action.

"What is going to happen to all of us?" Mrs. d'Aout went on as she cried. The Major, standing by her, was very pensive and held his arm around her shoulders. We just stood still. I could not stand the intensity of the events any longer. How was I to know that Jeannine would be all right? Fear took possession of me. Fear for my Jeannine. I slipped away. Rushed upstairs, opened the entrance door and dashed out like mad. I ran as fast as I could and, as I turned around the corner, I saw the street was obstructed by the debris of the tall buildings across the street, enveloped by flames. I ran back and took a different route, a longer one. I kept on running. Ambulances and police cars passed by hurriedly. Meanwhile, the German planes were returning to their base after having unexpectedly planted chaos, destruction and death in the peaceful town of Brussels.

I ran a few minutes more until a horrible sight brought me to a stop. My legs shook and my heart stopped. Jeannine's apartment house was partly demolished.

"Oh, no, she lives on the other side, I think. Please God,

"please," I said to myself, shaking all over. My legs felt weak. Then I started running again. I arrived at Jeannine's house: her apartment was on the bombed side. The stairway was not very damaged and I managed to run up to the second floor. I knocked on the door and received no answer. I yelled, "Jeannine, open the door. Jeannine, are you all right?"

I banged on the door at the same time. Still no reply. So knowing only too well that Jeannine must have been hurt, I pushed the door until it broke open. I looked inside, no sight of Jeannine. I flung the door aside and ran to Jeannine's bedroom. The door was jammed. I kicked it open and froze in my tracks when, at a glance, I saw that the wall on the other side of the room had been torn down. The outside could be seen from there. I, then, looked at Jeannine's bed. It was covered with fragments from the ceiling and the wall. Jeannine was lying there with tears in her eyes and looking at me in a most moving and tender manner. Blood ran down from her head, pieces of plaster lay by her head and over her torso. With a faint smile, she said, "Sweetheart."

I ran to her and threw my head on her bosom. She ran her fingers through my hair, "Has it not been wonderful, my beloved Michael? I have been supremely happy. Oh, promise me you will not forget me. What will happen to you, now that I will not be caring for you. We really had an immense bliss together; it was too wonderful to last. Now I know why the future seemed so dark to me. Oh, beloved, I want you to be happy, run away from here, go to America, be happy, and, one day you will find yourself somebody else to make you happy; somebody whom you will make as happy as you did me. Always remember me as the girl who loved you deeply. Only remember the happy moments we shared together. Do not let the thought of me make you unhappy ever. Think of me as a dream that did not come true. My most earnest desire was to live with you, for you. God did not bless us with that bliss. Yet, I thank Him for having granted me those few heavenly moments I spent with you. I feel weak . . . where are you, I cannot see you . . . no, do not, please, you would

not be able to find anyone to take care of me now. It would be useless anyway. I will soon be gone. Let them take care of the others who may still survive, not me. Oh, hold me close in your arms, my sweetheart, give me a last kiss. Let me part with this world in a heavenly manner. Give me a glimpse of the beyond in a warm kiss . . . for I will soon be there. . . ." "Beloved, dearest Jeannine, do not leave me . . . please. . ." I cried as I pressed her inert body in my arms and kissed her passionately. "My Jeannine, you are not you any longer, you feel cold . . . still not even death has touched your beauty . . . instead you look even more beautiful. Oh, why, why . . ." I wept for a long time, how long I could not say, for three or four days later I found myself in a hospital bed. I could not remember anything that had happened since Jeannine had died in my arms. I felt lethargic and the happy days with my Jeannine were but too vivid.

Later, that evening, the doctor and a nurse came to examine me. "Well, it looks as though you will be able to leave us tomorrow morning. You are doing very nicely, but I cannot understand, when you were brought here you seemed to be very ill, you were delirious. You seemed to be suffering from a bad brain concussion although there were no signs on your head to indicate that you had been hit. We did not X-ray your head because this is an emergency hospital and we do not have those facilities here. Your appearance was pretty critical. Well, get some rest tonight because we will not be able to keep you here much longer. This hospital is urgently needed for battle casualties. Anyway, you say that you feel well and I can see no reason why we should keep you here any longer. I will see you in the morning, now get some sleep." "Get some sleep," he said. How can I sleep, how can I eat or live? Sleep without my Jeannine's shoulder on which to rest my head; eat if I have no desire to live? "Brain concussion," he calls it. My state of exhaustion was such that I soon was sound asleep and did not wake up until the following morning when the doctor had to shake me in order to arouse me.

After examining me and saying a few words to the nurse, the doctor addressed me: "As far as I can determine, your health is good and, unless you have any disturbance to report, I think you may now leave this hospital. Go home to your relatives and rest as much as you can for a few days. The receptionist at the entrance hall will tell you where your wife has been buried. It is too bad it had to happen. She was a beautiful woman in the prime of life. There was not a thing that could have been done for her. Have courage, you are not in this alone, countless people are in identical circumstances nowadays. . . ."

The doctor was called away and did not complete his sentence. The nurse brought my clothes, and I dressed and left.

## *Part Two*

**T**HAT day, after enquiring about the location of Jeannine's grave, I left the hospital. I felt lonely and desperate; I felt as though I had no friends. Even the thought of my own sister was far from my mind. I walked aimlessly. Here and there I found buildings destroyed. The people looked mournful; the town looked sad. Workers were clearing the debris off the streets. Everything was quiet otherwise. Some two hours later I found myself at the cemetery where my Jeannine had been buried. The keeper led me to her grave.

"My poor Jeannine, deep underground, sentenced to rot . . . her beautiful soft skin . . ." Tears ran from my eyes. I fell on my knees and prayed. After, when I arose, my heart seemed to feel lighter. I had done my duty towards my Jeannine. I felt as though she were there by my side, watching me. Then her last words drifted back to my mind. That gave me a new strength. "I must do as she asked me in her agony; it was her wish, her last will. So I shall go on," I said to myself. Then I began walking again. I went to the d'Aut residence.

"Where have you been? We have been so anxious about you," said Isabel. I fell in her arms and cried like a child.

"Jeannine will watch over you from above. She will keep you company throughout the years . . . You must be courageous. Jeannine would not want you to go on mourning her. Pull yourself together. Pierre has joined the army and is now fighting and avenging Jeannine's blood."

"Yes, Michael, we are very sorry this had to happen. Let us say it was God's will. You are still young, you will over-

come the pain of her loss. Always remember Jeannine, but only as a symbol of kindness, sweetness and the best of womanhood. We all will remember her in our prayers," added the Major.

"Michael, just as you predicted, Jules arrived here that first day when the Germans bombed Brussels." Isabel interjected.

"I am happy to hear that. How is he? What does he have to say about the situation in Antwerp?"

"I was so worried at first that I did not know what to do. Imagine, I was all set to go to Antwerp to meet him, when, all of a sudden, I heard him in the house talking to the maid. I could not believe it. It certainly was very comforting to hear his voice again and to know that he was safe. He is upstairs now, I will go and tell him that you are back. We will not be long."

A few minutes later, while I quickly glanced at the news-papers, Jules came down.

"Hello, Jules, I am so glad you were able to make it back from Antwerp. I assume you will not be staying here long, you will be going into the army, no doubt."

"I wish I could. However, the army has found me unfit for military duty. They say I have a weak heart, that I am flat-footed. Well, it may be for the best, that way."

We remained there for a while. We were sad and silent. "Let us turn on the radio and see what is new at the front," suggested Major d'Aout.

"The Germans are now only forty kilometers away from Brussels, and Antwerp is under the constant fire of the German artillery. In the French sector, the Germans are reported to have pierced the Maginot Line. The allied troops are retreating all along the line, unable to sustain the smashing onslaught launched by the Germans," the announcer said.

This news was enough to incite my hosts.

"Let us go to our farm and seek refuge there," said one. "Let us go down to southern France . . . it will be a while before the Germans reach there if they ever do," said another.

"You three go, protect yourselves. We will stay, we do not want to leave home, not at a time like this. We belong here, but the three of you go," said the Major.

"Michael, Isabel and I will go with you. We will go and keep on going so long as necessary. We will pack right now. The Germans will be here any time now. We still have enough gasoline in my car to go some distance into France. Once there, we will either find more gasoline or we will take a train to Bordeaux. Yes, that is it, Bordeaux. That is where our friend, Dr. Mendes, is presently in the capacity of consul general for Portugal. We will find safety yet; he will give us a visa to Portugal. Let us hurry, there is no time to be lost, let us go," said Jules as he went out of the room, followed by Isabel.

I was left alone. "My Jeannine, I really have no reason for staying any longer, but where will I go? Why should I go if I am not coming to you? I will stay. Here I still can come to your grave and be with you. If I go, not even that consolation will be left to me."

Jules now came back.

"All right, we are all set to start. I will go out and get the car ready. Get your things and let us go," he said as he walked out of the house.

Isabel came in with two small cases. "I have packed your things in this case. The other one contains Jules's and mine. Come on now, we will have to hurry."

While we prepared to leave, Mr. and Mrs. d'Aout came out of the house to see us off. "So you are ready to go. May God be with you. May you be successful in your search for happier days. We are happy to see you go, for, we trust, God will watch over you. We are sad to see you go for perhaps we shall never meet again. But the future belongs to you and you must be courageous and fight for the life to which you aspire. We are not young any more and we belong here. We want to spend our last days here where our parents lived and died. We are old. We want to suffer with our country," Major d'Aout said in a sad tone with tears in his eyes.

Mrs. d'Aout, silently weeping, stood by her husband look-

ing at us. Weeping too, Isabel and Jules embraced their parents while I thanked them for the, although tragic, happy and memorable days spent at their home.

"You had better leave now. You must not lose any more time. Please hurry," said the Major.

We boarded the car and departed often looking back and waving our hands at Jules's parents. It was a hardship on Jules and Isabel leaving Brussels, leaving their home. I, too, experienced that feeling to a certain extent, for I was leaving my heart behind. I would never forget Brussels or its meaning for me. I had lived there; my heart had died there. We did not speak, but I could tell at a glance what was devouring the hearts of Jules and Isabel. Many a happy day, many a dream, many a wish, was now being wiped away by the hard truth, the cruel reality.

The situation was desperate. What could we, or anyone else, expect from such unprecedented events? We did not know what would happen once we ran out of gasoline; we did not know what could happen. We trusted to fate and set out on our way in the hope that we would find safety and better days away from the rapidly advancing enemy somewhere, anywhere.

As we were leaving Brussels, the German planes approached in another terror mission. Bombs fell everywhere. Here and there, we found houses afire or demolished by previous bombings. There were people running wildly through the streets as though they did not know what they were after. People were grieving over the loss of their dear ones and clamoring over what was irreparable: the loss of their daily peaceful lives. The police were trying to maintain order and prevent pillage; Red Cross cars and ambulances passed by hurriedly.

As we rode down towards the frontier, the traffic became heavier. From town to town, more fugitives joined our already long convoy of refugees. The cars bore license plates from many different countries in Europe; some were from countries of other continents, piled mountain-high with household arti-

cles, mattresses and beds. The refugees looked anxious and restless. Some had been on their flight for weeks and looked exhausted and nerve-wracked. Some had long beards; they had been unable to shave for many days. The women, calmer, had a better appearance. The children, not realizing the gravity of the situation, acted as usual. The aged, very concerned, appeared to be deep in thought and maintained a reserved attitude. The young children were just on another trip, the old were experiencing something they had never thought could happen to them. They had lived and seen much in their lives, but never so much. They seemed to be able to cope with the situation in a more adroit manner. The others, knowing only too well with what they were contending, seeing their hopes and dreams on the brink of failure, were nervous and excited. Some were very mindful of their belongings, especially of the mattresses they had brought along. They knew that, most certainly, they would not find on their way a bed on which to repose and regain the energy necessary to continue on their flight.

We arrived in Valenciennes, in France, after a long and tiresome day. Everywhere were signs of destruction by the German air force. The town, although packed with refugees, seemed to be deserted. All was quiet. It was time for us to have our evening meal and we felt hungry.

"Hope we will find a place to park our car, somewhere," said Jules. "It does not seem we will have much luck, not the way this town is crowded with refugees. Oh, here we are, if the car will only fit there. Good and well, it does fit here. Let us go somewhere to eat dinner now," said Jules.

"Are you sure you can make it?" asked Jules addressing Isabel as we alighted from the car.

"Yes, I guess I will be all right," answered Isabel.

Then we walked across the street to what seemed to be a restaurant. The owner impatiently sent us away, "Do I have a sign outside saying that I am serving food to anyone?" The rudeness on the part of this man rather shocked us but we did not even answer him and, after just glancing at one another,

we walked away. We came across several other restaurants, but they were either too crowded or closed. The ones where food was to be had, served only meager meals for exorbitant prices. In view of the way they were crowded we did not wait to be served anywhere.

"Let us drive to the next town. Perhaps we will be luckier there; we may even find a small restaurant in some small town or village on the way," said Isabel.

"It seems to be the best thing to do if not the only one at that. Let us walk back to the car," said Jules. "Am I dreaming or do I see, over there, one of those wagons that serve fried potatoes and ham? It is smoking. Let us hurry before the crowd surrounds it."

We ran and, thank God, we finally had something to eat: fried potatoes, ham and pickles. This was one of those ambulant restaurants so typical of northern France and Belgium.

"We may as well find ourselves hotel rooms and spend the night here. No use going any farther tonight and, besides, you need some rest, Isabel," Jules said.

As Isabel went into the car I asked Jules, "I have noticed that you are being especially careful of Isabel. Why, does she feel ill?"

"Yes and no. She is pregnant, now of all times. Before the war, we hoped to blessed with the arrival of a baby, but in vain. The war had made us forget all about it and we were even thankful we did not have that worry in our minds when the war began. Now she is three months along and, for all we know, she may lose the baby. This is more than she can stand in her condition. I just hope she will be all right."

"Then we must not go any farther tonight. There must certainly be some place where she, at least, can sleep. Let us go and find that place," I said.

"Yes, but we cannot use the little gasoline we have left in our car. We must walk and that will not be good for her."

"Why not leave her in the car? She will be all right there and, when we find a room, one of us will come for her."

"All right."

We searched vainly for a room for Isabel. Finally, Jules said, "Well, this has been the eighth hotel or private home where we have tried. But just so that we will not have it on our conscience, let us enquire at this one."

"Yes," said the man who answered the door.

"My wife is pregnant and ill and in need of a room in which to spend the night. We have tried in many places but without success. We have come a long way. We are from Brussels. Can you help us?"

"We have no room for Belgians; we only welcome good allies, not collaborators of the Germans who paint themselves as our allies. Go, you traitors . . ."

We were not welcome, of course. The French frowned at the sight of the Belgian license on our car. What had happened? The French, who were always friendly towards their neighbors, the Belgians, had changed their friendly attitude into an hostile one; King Leopold III, of Belgium, had surrendered his army to the intruding enemy. We felt very bitter. Why should we all be judged by the actions of the king? Why should he be called traitor? Why should we? Perhaps the king ought to have fought to the end, but were we responsible for the actions of the king? I was not a Belgian myself, but, obviously, I was taken for one everywhere we went. My companions were. How could anyone judge a man and his whole nation for an act about which no one knew the true facts? We felt very discouraged. What could we do now? As we were leaving the hotel we went across the lobby where many persons were gathered and listening to the latest reports on the situation at the front. We too stopped and listened.

"The German vanguards are nearing Laon," the announcer reported. Laon was only a short distance from Valenciennes.

"Do you suppose all these people are refugees like us, Jules?" I asked.

"They seem to be. Watch the way they are leaving the lobby. This is a very shaky spot in which to be. Before we know it, the Germans will be here and then we will be forced

back on our tracks. Perhaps they will subject us to forced hard labor in concentration camps. I would never forgive myself if anything happened to Isabel or the baby. Let us drive on to Paris. We will take turns at the wheel, and in the meantime Isabel can sleep, although uncomfortably. Anything seems to be better than to risk being caught by the Germans. Did you hear the announcer say that one of the new methods of operating of the Germans is to send their troops heavily armed on motorcycles to a certain place previously agreed upon and then they drop paratroopers in that same location and, thus, establish the so-called "pockets."

"Let us not lose another minute. Come on. We had better not mention anything to Isabel. It may upset her and it would not be good for her at all."

We walked back fast and, soon, were on our way, like others, in our flight from our mortal enemies.

Driving all night was a hardship on the three of us. Jules and I took turns at the wheel every hour or so, so that the two of us might get some rest if rest could be had under such circumstances. We arrived in Paris early in the morning and, luckily, were able to refuel the car. At around ten o'clock in the morning we reached Le Mans. The voyage was slow and rough. The highways were crowded with the traffic formed by the wave of refugees who came from everywhere. In Le Mans, we took a short rest and bought ourselves some food, and then, went into a cafe to have some hot coffee. About one hour later we were on our way again. There were about three hundred miles more to be covered and, then, it would be Bordeaux, the Portuguese consul, Spain, and then, Portugal, like an oasis in a desert. As we arrived in Chatellerault, we were detained for some two hours. A heavy troop movement was taking place and we could not possibly try to get through and hinder the progress of the operation. The allied armies were retreating in mass. A large part of the allied troops was encircled in northern France and endeavoring to reach Dunkirk in time to elude the Germans and embark from there for England. The situation seemed hopeless. Italy had declared

war on the allies and a clash between the allies and the Italian army was imminent.

"The only thing we can do now is not to stop for any reason at all and just keep on driving as fast as possible," I said.

"Will we ever reach Bordeaux?" asked Isabel.

"We will cover as much distance in as short a time as can possibly be done. We will make it to Bordeaux all right. Let us avoid the main highways so as not to be delayed by this huge traffic. Like ours, the aim of all these refugees is to reach Bordeaux or Bayonne where, with help of God, they will be able to secure a visa to Portugal," Jules replied.

We drove on and on, so far from the front that we felt it only safe to stop for a short while to eat our lunch under the trees which lined the road. It was a very warm day and we needed to stretch our legs and relax. We lay on the green grass and nibbled on some sandwiches and biscuits we still had with us. A while later the roaring sound of planes could be heard. Meanwhile, the refugees kept on flowing by. Some, like us, stopped and lay on the grass. The planes were now approaching and, by the sound of the motors, we could tell that those were not allied planes. "Les Boches," everyone exclaimed. Yes, those were German planes, and this was going to be our first experience with them on the highway.

They were *Stukas* which flew low and strafed everything they could see. They had no compassion for us poor miserable refugees. They dived and strafed the convoy which was still passing by. Cars collided, stopped, were set on fire; there were dead and there were wounded. We were so overcome by the suddenness of the attack that we did not even try to seek shelter anywhere. We just stood there under the trees and watched the Germans slaughter the refugees.

A woman and a man, presumably her husband, got out of their car which was beginning to burn. She carried in her arms her small girl who had been hit by the shower of bullets poured by the *Stukas*. At this time, one of the planes came down too low and crashed against the high trees and caught fire. In our delirium, we could not help rejoicing at the sight

of the burning plane and its pilot: that one would spread misery no more.

The *Stukas* went on and quietness took over. We hastened to the aid of those who needed help. Some were dead; many were wounded. The little girl died in her mother's arms. The woman, so bereft by the sudden loss of her daughter, did not even shed a tear. She just got up and, facing her husband, said, "Why go any farther? We wanted to go on to new places far away from this misery; we wanted to start life anew—all for her. Now, she is no longer. Now what have we left to fight for?" Her eyes stared out at the opened fields. She looked as though she had lost her mind. Unexpectedly, she fainted and a minute later recovered consciousness only to weep like a child. Such was the tragedy.

"Well, I guess we had better keep on moving if we do not want to meet the Germans or the same fate as those who will not go any farther," said Jules as he comforted Isabel who was shaking with sorrow.

"Let me just see if we can be of any help to anyone around here first," I said as I walked away.

By this time only a few refugees remained and they felt they did not need assistance. Many were beyond help. At this moment, Isabel, who had become hysterical, complained of pains in her abdomen and back. She was having cold sweats. Jules became excited and nervous.

"What shall I do, Michael, I am afraid she is having a miscarriage and there is nobody around to help her. What shall I do?"

I enquired from the refugees whether there was a doctor among us. There was not. I walked back to Jules and said, "She will not be in immediate danger. She is in an early stage of pregnancy and, as far as I know, no serious consequence or complications are likely to arise from this. But, just the same, we will see a doctor in Bordeaux when we get there."

A few minutes later Isabel had lost her baby. I assisted Jules in placing her comfortably in the back seat of the car, and then we drove on.

This was the last stretch of our journey and the hardest one, too. There were so many cars on the road, cyclists, pedestrians and carts being pulled by horses and bulls. Everyone had the same thought in mind: to flee as far and as fast as possible from the enemy.

Two men signaled us to stop and asked us if we would give them a lift. "Our supply of gasoline is exhausted and we simply have got to reach Bordeaux. Please let us come with you," said one of the men.

"All right, get in," Jules answered.

"We have tried to exchange our cars for bicycles but what good is an automobile without fuel? No one would make the trade with us although we have seen it happen with others. Too bad."

"And what are your plans now, if I may ask?" I enquired. "We just cannot stand the Germans. If we stayed until their arrival, we would start shooting at them and then we would die. Would it be worth it? We will go to Portugal and, from there, we will go on to England and join the Free French Army which has headquarters there now. At least that is what we heard over the radio this morning. It seems that a certain General De Gaulle is endeavoring to reorganize the French troops which were able to flee to England across the channel from Dunkirk. We are French and live in Paris. We must have been betrayed. How else do you explain the situation? What good did the Maginot Line do? There must have been foul play somewhere."

We just kept silent. I, for one, was thinking how admirable it was that, after we had been attacked by the Germans, rejected by our friends, the French, we should still be counting on the assistance of Portugal. Were we going to be welcomed by Portugal or was Portugal going to refuse to give us asylum? The fact is that we all had much faith in our fellow man for we were counting on him . . .

"Look, only forty-five kilometers more to Bordeaux according to that sign," said one of the strangers.

He received no reply from any one of us, but our hearts be-

gan beating faster. Once in a while the convoy would have to come to a halt and we would alight from the car and talk like the others. Everyone seemed more cheerful, we all knew that Bordeaux would mean the start of happier days. I, as a rule, kept to myself; the souvenir of my Jeanmine was ever present in my mind. I would picture her there with us . . . had she not died she would be here with us, she would be my wife and we would be happy. I really was not a refugee, not by my own will, anyway. I had not cared to leave Brussels. I had been dragged out. I did not have any special place to go. My life had seemed empty. However, I was now thinking about how much longer it would be before I would set foot on a ship to America. I did not worry about that either, though. It is sad, indeed, to have to live without an aim in life, without the slightest interest in anything.

That night we entered Bordeaux, at around nine in the evening. It was quiet and deserted in the outskirts. There were hundreds of cars from all over Europe. Bordeaux was crammed with refugees. We drove past a large park, the name of which I do not recall. It was late and so we decided to stop and, at the example of hundreds of others, spend the night there. The thought of a bed was far from our minds. We made sure our valuables were safe, and, after finishing the food we had left over from our lunch, we lay down on the grass. We had intended to spend the night at my apartment. However, it had been taken over by the authorities to accommodate refugees. We all were really resting for the first time in weeks. The fear of the Germans, although always present, was not so accentuated. This was the first time, too, that we all were able to stop and think; to think of the past, to think of the flight, to think of the present, and to think of the future. There were many couples among us who had not, in many days or weeks, had an opportunity to express, physically or otherwise, their love for each other. They felt the need; they had the urge.

The park was dark and silent. Under their covers, one could see, husbands and wives, lovers, were once again experiencing

that ecstasy derived from love; an act which was comforting in itself, more so after such unprecedeted events. I kept thinking of my Jeanmine. What would I not give to be able to rest my head on her bosom. The moments we had spent together came back to my mind to the smallest detail. The weather was favorable and there was a soft evening breeze which helped us to relax and soon to fall asleep.

We rose with the sun after a relatively peaceful night. The people around us did not appear as gloomy. We, ourselves, felt much better. There was something like a new will to live in all of us. That feeling was cast upon us by the morning sun whose warm rays comforted us. Isabel, too, now felt quite all right. We stretched ourselves and, after more or less freshening our appearance, we went into a restaurant where we had a very meager breakfast for an exorbitant price. Then we enquired about the location of the Portuguese consulate and the hour at which it would open its doors. From there we walked back to the car to wait until nine o'clock, the time when the consulate would be open.

The consulate of Portugal was on Quai Louis XVIII, near Place des Quinconces. In this large square we found dozens of cars, hundreds of persons. We stopped there, and I walked up to the first person I came across, an old man, well in his sixties, and asked him what all those persons were doing there.

He explained, "We have been here for the past five days and nights. First we were only a few but, as the days went by, we became more numerous by the hour. It seems that we arrived here too late, for the Portuguese consul will not grant any more visas to anyone. It is indeed sad that we should be cut off from the only hope we had left. But that is the way of the world. Portugal does not need us; the Portuguese consul can leave any time he pleases. He does not have to fear the Germans or any of the contingents involved; he has diplomatic immunity. This is a world for the mighty; only they seem to be entitled to fairness. Still, we shall wait on till we either obtain a visa, are killed or imprisoned by the Germans

or, even more, until we commit suicide like some have already done."

It was strange to hear this man speak like this. Why, the Portuguese consul must surely have been instructed not to grant those visas. He is too good a man to take such an indifferent attitude. He is the father of fourteen children and, most certainly, he would not wish to see his family in such circumstances and abandoned. As I walked back to the car I felt it best not to repeat what I had heard. Anyway, how were we to know that such was the situation? I was now beginning to feel more interested in what was going on. The happenings had given me a different outlook on life. I was beginning to care. My love for Jeannine was ever present, but now I thought of her in a different way. I was still very much under the pain of her loss, but I was beginning to think in a constructive manner. I shall always remember her, for, to me, there is love but once in a life time. Jeannine taught me that there was such a feeling for I had not believed in it until then.

After she was gone, I could not regard any woman in the way I had Jeannine. Woman and Jeannine were synonymous to me. I do not believe I will ever find a woman who can compare. But life must go on and I must try and do as my Jeannine asked me. I must lead a useful and constructive life.

"What did that man have to say?" asked Jules.  
"Oh, he just said he did not know if we would be able to find a parking place around here."

"What does he mean? It seems to me it is a quite simple task to find a parking space here. Anywhere will be a fine parking space. Look right here."

We parked our car among the other hundreds and walked around the corner to the consulate. The crowd became denser as we neared the consul's residence. The people looked more or less impulsive, and indifferent, as though they had come from nowhere, as though they were going nowhere. They could tell where we were directed but did not even try to tell us that it was useless. Who cared what happened or did not happen? They sat around on their trunks, and some just stood idly.

As we reached the consular residence, a policeman stopped us, "I have orders not to let anyone approach the building. Move on now."

"But we are friends of the consul's family and . . ."

At this moment one of the consul's sons happened to be leaving the house and, upon seeing us, he immediately took us inside.

"How is Dr. Mendes?" Jules asked him.

"He is quite all right but cannot be disturbed. He is rather upset because of the orders he has received and which specifically state that the only refugees who may be granted a visa are those who have established residence in Portugal. No other. No Jew at all is to be granted a visa," he said.

"But saving us, refugees, is but the moral duty of any civilized person. Imagine the skipper leaving his ship as soon as he realized that it was sinking, and leaving the passengers and the crew to their ill fate. This is a similar situation," Jules added.

The news certainly took everything out of us. It shocked us beyond words. Our flight had been a vain attempt. What had we left home for? We, like the other thousands outside, were doomed.

All of sudden the entrance door flew open and in came an old man with his pooh under one arm and his wife hanging on to the other, a policeman following them up the stairs. "Where is the consul? We want to see the consul. We are Jews, we have to leave the country before the Germans get here. I am a professor at the Sorbonne in Paris and I have taught principles fundamentally in conflict with Nazism. They will kill us . . ." Looking down at the pooh and fondling it, he added, "Our poor little pooh will be left alone with no one to care for him. No, they will not kill him, a dog is harmless to them."

At this moment the door leading to the consul's office opened and in it stood the consul, Dr. Mendes. He looked grave, his eyes had blue circles around them. His hair had turned completely grey, as white as snow almost. With him

was Mrs. Mendes. They stood there for a moment. We were all speechless. Even the French professor, who only a few seconds before was in such a turmoil, now sat down and just beheld Dr. Mendes.

After a few seconds, Dr. Mendes spoke, "As I have already informed everyone, my government has flatly denied all requests for the granting of visas to any and all refugees. I have it all in my hands now, to save the many thousands of persons who have come from everywhere in Europe in the hope of finding sanctuary in Portugal. They are all human beings, and their status in life, their religion or color, are altogether immaterial to me. Furthermore, the clauses of the constitution of my country relative to such cases as the present, say that under no circumstances shall the religion or political belief of a foreigner bare him from seeking refuge in Portuguese territory. I am a Christian and, as such, believe that it is not for me to let these refugees perish. A large part of them are Jews, many are men and women with prominent positions who, due to their social standing, as leaders and such, felt it in their hearts to speak and act against the forces of oppression. They have done what, in their hearts, was the right thing to do. Now they want to go on where they will be able to carry on their fight for what they think is right. I know that Mrs. Mendes wholly concurs with my views, and I feel certain that my children will understand and not hold it against me, if by giving out visas to each and everyone of the refugees, I, tomorrow, am discharged from my duties for having acted contrarily to orders which, in my estimation, are vile and unjust. And so, I declare that I shall give, free of charge, a visa to whosoever shall request it. My desire is to be with God against Man rather than with Man, and against God."

Turning to the police officer who was standing by the door, he said, "I demand that your guard be lifted immediately. You are to stand by merely to maintain order. Not to prevent anyone from seeing me. Not any more. Go and spread the news."

To his children present, he said, "I do not know what the future holds for your mother, for you or for myself. Materially,

life will not be as good as it has been so far for us. However, let us be courageous and bear in mind that, by giving these refugees a chance to live, we shall be standing one more chance to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, for, by so doing, we shall be doing no more than carrying out God's commandments." Upon being informed that they were going to be given a visa any time they asked for it, the heretofore depressed throng of thousands of refugees, now very jubilant, cried, "Hurrah for the consul; Long Live Portugal!"

The heretofore sad and melancholic crowd was now in constant murmur. Yes, they were all planning on what they would do. They would go to Portugal and from there to their countries' colonies and do their part from there. They would go to England and join the remnants of their countries' armies who had fled there; they would even try for the new world—America. They were now standing in interminable lines awaiting their turn to enter the consulate and obtain the precious visa, a ticket to life.

Meanwhile, the Sorbonne professor, who had broken through the police guard and succeeded in entering the consulate, had brought with him his wealth in gold which amounted to a very sizeable fortune. It was composed of pearls, jewels, diamonds and what not. He knew that he would not be able to pass it through the Spanish and Portuguese frontiers. This, naturally, caused him much anguish. Finally, he decided to entrust it to Dr. Mendes and did not rest until he saw him place it in the safe deposit box which the consulate rented at the Credit Lyonnais office in Bordeaux.

"Now I must have the cooperation of some of my children in the process of granting the visas," Dr. Mendes said. "My staff is not large enough for the job. You," he said addressing Pedro and José, "the two of you have assisted me before and so know what to do, so give me your help."

Somebody opened the doors and then began the tremendous task of granting visas to thousands of refugees. Three days later, as the last refugees were leaving the con-

sulate, Dr. Mendes, seeing his job done, looked up as if to say "Thank you God for having allowed me to serve you" and then, as he made for a chair, he collapsed. His job had been successfully completed. He could now let go of his self control. The intensity of the events had aged Dr. and Mrs. Mendes. This had truly been their crucifixion. Mrs. Mendes, who was now without domestic help, decided that she should cook and feed as many refugees as might be necessary. She kept the more deserving ones, the aged and the sick, in her home, sewed their clothes when necessary, and even went as far as to make their beds and wash their clothes. A true act of abnegation. And all this in the space of three days. May God have mercy on her soul. She was a great woman.

After three days of uncertainty as to whether or not Dr. Mendes would recover, he showed signs of becoming conscious. This was a happy day. We had decided to stand by so that we might help in whatever way we could. That was all we could do for a man who had done so much for so many. "You should not have stayed. You are subjecting yourselves to danger. Please go," said Dr. Mendes a few minutes after he had recovered consciousness.

"If you wish," replied Jules, "but let us have your home address in Portugal and we shall be glad to visit you there."

Mrs. Mendes gave us their home address and just as we were preparing to leave, two men came in. They had an haughty attitude and made themselves at home.

"I am a special emissary of the Portuguese government and this is my secretary," one of them said. "We want to see Dr. Mendes immediately."

"I am the consul," Dr. Mendes replied.

"You are Dr. Mendes? All right, I need not say what has brought me here. If you do not know why I am here you will soon find out. I have been directed to take you to Lisbon. We must leave immediately, there is no time to be lost. You know, of course, what this means. How dared you act in discordance with the instructions transmitted to you by your superiors?"

"I did what my conscience dictated me to do," Dr. Mendes replied.

We were all quiet and the atmosphere in the room was that of suspense. Dr. Mendes went to prepare his personal belongings and official papers which he would need in Lisbon and shortly returned and announced that he was ready to leave. The ambassador and his secretary stood up and, without saying a word, walked out, followed by Dr. Mendes, his wife, Jules, Isabel and myself.

After riding for a few long hours, we arrived in Bayonne. "Oh, look there, Jules," I said as we arrived in the vicinity of the consulate of Portugal, "these people must be refugees; wonder what they are doing here at this time. Probably these are not part of the refugees who went to Bordeaux. They must have come directly here and now the vice consul will not give them visas."

"Yes, it seems to be just as you say, let us see what will happen now.... This has all the aspects of a second Bordeaux." We stopped in front of the vice consul's office and followed Dr. Mendes and the emissary into the consulate. The vice consul came to enquire who we were and Dr. Mendes, as he sat at one of the desks, enquired, "Why do you not help those poor refugees?"

"Why, you know as well as I that our government has categorically refused to grant any visas to anybody. I am here to carry out the instructions I receive from my superiors."

"How would you like to find yourself, your wife and children in the same circumstances as the refugees? You say you are here to carry out the instructions you receive from your superiors. Very well, I am still the consul at Bordeaux and, consequently, your superior. I, therefore, order you to pass out as many visas as may be needed."

Upon this, he sent out messengers to ask the refugees to call at the chancery of the consulate to obtain their visas. The emissary, as though beginning to understand what the situation was all about, said no more and just stood by. The vice

consul flew into a mad rage when he saw Dr. Mendes sit at his desk and prepare the necessary rubber stamps and forms to make out the visas. It so happened that the visas Dr. Mendes now granted were the first of their kind. They read something like this: "The Portuguese Government requests the Spanish Government the courtesy of allowing the bearer to pass freely through Spain. He is a refugee from the European conflict and enroute to Portugal!"

These visas were slips which bore no other identification than the official seal of the consulate. This was the kind of visa Dr. Mendes passed out. There was no time for formalities. The life and well being of each and everyone of the refugees was what counted with Dr. Mendes.

The following day, as the refugees who had gone to Bayonne were once again on the move, on their way to safety, Dr. Mendes again informed the emissary that he was ready to continue on the voyage home.

We reached Hendaye on the Franco-Spanish border late in the evening. Once again, we found a large multitude of refugees—more than we had ever seen anywhere before. All the refugees who had been encouraged by Dr. Mendes, and many, many others, thousands of them, had come full of hopes to Hendaye only to see their efforts shattered. Spain in collaboration with Portugal, had shut her frontier. This was something beyond Dr. Mendes' power, everyone thought. Yes, there was not a thing Dr. Mendes could do about this new development in the persecution of the refugees. However, God helps those who have faith in Him. It is true that Dr. Mendes could not help the situation at all. Here, there were Spaniards armed and ready to stop anyone who might attempt to pass into Spain. Many refugees, no doubt, faithfully prayed to God; Dr. Mendes did. Not knowing what he was doing himself, Dr. Mendes said to the refugees in a large square in Hendaye: "Ask no questions. Just follow me."

Upon saying this and allowing time for the refugees to get ready to follow his car, Dr. Mendes departed. "Where is he taking us," Jules wondered.

"I would not know; I have not the faintest idea, but I feel sure he will take us through Spain. He is a man capable of doing anything he sets out to do," I answered.

"Yes, he has helped us before to see our way clear and he is doing the very same thing now, no doubt," Jules added. We rode for a long time. Just how long I would not know. This must have been the very largest convoy ever assembled anywhere. God must have been with Dr. Mendes, with all of us, for very soon we found ourselves in Spain. What had happened? This was a real miracle. Dr. Mendes had done it once again. Most certainly inspired by God, he had thought that perhaps the orders of the Spanish government had not been transmitted to all points in the frontier. Obviously, the refugees would all drive to Hendaye, the Spanish authorities presumed. They were right. They did. However, the Spanish authorities had forgotten that there were other points in the frontier whereby the refugees could successfully enter the country. That is exactly what happened. Dr. Mendes was ahead. He presented his credentials to the guards and explained to them that he had authorized all the refugees to go to Portugal and that it was all right, therefore, to let them pass freely. So they did.

Two days later we arrived in Elvas, in Portugal. The refugees had taken different routes. We were no longer in a convoy. Portugal presented a better aspect in general than did the countries through which we had just travelled.

It was late in the evening when, after presenting our passports at the frontier, we entered the town of Elvas. It all seemed so strange to us. From terror-stricken people, we were now in the presence of indolent and carefree people. There were couples walking the streets peacefully, men standing at corners and talking; others playing their guitars and singing some melancholic sounding Portuguese melody. All street lights were on and no one bothered with anything, no one tried to prevent the lights from showing through the windows, no one feared an air raid here. It was warm and the beautiful full moon cast a bright moonlight over the land. We spent the

night in Elvas and the following morning set out again on our way to Lisbon from where we would, ultimately, depart for a new life, for a new world. The intensity of our fear and anxiety was beginning to wear off. Our nightmares did not occur as frequently. The Portuguese newspapers bore information to the effect that the world was very grateful to the Portuguese government for its action in sheltering the refugees. The knowledge of the fact that the refugees had been helped by one sole man, Dr. Mendes, and not by the Portuguese government made me feel bitter. At this time Dr. Mendes had been severely reprimanded for his action. He had lost his position, and he and his wife and their children had been thrown into misery. The truth is that I, as many other thousands, owed my safety to Dr. Mendes and to no one else. Where is justice? Oh, but this is the way of the world. The last time I was with Dr. and Mrs. Mendes, they said to me, "We have peace of mind." And this made me admire them. Dr. Mendes' words drifted back to my mind, "With God against Man, rather than with Man against God." How simple.

Some time later, after Isabel and Jules had boarded ship for the Belgian Congo, I was given passage aboard an American-bound liner. That first evening on the high seas, after dinner, feeling relaxed, I decided to go up on deck and watch the sea. The Portuguese coast could still be seen many miles away, minute lights that shone in the distance. I beheld the view and thought: "Goodbye old Europe. In you I found good and bad; in you I found happiness and misery. I thank you for the good with which you have gifted me, but I shall never forgive you for the wrong you have done me. I shall never return so long as I may live."

Then I turned and looked in the opposite direction. "Hello, America, I am returning never to leave again. May I find in you the blessings which the old Europe did not see fit to grant me."

A new horizon was before, the dawn of a new life.



THE WORLDWIDE JEWISH MIGRATION AGENCY

# UNITED HIAS SERVICE

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May 19, 1960

Mr. Robert Magdoff

533 Elm Street

Ann Arbor, Michigan

Dear Robert:

I am going out of my way to make you an off-the-cuff proposal to write a script for a movie.

Enclosed you will find an exchange of correspondence between Cesario Jose Mendes, the nephew of the late Portuguese Consul General in Bordeaux at the time of the collapse of France in 1940.

Being a descendant of an old and noble Marrano family, Consul Mendes disobeyed orders from his government and issued over 10,000 Portuguese visas to Jewish refugees free of charge. By doing that, he saved the lives not only of those 10,000, but opened up the gate for a mass influx of many more thousands of war refugees to Lisbon. He did it under the influence of a young Polish Rabbi coming from Brussels to Bordeaux, with his wife and six daughters. At first Consul Mendes offered the Rabbi hospitality over night, because otherwise the family would have had to sleep in the street. But during thisateful night, the conversations between the Rabbi and the Consul brought alive the dormant conscience of a Jew whose ancestors were forcibly converted some 500 years ago.

I know both the Rabbi and the Consul personally. I was a witness to the mass scene described in the attached excerpt from a book of one of the sons of Mendes. Esther and I were also beneficiaries of those Portuguese visas which determined our future.

Think it over. Tell me whether you became inspired, as evidently both Fred Zinnemann and Robert Anderson were. If so, let us know and I will prepare more material for the time of your visit in New York at the beginning of June.

Yours,

*Murray*

14sep  
encls.

March 4, 1966

Dear Mr. Alcalay,

Mrs. Joana de Sousa Mendes, Daughter of the late Portuguese Cdsul asked me to write to you this letter and give you some information about this outstanding man, who helped so many thousand Jews during their darkest days of Hitler persecution.

When all these helpless families, waiting and begging for visas to save their lives found nothing but closed doors, he alone opened the doors of the consulate in Bordeaux and with the help of his sons worked day and night giving thousands of visas, ignoring the orders of his Government to apply to the Ministère de l'Etranger, because he knew that there was no time to lose. My late father, Mosco Galimir and myself were amongst the fortunate ones to get passports and to stay in the Consulate for two weeks.

I still remember, that every day at lunch telegrams arrived from the Government of Portugal to recall him. Mr. Sousa Mendes never lost faith and hoped he will be forgiven for all the good deeds he did for us.

But his Government did not pardon him.

During the German occupation in France, thanks to our Portuguese passports, we were protected by French authorities and not sent to concentration camps. When, a few months later, after receiving our American visa for the United States, we went to Lisbon, we had the great pleasure and satisfaction to see our great, good friend once more. He looked worried and tired. A few months later he got a stroke. We always were in close touch with his family and most of his children came to the U.S.A., as they had it too difficult in their country because of the fact that the Portuguese Government never forgave Mr. Sousa Mendes for his disobedience and it is my personal opinion, that you never will get any information from them. They certainly will be ashamed of having given strict orders concerning the granting of visas to Jews.

It is with tears in my eyes that I finish this letter, thanking you for everything you will do in order to give this great humble man an honor place in the INSTITUTE FOR THE RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE OF THE WORLD.

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77 #/f.  
C  
N.Y.

Very sincerely yours,

MARGUERITE ROLLIN  
*Marguerite Rollin*

Translation from a letter in German by Mr. Moise Elias  
of 170 W. 74th Street, New York, N.Y. 10023

August 15, 1966

Tad Vashem  
Department for the Righteous  
Jerusalem, Israel  
Har Hazikaron P.O.B. 84

Dear Mr. Alcalay,

It is my wish and pleasure to report on the infinite services which blessed Aristides de Sousa Mendes, former Portuguese Consul General at Bordeaux, France, rendered in providing free visas to thousands of Jewish refugees during the collapse of France in 1940 - the saving of their lives!

My wife and I were in Southern France at that time and, only because Dr. Mendes, in his hospitality, sheltered us, were we able to escape the Nazis. The visas he granted us, free of charge enabled us to, finally, go to Lisbon, and, from there, to the United States.

With our own eyes, we witnessed, for weeks, Dr. Mendes, with the support of his wife, in his untiring efforts, affixing visas on any and all passports which were presented to him - all free of any charge. Dr. Mendes did all this until the Portuguese Government fired him and closed the consulate in Bordeaux.

Later, in Lisbon, I heard that Dr. Mendes had been submitted to a disciplinary counsel, and discharged from his capacity as Consul General.

To conclude, I cannot refrain from expressing the great and respectful admiration, as well as gratitude, I hold for Dr. Mendes and his wife.

I recognize as an act of God that such a man as this was at the right place at the right time!

Translation from a letter in French by Professor Dr. Charles Oulmont of the Sorbonne University

February 7, 1968

My Dear Mrs. Joana Mendes,

I shall never forget the devotion with which your unfortunate father took to heart the suffering of the Jews, during the German Invasion of France, in 1940, at Bordeaux. . . . The refugee situation was intolerable - your father, filled with pity and compassion, did all he could and, he did everything he could, to save the refugees from the heel of the invader.

I, personally, was in that hopeless situation as a refugee, even though I had been invited by the Portuguese Government to attend the commemoration of the Independence of Portugal. This fact, one would expect, would protect my life! Alas, it was your father, and he alone, in his bounty, who saved me, and I render homage to him for that fact. It was he who took my priceless baggage to Lisbon. Because of his kindness, my manuscripts, as an author, were spared from the destructive hands of the Germans. These same destructive hands had, earlier, devastated my house in Paris, at St. Cloud. . . .

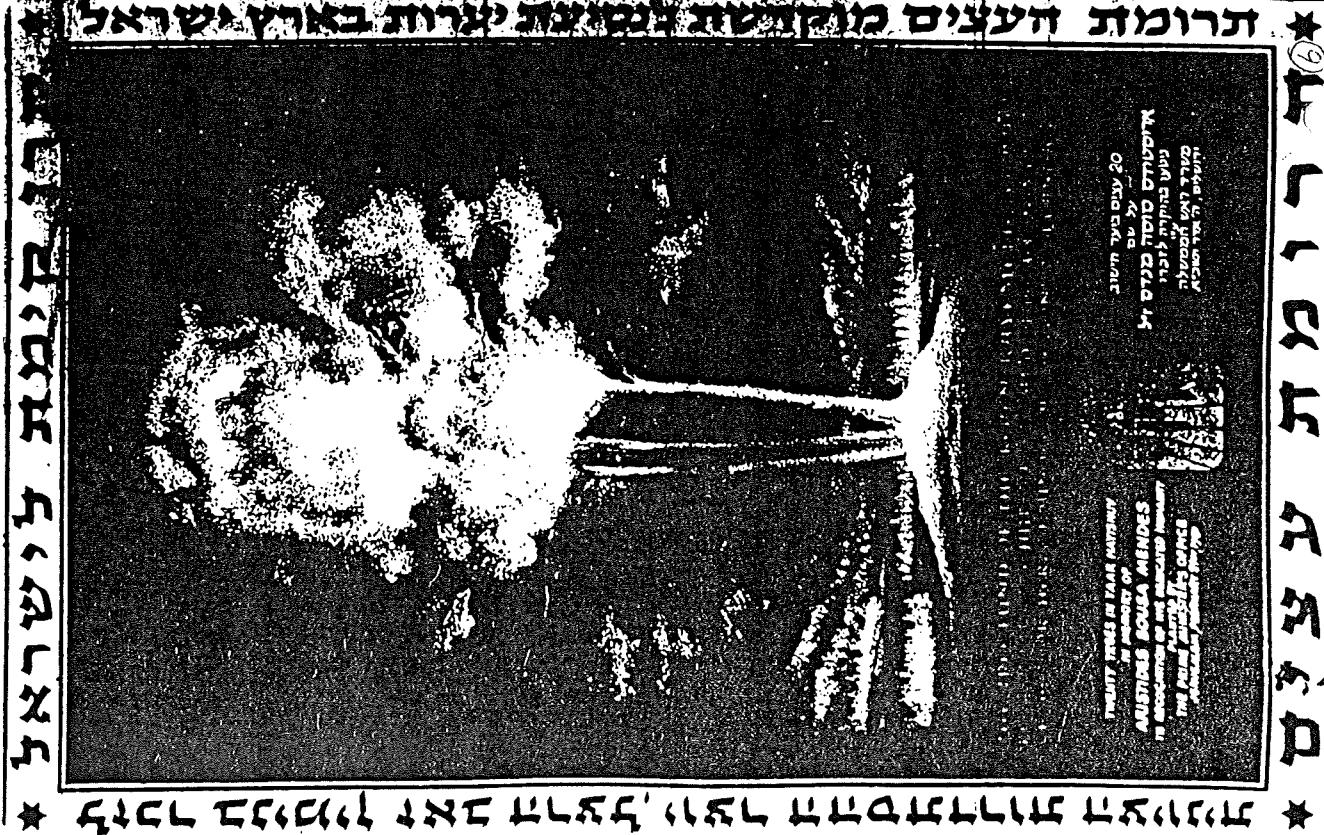
I assure you, Madame, that I understand the gesture on the part of the Israelites toward the memory of that man, a true Christian who possessed a truly noble heart - that was justice in action.

In great respect, and  
Fondly,

Prof. Dr. Charles Oulmont

Excerpt from a writing by Harry Ezzatty, a New York attorney, concerning refugee Rabbi Krueger and his family.

"One day as the Consul walked among the people encamped outside Quai Louis XVIII, he was met by a young rabbi and his family among which were six children. He pleaded to the Consul for a visa for his wife and family so that they might be saved. Perhaps Mendes was struck by his appearance for he wore a ripe, dark beard or it may have been the sight of the young children. For some unknown reason he decided to make an exception to the orders he had received. He invited them into the chancellery. There he prepared visas for the rabbi and his family. Afterwards, Mendes asked the rabbi where he would spend the night before leaving for Lisbon. The rabbi looked puzzled: "Why, in the street, of course, like all the others," he said pointing out to the street. Mendes asked the rabbi to spend the night at the Chancellery, and so, he and Mendes had the opportunity to talk into the night. The rabbi, speaking fluent French, told Mendes of his flight from Poland where he had been born and how from there he had come to Belgium where life was good. There were no persecutions and they were able to lead their lives as pious Jews. But with the war he had to save himself and his family. In Bordeaux he was like the other thousands of Jews, with nowhere to go until he had been blessed by the Consul's kindness. They talked all evening. They talked about the refugees and what would happen to them. "No Jew is safe," he continued, "as long as the Nazis are in control." "If we should be trapped here, I don't know what would happen to us." When they were finished talking, Mendes knew what he had to do. Today the rabbi and his family were exceptions obtaining Portuguese transit visas; tomorrow they would be among thousands leaving for Spain and Portugal."



ISRAEL INFORMATION SERVICES

11 EAST 70th STREET  
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021  
Tel./Telex 7-7400

CONSUL-GENERAL  
OF ISRAEL

29th September, 1967.

10 a.m.

For Immediate Release

ISRAEL PRESENTS POSTHUMOUS AWARD TO PORTUGUESE DIPLOMAT FOR JEWISH RESCUE EFFORT DURING WORLD WAR II

Israel's gratitude to a deceased Portuguese diplomat, Aristides de Sousa Mendes, who endangered his own welfare in his efforts to save Jewish lives during the Nazi occupation of France, is to be formally marked in the presence of his daughter at a ceremony at the Consulate General of Israel in New York, on October 9, 1967.

Miss Mendes, a resident of New York, will be handed a special commemorative medallion by the Consul General, Mr. Michael Arnon, on behalf of Yad Vashem, the Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem. A citation attesting to the courage and self-sacrifice of her late father will also be presented.

Aristides de Sousa Mendes, who served as Portuguese Ambassador in France during the Second World War, succeeded in saving thousands of Jews from almost certain death by issuing them entry visas into Portugal on his own responsibility. By the very nature of his deeds and considering the circumstances in which they were performed, the diplomat seriously risked his career, his family well-being, and his health.

The medallion being presented posthumously to Mr. Mendes is inscribed with the Talmudic dictum, "One who saves a human life saves as it were a whole world".

It was specially struck by Yad Vashem for ceremonial presentation to gentiles who actively helped in the rescue of European Jews during World War II.

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## WE SAVED 10,000 JEWS!

**Devout Catholic died in poverty after smuggling Nazi refugees into Portugal in 1940 by defying government**

ENHARTENING stories of heroism died years ago his Jewish ancestors had been forcibly converted to Catholicism, continue to crop up for a long time, and although many of their descendants have ever since the conflict ended. The latest concerns a Christian who defied the orders of his government so that he could save the lives of more than 10,000 Jewish refugees.

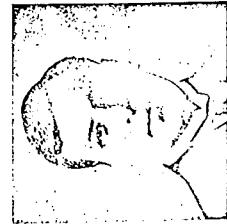
He was the late Aristides Sousa Mendes, a Portuguese Consul General in Bordeaux, France. Five hundred parts of Europe living in France were all parts of the Mediterranean, preventing Jews from going to Palestine, the French borders on the east to Switzerland and Italy, were sealed. The German army occupied all of Northern France. Spain was closed to refugees, and Portugal, as far as the Consulate would be occupied by the Germans, and then any Portuguese caught trying to be shipped to Poland, to the death camp.

In their desperation, thousands swarmed to Bordeaux hoping somehow to be allowed to cross Spain into Portugal and proceed from there to England, to Latin America, to the U.S.—to any country that would shelter them. Arrived in Bordeaux, they beseeched the Portuguese Consulate General for visas. Their last hope for life seemed gone when they learned that the Portuguese government had ordered Consuls to issue no visas to Jews, and for that matter, no visas to any refugees at all except those few who could prove they had established residences in Portugal.

At this point Mr. Mendes emerged from his office and greeted a delegation of refugees in the outer hall. His eyes were encircled with fatigue, and his hair had rapidly turned almost white. Next to him stood his wife.

"I have it in my hands now," he declared, "to save the many thousands of persons who have come here from every place in Europe in the hope of finding sanctuary in Portugal. They are of finding themselves, and their status in life, their religion or color, are altogether immaterial to us. Furthermore, the clauses of the constitution of my country, relative to such cases as those here, shall declare that under no circumstances shall the religious or political shills of a foreigner bar him from seeking refuge on Portuguese territory. I am a Christian, and as such I believe it is not for me to let these refugees perish."

"I know that Mrs. Mendes wholly concurs with my views, and I feel certain that my children will understand and not hold it against me if, by giving a visa to each and every refugee, I am discharged tomorrow from my duties, for having acted contrary to orders which, in my estimation, are vile and unjust."



Aristides Sousa Mendes, as he was before the war.

The government had assumed all the refugees would concentrate at Hendaye, and had ordered the border sealed there, but had rejected to transmit similar orders to other border points. He left the refugees to the next border entry, presented his credentials to the guards, and said he had authorized all the refugees with whom he had been staying to proceed to Portugal. They were admitted.

But as soon as Dr. Mendes arrived in Portugal he was severely reprimanded for his actions, and dismissed from his position. He had saved the lives of more than 10,000 refugees, and he was ordered home.

This year, in tribute to a true Christian,

the Government of Israel planned trees

in the Matterhorn forest in his memory.

### GIVES OUT VISA'S, PRESS

Therefore, he told the people in the hall to go out and spread the word that he would give out visas to Portuguese citizens, without charge, to all who needed them, this created a sensation and 10,000 Jews lined up immediately for the previous papers. With two of his sons—Pedro Almeida and José Antônio Souza—helping him, Dr. Mendes worked for three days issuing the visas. He waited until the job was finished, but, realizing it was time to be confronted by two furious emissaries of the Portuguese government who demanded that he accompany them to Lisbon for having violated orders.

They took him to their car, but Dr. Mendes, as official as he was, yet, harassed. A day gone, some hours later, they saw another crowd of refugees waiting in front of the Portuguese consulate. It was Bordeau again. Despite the presence of the emissaries, Tom Lisbon, Dr. Mendes strode into the vice consul's office and ordered him to grant visas to all the applicants. When the vice consul reminded him of previous orders to the contrary, Dr. Mendes, as the man's superior, ordered him to do so and said, "How do we feel if he and his family were in the refugees' place? Every nation's emissaries were impressed, and did not prevent Dr. Mendes himself from immediately issuing travelable visas (the first of their kind) which read as follows: "The Portuguese Government requests the Spanish Government the courtesy of allowing the bearer to pass freely through Spain. He is a refugee from the European conflict and en route to Portugal." On the seal of the consulate was impressed on each.

The next day, after all the refugees had been accommodated, Dr. Mendes told his emissaries he was ready to continue with them. They reached Hendaye, on the Spanish border, late at night, and found a long line of refugees, bare people who had been assailed by Dr. Mendes in the frontier, weeping and close. Dr. Mendes approached the refugees, concentrated in a large city, squat, and ugly, "Ask no question, just follow me."

He had correctly guessed that the Spanish government had assumed all the refugees would concentrate at Hendaye, and had ordered the border sealed there, but had rejected to transmit similar orders to other border points. He left the refugees to the next border entry, presented his credentials to the guards, and said he had authorized all the refugees with whom he had been staying to proceed to Portugal. They were admitted.

But as soon as Dr. Mendes arrived in Portugal he was severely reprimanded for his actions, and dismissed from his position. He had saved the lives of more than 10,000 refugees, and he was ordered home.

This year, in tribute to a true Christian,

the Government of Israel planned trees

in the Matterhorn forest in his memory.



## Guy WRIGHT

### Straightening the Record On Dictator and a Hero

**T**HIS MANUSCRIPT was old and faded. Even the rejection slips, from Time, Readers Digest, Saturday Evening Post, were limp from much handling.

But there was nothing wilited or worn about the young man who brought the manuscript to me. John Arbranches is his name. He spelled it for me—A-h-r-a-n-ch-e-s—and then sat rod-like in his chair waiting for me to finish reading, as tense as if he'd written the thing himself.

The manuscript took me back to the summer of 1940. France was falling, to Europe's refugees, with nowhere left to run, crowded in the southwestern corner of France at Bordeaux.

Spain would not accept them. But with the proper papers, they might travel across Spain to the one last sanctuary on the continent, Portugal. Or so they hoped. The Portuguese consul at Bordeaux, Aristides Mendes, had just been instructed otherwise. Dr. Mendes frowned as he re-read the telegram from his superiors in Lisbon. He spent them in a vain attempt to win a fair hearing, eking out a living as a language tutor to the American legation in Portugal. After his death his family—he fathered 14 children—scattered to the four winds. Only one son remains in Portugal. Misfortune has dogged his children as though they had inherited Salazar's curse.

"I know all this and more," the manuscript concluded. "I know that he never regretted his action, and he died a true Christian. I also know that I am very fortunate to be born the son of such a man." It was a moving narrative with a strong ring of truth.

"How do you happen to have this manuscript, Mr. Arbranches?" I asked. "The young man swallowed hard. "I also am one of Dr. Mendes' sons," he said. "I use a different name now because it is simpler that way."

I tapped the sheaf of rejection slips. "Too bad that it happened so long ago." "I know," he said. "I thought perhaps with the Eichmann trial and the trouble in Portugal's colonies . . . also my father was consular here during the '20s. My brother, Sebastian, the one who wrote this, was born in Berkeley . . ."

Sensing another rejection, he began gathering up his papers.

*The National Jewish Monthly*

JULY - AUGUST 1921

# 200,000 Persecutions Prevented

*Human compassion glowed in the hearts of uncouth men and women who risked their lives to rescue Jews from the Nazi executioners*

Condensed from Together George Kent

The Nazi racial revolt soon created when the persecutors of the Jews snatched to protectors of the Jews snatched to save other Jews from Hitler. This is the heartening story of rescuers, men and women of every nationality—French, Dutch, Danes, Norwegians, Belgians, Italians, Portuguese, and Germans, too—who could not stand idle while others suffered.

Together George Kent © 1954, Curtis Publishing Co., Inc., New York, N.Y.

## 200,000 PERSECUTIONS PREVENTED

Norway spirited thousands to safety. Fugitives could enter Portugal from France. They also selected and fed rescuers, men and women of every nationality—French, Dutch, Danes, Norwegians, Belgians, Italians, Portuguese, and Germans, too—who could not stand idle while others suffered.

Portugal, France, and Germany saved more than 20 percent of its Jews. And

Denmark saved practically its entire Jewish population. France saved about half. The Netherlands rescued nearly 20 percent of its Jews. And

Italy, Sweden, and Denmark ferried to Yugoslavia into Italy, where they lived out the war unopposed.

But the carpenter's wife took the woman into her own bedroom and let her share a bed with her own child.

In Nice a Protestant minister saved more than 20 Jews, smuggling them into Italy and putting them on ships headed for North Africa. In Rome a Catholic priest established a printing plant to make false passports and birth certificates for Jewish fugitives. So many clergymen in Italy devoted themselves to saving Jews that clerical garb became highly sacred to the Gestapo.

In Paris alone 49 priests who had fled to Lyon to escape the Nazis helped Jews and worked in the underground were arrested and many of them shot.

At Bordeaux the Portuguese consul, Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes, defied orders of his government and issued visas to all Jews who applied for them. In three 15-hour days he summed up 20,000 visas.

Twenty thousand Jews were

began one day in 1938. Driving on a worked road close to the German border, she spied a small boy limping along. She stopped and found his body covered with welts from which "They killed my papa and mama. I saw it," he babbled.

After taking the boy to a hospital she went back to the border and found five more little fugitives. On her return she hid three of them under rags in the back of the car; two huddled under her wide bell skirt.

When the British government decided to permit the entry of Jewish children, Mrs. Wijsmuller was one of the agents for the Dutch committee charged with assembling them. She went to Vienna, where she wangled an interview with Adolf Eichmann, then supervising anti-Jewish activity in Austria. Under cover of his pretenses, Mrs. Wijsmuller explained her mission. Eichmann referred to his papers.

"On Saturday you can have 600 of them," he said. "You arrange for transportation. If they get to England and England takes them you can have them here."

The proposal was diabolical. Saturday was only five days away. It seemed an impossible task—to find places for the food, arrange for feeding, escorts, customs and immigration clearance. But Trauus Wijsmuller, who in Amsterdam was affectionately called "the bulldozer," round over all the obstacles. On Saturday the train was ready, and the 600 children started their journey. It was

then, she wrote, that she was caught

in the net of Gestapo. Her husband, Mr. Wijsmuller's fondness for particular fondness, Mrs. Wijsmuller's expeditious on the day their country surrendered, May 14, 1940. The sick backs were tearing. Amsterdam when Mrs. Wijsmuller tear off a shirt with steam up waiting in limousine for clearance for England. Quickly, she rounded up five buses and filled them with 60 Jewish children from a municipal orphanage.

As they rolled along, other Jews clambered aboard, clinging to steps and lying flat on roofs. By the time they reached the harbor there were 200. No one was left behind.

One Dutch schoolteacher, Leon Weisenthal, guided many Jews into France. His last party was a group of 33 boys. When he left them, this devout Calvinist made the youth promises they would try to go to Palestine. Most them made it, and today his memory is kept alive in Israel by a grove of trees planted in his name. Weisenthal was not to live. On his return to Holland the Gestapo put him to death.

Among the bravest of the resisters were the Germans, for they performed their mercies under the very noses of the Gestapo. In Berlin, Dr. Franz Kaufmann, a young Jew, worked day and night nurturing his fugitives, passing them on to friends. A associate warned him: "You must stop." His only reply was, "I know this sooner or later I will be caught

## 200,000 PERSECUTIONS PREVENTED

but I have taken my oath on the high altar, and I cannot stop helping the poor people. One day if I happened to be led out into a sonny yard and shot.

In Katowice, Upper Silesia, the chief air wardens built false walls in an empty barracks and there kept three Jews in safety. Perhaps more remarkable was the SS officer whose living quarters were directly above an SS center in Berlin. He kept a Jewish couple concealed there until the end of the war.

Anton Schmidt, a German soldier in Witten, Poland, impounded repeatedly owned Jews of impounding Gestapo raids. He had three houses under his command, all officially concealed there until the end of the war. When the battle for the city was going on, he had four Jewish women who could not close their eyes to the distress of their fellow human beings. You can multiply these wanted by the Germans who were wanted by the Gestapo.

Oskar Schindler, a German businesman who took over an enamelware plant in Cracow, Poland, gathered up every Jew he could find—and altogether—out them to work in his factory and had them as essential war workers. For each one he employed, he paid

him in silver to the SS. One of the most moving stories of

One of the most moving stories of

One of the most moving stories of

the Hitlerites in his spirit. Nowhere, in no other period of history, has the unflinching quality of compassion been more clearly demonstrated than in the humanity of the simple men and women of Europe who suffered and died to help the Jews.

Part of the material in this article comes from two books: *Die Unbekannte Hölle*, by Kurt Grossman (Astrid Verlag); *The Story of the Danish Rescuers*, by David Lamb (Hamish Hamilton Books).

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in line for fear that he would have to go to the end of the line, thousands of people away. Many had noteaten for days.

"Where is the Portuguese consul?" someone screamed from the street. Mendes was sitting in his office looking at the instructions that he had finally received from Lisbon. They read, "No refugees are to be given any visas unless they can establish bona fide residence in Portugal. No Jews are to be admitted under any circumstances."

There were 10,000 Jews waiting outside. Each one feared for his life. Mendes walked out of the consulate onto the steps. He stood erect, and everyone knew the long wait was over. The words he uttered are recorded imperishably in the memory of survivors.

"I cannot allow these people to die. I am going to issue a visa to anyone who asks for it, regardless of whether or not he can pay." He turned to his wife. "I know that Mrs. de Sousa Mendes agrees with me. Even if I am discharged, I can only act as a Christian, as my conscience tells me."

When the news passed down the line it was greeted with cheers. The refugees began to pour through the chancellery. Mendes set a low coffee table before a couch in his office. He hunched over it and began to prepare visas. He worked here for three days, assisted by his sons José and Pedro, stopping only to sleep and

eat. He took no money, though more than once he had been offered a fortune in gold. In the end he saved 10,000 Jews who would have been burned in Hitler's ovens. On the third day when the door closed on the last applicant, Mendes fell to the floor, exhausted and sick.

Meanwhile, word of what had happened reached Lisbon. Two officials were sent from Portugal to bring Mendes back. As they were driving him through Bayonne they saw another crowd assembled before the Portuguese consulate.

Mendes and his party pushed through it and into the office of the vice consul. "Why don't you help these people?" Mendes asked the vice consul.

He replied, "I have instructions from Lisbon not to grant any visas, especially to Jews. I am carrying them out."

Mendes became enraged. "I have not yet been removed as consul general. I am still your superior." With this he walked to the vice consul's desk and began to assemble the seals for the visas. No one could stop him, not even the two officials from Lisbon.

"Go tell those people to come to the chancellery. I am going to give them visas." The visas were unique, simply slips of paper with the consulate seal and the following inscription, "The Portuguese government requests the Spanish government the courtesy of allowing the bearer to pass freely

#### THE CONSUL WHO DISOBeyed

through Spain. He is a refugee from the European conflict en route to Portugal.

A full day was spent issuing visas. The next morning Mendes and the two officials resumed their trip. At night they reached Hendaye on the Spanish border, and received another shock. Spain had closed its frontier to the refugees, and all the work of the past days had gone for nothing.

Mendes walked over to the square where the hopefuls were waiting. "Just follow me," he said simply. Mendes reasoned that the Spanish authorities would expect the refugees to cross at Hendaye and that only that point would be alerted. He was right. Down the road at the next town officials were ignorant of the whole affair.

Mendes fought for reinstatement without success. He was the father of 14 children, and without means. Soon he lost the family home, and his children began to leave Portugal. Several of them are in the U.S.

Aristedes de Sousa Mendes died in Portugal in 1954. He was forgotten and impoverished, but he had never regretted his actions.



Mendes flashed his credentials. The people passed through. It was over, though now Mendes would have more to explain to Lisi n.

At a hearing Mendes forced his government to change its policies of asylum. Many more refugees were to escape through Portugal after 1940. But he was dismissed from the foreign service for disobeying orders.

Mendes fought for reinstatement without success. He was the father of 14 children, and without means. Soon he lost the family home, and his children began to leave Portugal. Several of them are in the U.S.

Aristedes de Sousa Mendes died in Portugal in 1954. He was forgotten and impoverished, but he had never regretted his actions.

How easy it is for Franco and Salazar to publish phony stories like these.

## 'Jews Saved From Nazis' By Franco'

JERUSALEM, July 11/16 — Generalissimo Francisco Franco of Spain saved more than 50,000 Jews from Nazi death camps in World War II, according to an American rabbi.

Rabbi Haim Lipschitz, managing editor of the American "Jewish Press," has just come from completing research into the subject in Spain.

"I have come up with unequivocal proof that on Jan. 2, 1941, Franco telephoned Adolf Hitler and demanded that 122 Jews who were to be sent to Bergen-Belsen (death camp) be sent to Spain," Rabbi Lipschitz said.

P.G.6

When the War started in 1939, Franco did not care if the Jews lived or died and even ordered the frontiers closed. Why did not Franco make a telephone call to Hitler when the Jews needed to be saved in their most tragic time?

from the  
"Jewish Chronicle"  
London

10-4-67

## HOW Salazar aided Jews to escape (to never die)

From a Special Correspondent

As the war clouds gathered over Europe in 1939, East European Jews were still trying to obtain visas to the West, and most of them were unsuccessful.

But a small minority were fortunate in having applied for Portuguese visas, because the dictator of Portugal, Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, had ordered his country's consulates—even those in Germany—to issue temporary visas to those in danger of their lives.

Soon, there was an influx of Jewish refugees into Lisbon, the Portuguese capital, and other cities. Various international organizations, including the American Joint Distribution Committee, and the Jewish Agency set up offices in Lisbon to help them, and the community played its part, also.

Financial assistance and medical aid were made available for the seconciros, and their religious needs were not neglected, public hall and flats being rented for use as synagogues. When the refugees' temporary

visas expired, they were helped, with the active cooperation of the Portuguese police, to obtain visas for other countries. This improved impossible to obtain immigrants' certificates for Palestine.

At that time, the Lisbon community numbered about 200 families, 80 of them Gibralterian immigrants who had settled in Luso and then moved to Lisbon. The older 120 families were mainly young people from Transylvania who had arrived in Portugal in the 1920s and 1930s. Beginning at the beginning of the 1940s, these Polish Jews had worked their way up to becoming manufacturers, and Portugal's textile industry was founded by them.

There are about 400 Jews in Portugal today, most of them in and around Lisbon, which has two synagogues—Shaare Tikva, the Sephardi Synagogue, which was built about 40 years ago, and the Askenazi house of worship, a rented first-floor flat In Faro, where the last Jews died some years ago, there are still two synagogues and a Jewish cemetery.

HINDENBURGSTRASSE 15  
8134 PUCKING b. STARNBERG  
[OBERBAVARIA]  
May 18th 1968

TELEPON: PUCKING 479

Miss  
Joana de Sousa Mendes  
8 - 19 F.D.R. Drive , Aptmt. 12 F  
New York 10009  
New York

To the memory of the late

DR. ARISTIDES DE SOUSA MENDES

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude for the invaluable help he has given, in his quality as Portuguese Consul General in Bordeaux in 1940, to Luxembourg refugees.

We keep a grateful mind towards the eminent services

Dr. Mendes has rendered to our country during his ten years of office as Consul General accredited to the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg. But first of all his merits, in a time of tragedy and panic, will always be remembered by the Luxembourg refugees, many of them of Jewish faith, by the members of the Luxembourg Government and of my own family, who were saved by his initiative from certain persecution and thus enabled to reach the free countries.

His humanitarian action will serve for ever as an example of unselfish devotion to the cause of freedom and understanding between all nations and races!

*Aristides de Sousa Mendes*  
*Archduke Otto of Habsburg*

Luxembourg, 30 July 1968.

Dear Miss de Sousa Mendes,

His Imp-Highness the Archduke Otto of Habsburg has instructed me to express to you his warmest and sincerest thanks for your very kind letter of March 23, and for the documents enclosed in your letter.

Your letter had arrived here during the absence of the Archduke who was at that time travelling in France, giving a number of Lectures, and later on in Austria, and therefore the answer to your letter has been delayed, the more so because I myself was also repeatedly absent around that time. So please excuse the delay of this answer.

The Archduke has instructed me to tell you that he was deeply moved by the content of your letter, which reminded him of these fateful and sad days in Bordeaux in June 1940 , and especially of the great help which your late father <sup>de</sup> Aristides Sousa Mendes, gave also to him and to his entire family. And the Archduke was delighted to learn from the statement of the Israel Information Services in New York and from your letter that the Government of Israel , in deep gratitude to your late father, has handed to you a special commemorative medallion on behalf of Yad Vashem, the Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem.

Your late father indeed deserved such gratitude for having saved the life of many thousand Jews in these fateful days, regardless of the consequences for himself.

The Archduke Otto of Habsburg will for ever be deeply grateful to your father for the noble way in which he had also helped,in this dangerous moments, him and his entire family by giving to them immediately the necessary Visas for Portugal, so that on the next day the Archduke and his family went to the Spanish border, and from there then, the following morning, to Spain and then to Portugal.

who had been saved by the noble attitude of the Consul General in Bordeaux, Mr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes, your father.

At that time, the Archduke had no idea that your father would have so great difficulties on account of his courageous help to the Refugees, and only much later, when since a long time in the United States, the Archduke Otto learned about it, and regretted it deeply, although he did not even then know of all the sufferings of your father.

May I close this report with telling you anew, dear Miss de Sousa Mendes, that the Archduke as well as his family, and especially also the Empress Zita of Austria, will always remember with deepest gratitude what your father did in these days for them and for so many thousands helpless Refugees. May God reward your father, now probavly with God, for everything he did during his lifetime, and especially in the days of June 1940.

With my very best regards and with my sincerest greetings,

Yours truly

( Henry Count Degenfeld )

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MARTYRS AND HEROES' REMEMBRANCE AUTHORITY  
YERUSHALAM, HAIR MAZAKHON (POB. 49) - CAGES: KADASHAHA - TEL. 31202 30 - סדרה: קדשאה - ת. 31202 30

MARTYRS AND HEROES' REMEMBRANCE AUTHORITY

Jerusalem, 9th April, 1970.

YERUSHALAM, HAIR MAZAKHON (POB. 49) - CAGES: KADASHAHA - TEL. 31202 30 - סדרה: קדשאה - ת. 31202 30

Mr. Younn Souza Mendes  
8-19 1/2 R Dr. Apt 12. P  
New York 10039 N.Y.

Dear Madam,

Thank you for your letter of 7.5.70.

I can assure you that there is no intention to include Franco or Salazar amongst the Righteous.

At the same time, I must point out, in order to be fair to Franco, that e.g. my own uncle, amongst many other Jews, gave his life to the Franco regime.

In 1940 he crossed the Pyrenees on foot to Spain as a refugee and was allowed to remain there (true as an interned) until the end of the war. But, of course this is still a long way from that nobility of mind and deed for which we honour the Righteous.

Yours sincerely

A.L.  
Moise Landau  
President, Commission  
for the Righteous, and Judge of the  
Jewish Supreme Court.

Mr. Landau was the President  
of the court of Eichmann Trial.

Concerning some details of the noble help given by the Consul General Aristides de Sousa Mendes, your father, it is a pleasure and a privilege for me to tell you about it, because I went in Bordeaux to your father.

On Sunday, June 16th 1940, the Archduke and the Imperial Family, namely the Empress Zita, five more of Her children, the Duchess of Parma, mother of the Empress Zita, and several other close relatives of the Empress, together with some of us attending the Empress and the Archduke, went to Bergerac, (about 100 km distant from Bordeaux) where the French Government had made reservations for them in a castle. The Imperial Family had made the journey during the night, coming from a place near Moulins, at the urgent request of the French Government. -

On the same morning of the arrival, the Archduke Otto, with his brother Charles and with me, went to Bordeaux to see a number of high placed persons and to inquire about the situation and the possibilities as well as about the intentions of the French Government. It became immediately clear, that the Government would ask for an armistice, and that in that case the Imperial Family would be in danger to be handed over to the Germans, if no escape was made before. But the competent authorities of the French Government were very helpful and granted without any difficulty all permits for the journey to the Spanish border and for leaving France. I went with all the passeports of the Imperial Family and of all who were with them - we were 19 persons - to the seat of the French Foreign Ministry, where all permits were immediately given and stamped on the passeports. - Then, - it was, I think, about five o'clock in the afternoon of the next day - June 17, - after having seen the Spanish Ambassador, that I went to the Portuguese Consulate General. There was the in the staircase and, probably, also outside of the building, an immense number of people asking for Visas, who were introduced as soon as possible into the Office of the Consulate. I managed to tell some official a few words and was then immediately led to your father; the Consul General, who was very kind and told me, in view of the immense number of people to whom he gave Visas as rapidly as possible, and who had waited already for so long a time, to come to see him at ten o'clock in the evening, when the Consulate, all officials being exhausted, was to be closed. And your father told me that then he would of course, and with pleasure

give all the necessary Visas. Your father spoke on those occasions in a particularly kind way of the Imperial Family of Austria, of the Archduke Otto, of the Empress Zita and of the Duchess of Parma, who was by birth a member of the Royal House of Portugal, the House of Braganza.

I therefore went at ten o'clock in the evening again to the Consulate General, and your father, although evidently very tired from the immense work he had done all during this day and the previous ones, put personally all the Visas on the 19 passeports I presented him and signed them. I could in the short minutes highly appreciate the noble feelings of your father who had decided to help as many of the refugees as possible to escape the German danger. Among these refugees there were many, many Austrians, Jews and non-Jews, who had escaped Austria on account of their patriotic feelings as Austrians and therefore threatened by the Nazis who had invaded Austria 2 years before.

I also asked Mr. de Sousa Mendes to have the kindness to grant Visas to a number of Austrians, known personally to the Archduke, who had worked for Austria in France since 2 years, and I gave your father the names of their leaders who would come to see your father the next day. Your father faithfully kept his promise to give Visas to all those who would ask for Visas and mention that they had worked with the Archduke, and all of these like many thousands other refugees - arrived safely through Spain to Portugal, and most of them could later on reach the United States or South America.

On June 18th then, as mentioned before, the Archduke and His Family and our entire group went to the border and crossed the Spanish border the next morning, without any difficulty, and arrived then safely to Portugal.

In closing this report about your fathers noble attitude, of which I was personally a witness, I may add that the Archduke, after his arrival in Lisbon, went immediately - it was already late in the evening - to one of the highest officials of the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and asked that the Portuguese Consulates in France were given instructions to grant Portuguese Visas to Austrian Refugees who applied for it, and, from the Spanish Ambassador, the Archduke asked the same authorization. Both answered that they would immediately take the necessary steps - and indeed, many, many Refugees from all parts of France, and Spain later on, could thus arrive in Portugal, besides of the thousands

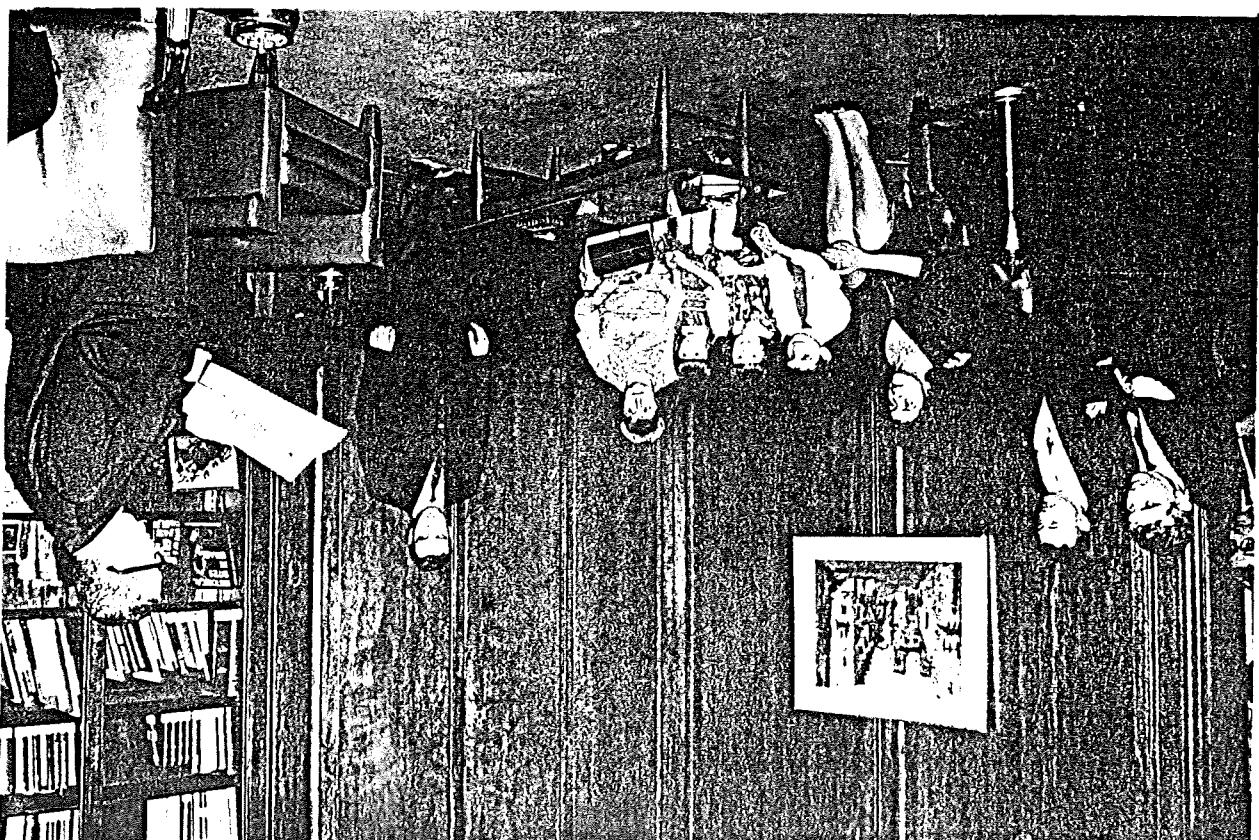
Sebastián Mendes, Mr. and Mrs. Ezraatty, Gesser Mendes,  
Marguerite Rollin, Motsé Elles, Gonçal Arnon,  
Joana Mendes, John Paul Abramchek, Luis Peláez Mendes



Sebastião Mendes, John Paul Abramoches, Cesáro Mendes, Harry Ezraatty, Môses Elias  
John Paul Abramoches at presentation of medalion.  
General Krueger, General Gonsalves and General Arnon and



Sebastião Mendes, John Paul Abramoches, Cesáro Mendes,  
Joséane Mendes, Aristedes Mendes, Geraldy, Geraldy, and  
Terezinha Smeo and Luis Pellegrino Mendes and  
Israel Gonsalves General Mitchell Arnon who read  
the "Attestation"





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