

ד"ר אריסטידס דה סוזה מנדס - חסיד אומות העולם

1. 21. 00

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE TO COMMEMORATE

DR. ARISTIDES DE SOUSA MENDES

COMISSÃO EXECUTIVA PARA A JUSTA COMEMORAÇÃO DE

DR. ARISTIDES DE SOUSA MENDES

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January 21, 2000

Dr. Mario Soares  
Former President of Portugal  
Rua Augusto Rosa No. 66 2do. D.  
1100 Lisboa, Portugal

Dear Dr. Soares:

I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to participate in a major opening program for an exciting new exhibit being featured at the United Nations exhibit gallery. This exhibit is entitled *Visas for Life: The Righteous Diplomats*.

The office of the Secretary General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in cooperation with the Jewish community, are planning several events including a day-long program and ceremony. The exhibit will open at the United Nations headquarters in New York in the main visitors center on Monday, April 3, 2000.

On behalf of the members of the family of Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes, I invite you to attend and participate in this memorable event. For further information or questions, please contact Eric Saul at (415)824-7743 (telephone or fax) or via email at [EricSaul@compuserve.com](mailto:EricSaul@compuserve.com) or Mr. John Crisostomo, Portuguese community coordinator in New York at (212) 421-6716.

Respectfully yours,



John Paul Abranches  
International Chairman



הועדה הבין-לאומית להנצחת  
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THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE TO COMMEMORATE  
DR. ARISTIDES DE SOUSA MENDES  
COMISSÃO EXECUTIVA PARA A JUSTA COMEMORAÇÃO DE  
DR. ARISTIDES DE SOUSA MENDES

August 10, 1990

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ARCHIVIST

JOAN ABRANCHES  
CORRESPONDING SECRETARY

Mariana C. Abrantes Sousa  
Rua Bartolomeu Dias, 2  
2795 Linda-a-Velha  
Portugal

Dear Mariana:

It was very nice to see you again during my recent trip to Portugal, and to meet your step-daughter, Maria Joao. I hope you and your family have had a pleasant summer. It has been quite hot here, and our grandson was visiting from Tennessee. He is now eight years old and learned to ride a two wheeler bike while in California, which pleased him very much. Our son Peter spent a week in New York visiting Sheila and his cousins. He had a very good time.

I am very enthusiastic about your suggestion regarding the possibility of having something for my father in Luxembourg. Attached are the materials we discussed which I hope will be helpful when you make your contacts. If there is anything else you need, please do not hesitate to let me know.

As I had mentioned to you, Robert Jacobvitz went on to Frankfurt, Germany, where there is a possibility of having something done in honor of Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes. If the proposed events could take place within a few days of each other, that would be great.

We are working on Holocaust Memorial events coming up in Ohio. We are committed to April 11 through April 14, 1991. At this time we will be in Cleveland, Cincinnati and Cincinnati. The United States Holocaust Memorial in Washington, D.C. will be having commemoration events when their building is finished. Yad Vashem (the government sponsored authority in Jerusalem for the study and documentation of the Holocaust) has published a beautiful 1991 calendar in honor of Righteous Gentiles, and the month of November has been dedicated to my father. We will attempt to obtain a few copies



How is everything in Portugal? Here we are all concerned about the Middle East crisis. The price of everything is going up, as well as the rate of unemployment. I spoke to your brother Francisco recently and he is doing well and planning a trip to Portugal in September.

Once again, thank you for your continued interest and support of our efforts to make known the heroism of Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes.

Saudades e muito obrigado,

*John Paul*

John Paul Abranches  
Chairman

Encl.



הועדה הבין-לאומית להנצחת  
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THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE TO COMMEMORATE  
DR. ARISTIDES DE SOUSA MENDES  
COMISSÃO EXECUTIVA PARA A JUSTA COMEMORACÃO DE  
DR. ARISTIDES DE SOUSA MENDES

June 21, 1988

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ANNE TRESEDER  
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Mariana Abrantes  
80 Washington  
Harrison, New Jersey 07029

Dear Mariana:

We are very pleased that you have agreed to become a part of our organization. There is much to do, and I am sure you will have much to contribute. I have enclosed some recent newspaper articles, etc. concerning our recent activities.

We will be having a barbeque at our house Sunday, July 3, and hope you will be able to come. Others who have been invited are Artur Cunha de Oliveira and his wife, George McHugh and his wife, Anne Treseder, Marek Breiger, and your brother Francisco. Robert Jacobvitz will try his best to be there.

Artur is the editor of The Portuguese Tribune, published in San Jose. He has been a very active supporter from the beginning. He has had a Sousa Mendes story in his paper about one a month for the past two years, but unfortunately, the Portuguese community does not respond.

George McHugh had been very active with Central American refugees when he became aware of Dr. Sousa Mendes. He has written an article for The Catholic Voice, and since then has been working with the Diocese of Oakland compiling a report on the State of the Diocese to be presented to the Pope when Bishop Cummins visits Rome. Several paragraphs within the report mention Dr. Sousa Mendes.

Anne Treseder is a member of our Committee, and will extend an invitation to Marek Breiger, who is a journalism teacher at Moreau High School in Hayward. He is also Jewish. Not only are these people interested in the story of Dr. Sousa Mendes, but they are also concerned with Catholic/Jewish relations as well. It should be an interesting afternoon if we can all get together.

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June 21, 1988

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Mariana Abrantes

We were very pleased to see you in New Jersey, and to meet your friends and colleagues at the Portuguese Club. John and I were very impressed with the energy, cooperation, and good will demonstrated by the Portuguese Community that resulted in a lovely building and so many activities for all age groups.

We are looking forward to seeing you soon.

Cordially,



Joan Abranches  
Secretary

Attach.

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# The International Committee for the Commemoration of Aristides de Sousa Mendes

## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The late Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes do Amaral e Abranches, (July 19, 1885 - April 3, 1954) was the Portuguese Consul First Class in Bordeaux between 1938-1940 when the German armies were conquering Europe. Thousands of refugees converged on Bordeaux, in the southwest of France, hoping to receive a visa from the Portuguese Consul there. After consulting with Lisbon, the Consul received instructions not to issue any visas to certain types of people, especially Jews. He realized these instructions were unconstitutional, and aware of the possible consequences of his actions, Dr. Sousa Mendes, with the support of his family, went on ahead and with the assistance of two of his sons, gave free visas to thousands. Portuguese Dictator Dr. Antonio Salazar became furious and sent Dr. Teotonio Pereira, Ambassador to Spain in Madrid, to Bordeaux to have Dr. Sousa Mendes removed and returned to Portugal. Dr. Sousa Mendes was never again permitted to work in the diplomatic service, and died penniless and disgraced in Lisbon in 1954. Since that time, his children have written to political leaders, newspaper columnists and others in their efforts to have their father's story told. His son Sebastian Mendes wrote a book and several articles;

daughter Joana assembled the required data that enabled Yad Vashem, the Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem to award a commemorative medallion posthumously to their father in 1967; trees were also planted, one of them in the Garden of the Righteous in Jerusalem, located on the grounds of the Yad Vashem Museum.

In the spring of 1986 a son, John Paul Abranches, circulated a petition to President Mario Soares of Portugal, that attracted a great deal of attention (see last page). United States Congressman George Miller (D-Martinez, CA) and Robert Jacobvitz of the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Greater East Bay, located in Oakland, California, at John Paul's request, contacted Representative Tony Coelho, (D-Merced, CA) the only Congressman of Portuguese ancestry. Under his leadership the United States House of Representatives Resolution 469 was drafted and signed by more than 70 colleagues. United States Congressman Henry Waxman (D-Los Angeles, CA) wrote a letter to President Mario Soares, also co-signed by over 70 Congressmen. In September 1986, during a visit to Washington, D.C., Portuguese Foreign Minister Pedro Bires de Miranda announced that President Mario Soares would, at a still unknown date, award a special medal of honor to their father.

In May of 1986, The International Committee for the Commemoration of Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes was formed with offices in

Oakland, California and Jerusalem, Israel. The goal of The International Committee is to ensure that the memory of Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes is appropriately recognized by the world for the lifesaving and altruistic deed he performed as Consul First Class in Bordeaux. The International Committee's goal is to work with the Portuguese people and government so that history will be properly and accurately recorded. It plans to develop educational material to be used throughout the world; to be used in educating school children as well as adults of Dr. Sousa Mendes' humanitarian actions. The International Committee's aim is to encourage and promote acts of compassion and concern for one another.

The International Committee for the Commemoration of Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes is a volunteer organization, under the auspices of the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Greater East Bay, and can be reached at the Jewish Federation of the Greater East Bay headquarters located at 401 Grand Ave., Suite 500, Oakland, CA 94610, or by phone at (415) 839-2900. Robert Jacobvitz, Executive Director of The International Committee for the Commemoration of Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes, can be contacted by calling (415) 362-7397.



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# The International Committee for the Commemoration of Aristides de Sousa Mendes

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Sousa Mendes' humanitarian actions. The Committee's aim is to encourage and promote acts of compassion, concern for one another.

For further information please contact The International Committee at the Oakland address listed below, or call Robert Jacobvitz, Executive Director (415) 533-7462.



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COMISSÃO EXECUTIVA PARA A JUSTA COMEMORAÇÃO DE  
DR. ARISTIDES DE SOUSA MENDES

CHAIRMAN DR. DAVID SHPIRO יו"ר ד"ר ד. שפירא

U.S. DIRECTOR ROBERT JACOBVITZ מנהל המשרד בארה"ב: ראובן בריעקב

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(415) 332-7332

March 3, 1988

Professor Douglas Wheeler  
27 Mill Road  
Durham, N.H. 03824

Thank you for your kind condolences over the death of my brother Philip. He was a good, kind hearted man and we will miss him very much. My only consolation is that he could see that at last our efforts to restore our father's honor were beginning to bear fruit, and he had an active part in it.

Last year you were kind enough to send us a copy of a biography of Dr. Sousa Mendes that you had prepared for Larry Katz of New Bedford as background information for the Holocaust Memorial service in which my father was honored. I finally had the opportunity to read it more closely and wish to make a few corrections.

My father never received any support from any high government officials and especially not from the Cardinal of Lisbon! He did ask for their help, but they refused, and the Cardinal suggested that my father and mother should pray to Our Lady of Fatima! My father did not make a personal appearance before the National Assembly to defend his actions. His "Reclamacao" was typed up and personally distributed to each member of the National Assembly at his home by several of the children, including myself.

I have enclosed an updated copy of a biography I prepared for the B'nai B'rith Women of Canada, who honored my father in a ceremony at the Holocaust Center of Montreal on February 8, 1988. The resources for this biography come from the Portuguese Encyclopedia, yourself, and my recollections.

Prof. Douglas Wheeler

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March 3, 1988

To the best of my knowledge, my father never worked for HIAS or any other Jewish agency, although the Jewish community was very helpful to us, as I believed I have mentioned in a previous letter. My father tutored two American Attaches around 1944 for a few months.

The addresses you requested are as follows:

Reese Erlich  
P.O. Box 19261  
Oakland, CA 94619

Rui Antonio Rodrigues Afonso  
Poste Restante  
Restauradores  
Lisboa, Portugal

It is our understanding that Jaime Gama will be introducing a "proposta de lei" for a debate regarding my father before the National Assembly on March 18, 1988. Rui Afonso will be acting as his expert. Several of my nephews will also be present. On April 4, 1988, honorary Israeli citizenship will be conferred post-humously to my father. This citizenship award will be presented to family members in Lisbon. We have also been told that President Soares and his wife have organized a national commission to honor Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes in a non-partisan way. The Jewish community is involved in this commission. A commission has also been formed in Cabanas and members of this group come from the neighboring communities as well. It is unfortunate that my family only learned of this through Rui Afonso, and not from anyone on these committees. The aim of this commission, according to Rui, is to transform the house in Cabanas into a museum and/or center for promoting the humanitarian values of Aristides de Sousa Mendes, and in so doing, stir up enough public interest through the media to pressure the Government/Foreign Office into rehabilitating and/or promoting Aristides de Sousa Mendes. We are very pleased with the way things are developing. In Portugal, I believe it will be the grandsons of Dr. Sousa Mendes who will carry on the fight. My older brothers and sisters are too ill, tired and discouraged to maintain a sustained battle with the beaurocracy at this stage in their lives.

We were very pleased to hear about your lecture at Harvard scheduled for April 21, 1988. I am not sure if I will be able to make it myself, but I will inform other family members and friends, and if their schedules permit, I am sure they would be happy to attend.

Thank you for your continued interest and support.

Sincerely,

*John Paul Abranches*

John Paul Abranches  
Chairman

P.S. I do not have the address of Yvette Davidoff; perhaps HIAS in Lisbon will be able to help you.

cc: Robert Jacobvitz  
Steve Mendes  
Sheila Abranches  
✓ Mariana Abrantes

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# The International Committee for the Commemoration of Aristides de Sousa Mendes

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## BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF DR. ARISTIDES DE SOUSA MENDES (1885-1954)

Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes was born in Portugal on July 19, 1885, along with his twin brother, Cesar, to Jose and Angelina de Sousa Mendes do Amaral e Abranches. He graduated from the University of Coimbra, one of Europe's most ancient universities, with a degree in law. He married his cousin, Angelina de Sousa Mendes, and together they had 14 children, one dying in childhood.

Through a competitive examination, he was appointed Consul Second Class on May 12, 1910 and proceeded to his post in Demerara. The following year (July 19, 1911) he went on to serve in Galicia and seven days later he was promoted to Consul General in Zanzibar; Consul in Curitiba on November 13, 1918; First Class Consul on June 20, 1918, went into inactive status on June 27, 1919. Two years later he was ordered to be interim manager of the Consulate in San Francisco (June 11, 1922); he syndicated for the Consulate in Boston (June 22, 1922); then he managed the Consulate in Maranhao (April 2, 1924). Temporarily he was Consul in Porto Alegre (November 14, 1924). He then was transferred to the General Board of Directors of Commercial and Trade Transactions (January 29, 1926), then he was appointed Consul in Vigo (November 29, 1927); Consul General in Genoa (May 2, 1929, did not assume this post) and Consul General in Antwerp (September 7, 1929).

He was decorated with the Red Star of Merit of Portugal, and the Second Class of the Bright Star of Zanzibar and the Official Order of Leopold I of Belgium.

At this point his official biography in the Portuguese Encyclopedia ends, as if he dropped out of sight. However, he was named Consul-General in Bordeaux on August 1, 1938; he served in that post until July 1940, following the fall of France and the advance of German armies to the Pyrenees and the English Channel. Defying the orders of his Foreign Ministry in a heroic effort and action, he along with his staff and two of his sons, signed transit visas for thousands of refugees, including Jews, who sought refuge in Portugal or Spain from the Nazi armies. The Lisbon government, following the orders of Antonio de Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970), Premier and Foreign Minister at the time, suspended Sousa Mendes from the Foreign Service on July 27, 1940. The following March 21, 1942, according to official records, Dr. Sousa Mendes was placed in the status of "awaiting retirement", a position he held until his death in Lisbon on April 3, 1954. For the record, his name, despite the fact that his official fate had not been decided until 1945, in effect, disappears from the list of Consul-Generals he was a part of for many years, in the Annual Diplomatic and Consular List beginning in 1944. There was no response from the government, despite a Claim he wrote in his own defense and hand delivered by his sons to each member of the National Assembly in September 1945, following the end of World War II.

After his death, Dr. Sousa Mendes' children continued in their efforts to clear their father's name. On October 9, 1967, a commemorative medallion honoring their father was presented to a daughter, Joana, by the Consul General of Israel in New York. A tree bearing his name was planted along the Avenue of the Righteous, located on the grounds of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem. On May 19, 1986, in Washington D.C., President Soares of Portugal presented the "Ordem de Liberdade" medal to Joana in recognition of her late father's heroic deeds. Both of these presentations were made in the presence of other family members and friends. Through the efforts of the late Dr. Sousa Mendes' children, members of the community, and government representatives in the United States, Canada and Israel, various resolutions and citations were awarded in recognition of his heroic acts.

Still, in 1988, the government of Portugal has not officially recognized its hero. The International Committee for the Commemoration of Aristides de Sousa Mendes, formed in the Spring of 1986, continues in its efforts to make the story of this brave diplomat known throughout the world, and honored in his homeland.

# The International Committee for the Commemoration of Aristides de Sousa Mendes

March 4, 1988

Mariana Abrantes  
80 Washington  
Harrison, New Jersey 07029

Dear Mariana:

I hope you and your family are well. We are fine after a very unhealthy winter. We hear from Francisco from time to time and he keeps us up to date with your very heavy schedule and your travels.


I am enclosing some correspondence to bring you up to date with what has been happening with us. As you know, Philip Mendes died this past January in Montreal, and we all miss him. He has had kidney problems for a while but this past year his condition had worsened more than we realized. We know that he was delighted that the world was beginning to become aware of his father's heroic actions, and his memory was in the hands of those who would treat it with respect. He had shared with us and with his family that his trip to Jerusalem this past June had been the highlight of his life. Of course New Bedford and New Jersey are not far behind. You deserve to feel good about your part in the success of the New Jersey luncheon. We were all very pleased and the resolutions are distributed all over the country.

Among the pieces of correspondence I have enclosed is a copy of a letter received from the Holocaust Memorial Committee in Brooklyn, N.Y. John has accepted their invitation to accept a posthumous award on behalf of his father, the late Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes. The ceremony will take place Sunday, June 5. If you or any of your family or friends would like to be present, we would enjoy seeing you. I have sent a copy to Sheila and she is planning to be there.

Professor Douglas Wheeler of the University of New Hampshire will be giving a lecture at Harvard on April 21. We are not sure of our schedule as yet, but we think we might be in the New England states in early April, and we don't know if he will be able to take additional time from work. Anne Treseder, our archivist, is in Portugal now, and with the help of Rui Afonso will be doing some of her own research.

Also enclosed is a copy of our response to the Portuguese American Congress for their contribution, not only to the International Committee but especially to the Portuguese American Scholarship Foundation. The family feels that a scholarship fund is one of the best ways to honor Dr. Sousa Mendes' memory. Philip felt this very strongly.

We appreciate your continued interest and support in our efforts to make the deeds of Dr. Sousa Mendes better known throughout the world, but especially within the Portuguese community.

  
Joan Abranches  
Secretary

Jerusalem Office: 16 Harav Michlin • Jerusalem • Israel • (2) 421906  
U.S. Office: 3245 Sheffield Avenue • Oakland, California 94602 • (415) 533-7462





# The International Committee for the Commemoration of Aristides de Sousa Mendes

December 1987

Dear Friends:

As another year draws to a close, we look back over the last twelve months and give thanks for all that has been accomplished. With the help of friends and supporters such as yourself, we see the gains we have made and look forward to continued success in the future.

During the past twelve months we have had the opportunity to travel and meet many wonderful people throughout the country. Last Spring we were in Massachusetts where there was a coming together of the Jewish and Portuguese communities of New Bedford to honor Dr. Sousa Mendes. As a result of that event, a scholarship fund has been established in the name of Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes, to be awarded to the high school student who not only receives good grades, but also shows a commitment to the betterment of his/her community.

The highlight of the year was the ceremony in Washington, D.C. when President Soares of Portugal presented the Order of Liberty medal posthumously to Dr. Sousa Mendes in the presence of the family from the United States, Portugal and Canada. This ceremony, which was held at the Portuguese Embassy, was witnessed by visa recipients and their families and Members of Congress were among the crowd of supporters. The following day, at a ceremony honoring Portuguese

