NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Implications for Righteousness in the Unknown Case of the Consuls of Toulouse

By Daniel Ruby[1]

A newly discovered instance of “righteous diplomacy” in Toulouse, France, in July 1940 sheds light on two other celebrated cases, the Aristides de Sousa Mendes case that preceded it and the Jan Zwartendijk case that followed. The acts of those two recognized righteous diplomats were extraordinary, but the new case supports the conclusion that more limited acts of diplomatic courage were not uncommon among Portuguese and Dutch consular officials in the summer of 1940. One specific finding is that the use of Curaçao visas by Dutch consuls did not occur first in the Zwartendijk case as has been believed but happened weeks earlier in Toulouse. Emile Gissot and three other consuls of Toulouse should be considered for righteousness recognition.

Figure 1. “Betrothal,” by Curaçao artist Suzanne Perlman, who arrived on the island in 1940 (see Postscript).

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Introduction

New information about what has hitherto been a footnote in the history of the Aristides de Sousa Mendes case sheds light on the practice of "righteous diplomacy" in the summer of 1940.

Emile Gissot is known as a bit player in the case of Sousa Mendes, the Portuguese consul who saved thousands of Jewish refugees in advance of the Nazi occupation of Bordeaux. Reporting to Sousa Mendes, Gissot was the Portuguese vice consul in Toulouse who also signed visas in June under instructions from his superior. Gissot is mentioned in the existing histories of the Sousa Mendes affair mainly because he, like Mendes, was disciplined and dismissed from his position by the Portuguese government. The records of Gissot's disciplinary hearing are indexed in the Antonio Salazar papers but are oddly missing from the physical files.[2]

My information shows that two weeks after Sousa Mendes was stopped by his government from issuing further visas on June 24, Gissot resumed issuing visas on July 8 or earlier for refugees holding destination visas to points beyond Lisbon. I will present specific cases and accounts of refugees obtaining Curaçao tourism visas from the Netherlands consulate as a precondition for obtaining Gissot-signed Portuguese transit visas.

The information suggests that Emile Gissot collaborated with officials at the Dutch consulate, G. Pichal and A.J. van Dobben, as well as with Stanisław Wozniak of the Polish consulate, to open an escape route in Toulouse that ran from at least July 8 to July 18 and allowed a flow of refugees to get the papers necessary to reach Lisbon. An estimate of the number of refugees who received these visas is in the neighborhood of several hundred.

This case preceded by several weeks a second instance of the issuance of Curaçao visas in Kovno, Lithuania, by Dutch consul Jan Zwartendijk in the well-known case of Polish Jews who escaped through Japan to Shanghai. Striking similarities between the

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[2] Rui Afonso, "Um homen bom," 1995. Afonso's biography in Portuguese is the source of most of our knowledge of Emile Gissot's role in the Sousa Mendes affair, including the mystery of the missing archive. Afonso has not written about Gissot's subsequent activities in Toulouse, however.

two Curaçao cases suggest that the nearly simultaneous occurrences arose from common influencing factors. However, the precise sequence of events in the two cases seems to preclude the possibility that the Toulouse case had a causal influence on the events in Kovno.

Nevertheless, the Toulouse case and another case of a Dutch consul in Marseille who issued contemporaneous visas to the Dutch East Indies suggest that the acts of Jan Zwartendijk were not unique among Dutch consular officials at the time. The writings of Yad Vashem historian Avraham Milgram similarly show that the actions of Aristides de Sousa Mendes can be understood within the context of service-wide attitudes and behavior in the Portuguese diplomatic corps.

The discovery of the significant role of Emile Gissot and the other Toulouse consuls does nothing to diminish the exceptional heroic actions of Aristides de Sousa Mendes and Jan Zwartendijk, but it helps to put both events into a unifying context.

The Ringel family

I began researching the case of the Toulouse Curaçao visas while writing about my mother's refugee experience for Ruby Family History Project, my genealogy blog.[3] Helga Ruby, née Ringel, was 15 years old in June 1940 when she, her mother, aunt and uncle fled from their temporary refuge in Nice in an attempt to reach neutral Portugal.

The Polish passport that was issued to my grandmother Elly Ringel in Toulouse on July 5, 1940, contains a series of subsequent visas and stamps that shows the family's exact movements from that day until entering the United States on May 22, 1941 (figure 2).[4]

[3] Ruby Family History Project, http://familyhistorymachine.com/project/ruby-family-history-project

[4] I am fortunate that my mother kept the passport and other documents of her family's flight. My siblings and I discovered them only after her death in 2005. Elly Ringel passed away in 1981.

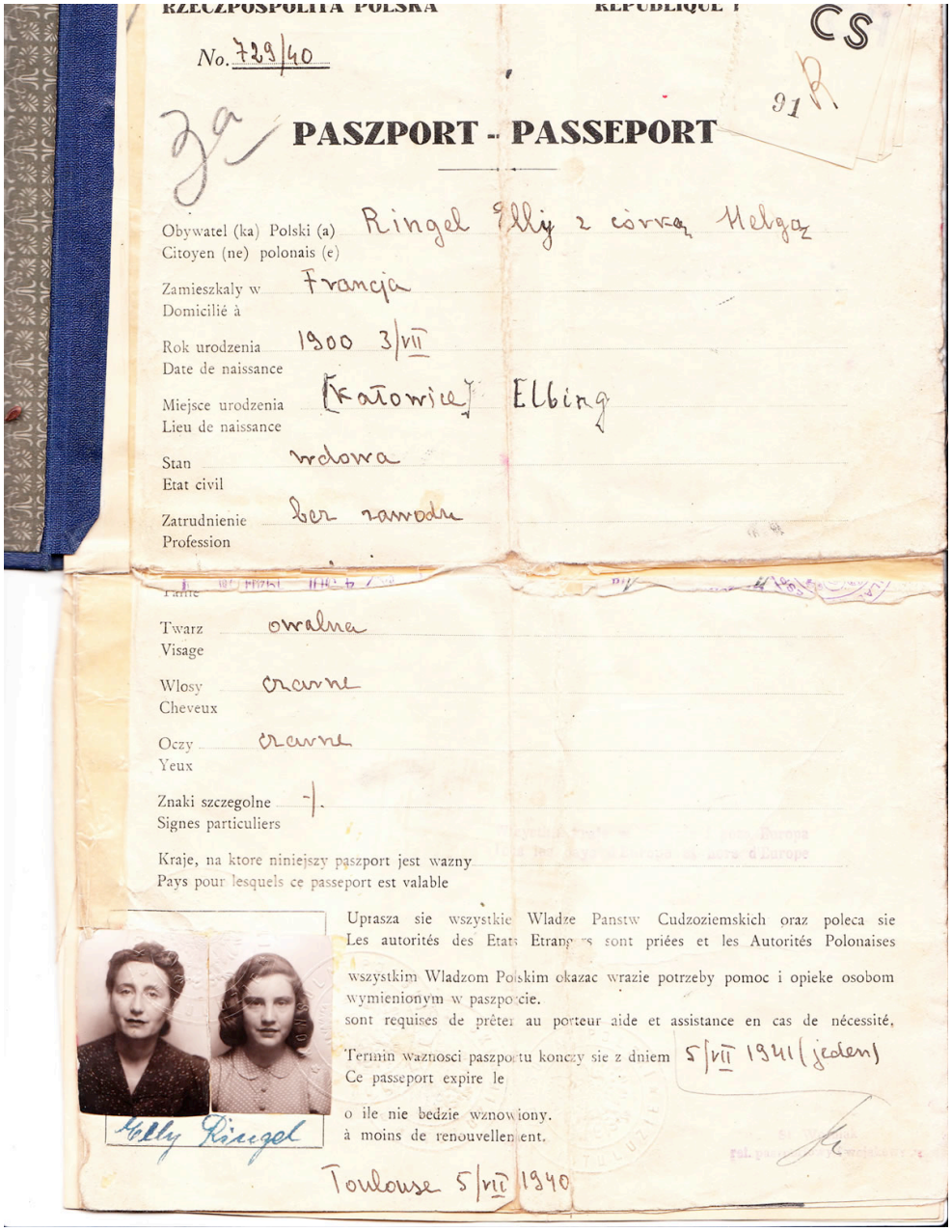

Figure 2. Polish passport of Elly and Helga Ringel

The passport shows that my grandmother obtained two visas on Thursday, July 11, first from the consulate of the Netherlands a tourism visa for the Dutch colony of Curaçao (figure 3) and second from the Portuguese consulate a transit visa for Portugal (figure 4). The following day, she obtained a Spanish transit visa from the Spanish consulate in nearby Perpignan. On July 23, the Ringel party added French exit visas and departed from Perpignan to cross Spain by rail, entering Portugal at Beira-Marvao on July 28.

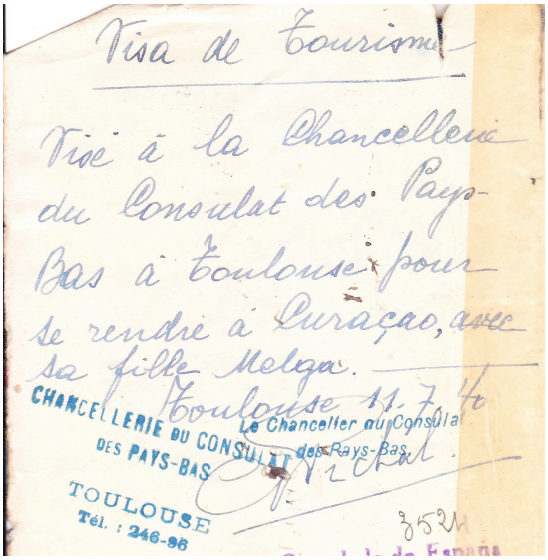

Figure 3. Dutch Curaçao visa

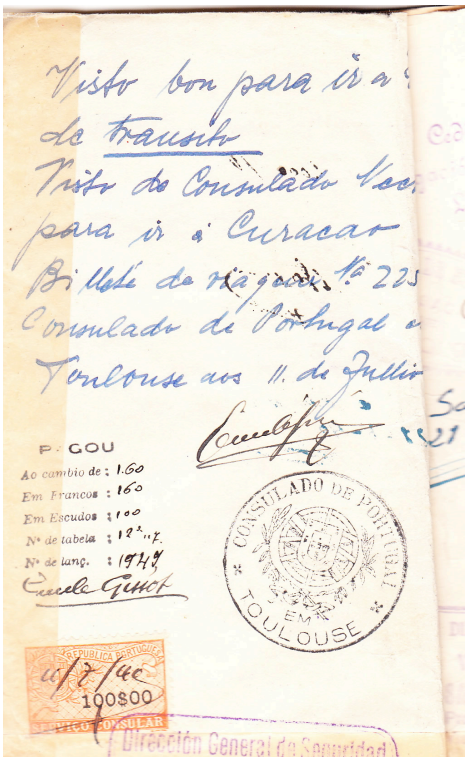

Figure 4. Portuguese transit visa

When I wrote up this information on my blog several years ago, I searched for similar stories about Toulouse and Curaçao visas. The one thing I found, first in an online posting of his memoir[5] and later in two recent popular histories,[6] [7] was the account of the ex-Nazi Otto Strasser, in which he vividly describes how he was able to get out of France with the use of a Curaçao visa obtained July 18 in Toulouse.

I blogged about Strasser[8] and also briefly about Aristides de Sousa Mendes,[9] whose crusade of mercy had taken place in a nearby city just two weeks before. I did not make an attempt at that time to read the visa signatures or to understand what they signified.

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[5] Otto Strasser, “Flight From Terror,” 1980, http://mailstar.net/otto-strasser-flight.html

[6] Ronald Weber, “The Lisbon Route: Entry and Escape in Nazi Europe,” Ivan R. Dee, 2011

[7] Neill Lochery, “Lisbon: War in the Shadows of the City of Light, 1939-45,” Public Affairs, 2011

[8] Ruby Family History Project, “Following the chain of documents, with help from a runaway Nazi,“ http://familyhistorymachine.com/content/following-chain-documents-help-runaway-nazi

[9] Ruby Family History Project: “Sealed train in Bilbao July 11, 1940,” http://familyhistorymachine.com/content/sealed-train-bilbao-july-11-1940

In January 2013, a comment on my blog from a representative of the Sousa Mendes Foundation asked if I could read the signature on the Portuguese visa and mentioned three names of Sousa Mendes vice consuls that it could be. One name was Emile Gissot, and I was immediately able to match that name to the distinctive signature on my grandmother's visa (figure 5).

Figure 5. Signature of Emile Gissot

That set me off on a course of learning more about Gissot and then about the personnel at the Dutch consulate. I found a surprising amount of documentation available online, including partial access to archives of the Portuguese and Dutch foreign ministries. Also, I had significant help from Paul Freudman, a researcher with the Sousa Mendes Foundation whose family members also received Curaçao visas in Toulouse. I will lay out the full details of what I have learned below.

Who was Emile Gissot?

In 1940, Emile Gissot (figure 6) was a 58-year-old, semi-retired career French diplomat. He had served in several South American postings as well as in Greece.[10] He had authored a well regarded 1907 treatise on the economy of Chile. He had been involved —and briefly jailed—in a early outbreak of Spanish Republicanism in Salamanca in 1917. He had dabbled in French politics and served as an advisor to the Interior Ministry. Now he was back in his native city employed part time as honorary vice consul for the government of Portugal.

The outbreak of war in May 1940 turned Gissot's comfortable sinecure into the center of a maelstrom over the next two months as a flood of Dutch, Belgian and French refugees descended on his city, all seeking an escape to Portugal that ran through his consulate.

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[10] Biographical details are from La Depeche du Midi, "Fleurance: Emile Gissot, un personnage," Oct. 31,2011, based on historical research by Henri Altaribo: http://www.ladepeche.fr/article/2011/10/31/1204516-fleurance-emile-gissot-un-personnage.html

Figure 6. Emile Gissot in 1916

Before the onset of the refugee crisis, Gissot did not issue visas in Toulouse at all but referred applicants to the regional Consul-General Sousa Mendes in Bordeaux or to the consulate in Bayonne. By June, with his city engulfed by refugees and the German advance not far behind, Sousa Mendes authorized Gissot to issue Portugal transit visas from Toulouse, but only to holders of destination visas to points beyond Portugal.[11]

Sousa Mendes went on to perform his extraordinary acts of humanitarian disobedience over the period from June 17 to 24. The Sousa Mendes Foundation documents many of the thousands of cases of refugees who benefitted from Mendes' actions, including among those recipients of visas signed by Gissot and two other regional vice consuls.

[11] This is from the Afonzo narrative. However, examination of the Freudmann Gissot visas from June 24 (figure 7) shows that no reference is made to a final destination.

Figure 7. Heinrich Freudmann Gissot visa - June 24, 1940

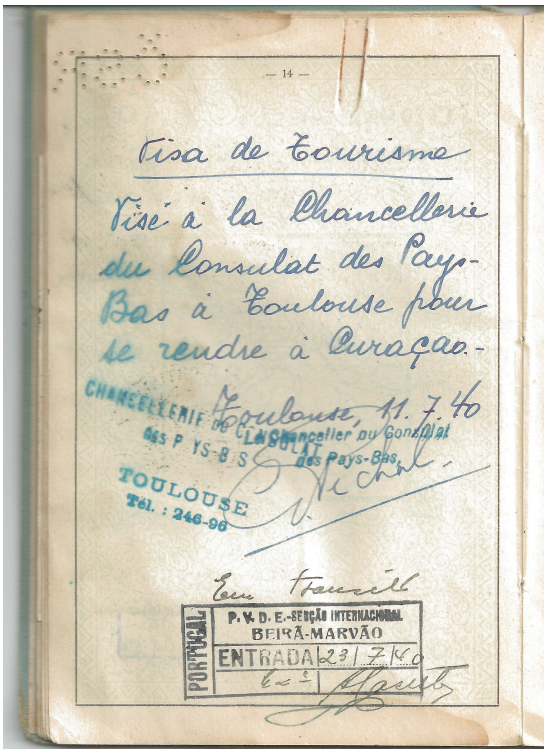

Figure 8. Heinrich Freudmann Curaçao visa - July 11, 1940

The Freudmann family is one of the Foundation's showcase examples. Researcher Paul Freudman is the nephew of Heinrich and Rosalia Freudmann. The Freudmann family members received Portuguese transit visas signed by Gissot in Toulouse on June 24, the last day of the Sousa Mendes crusade.[12] Paul Freudman had always been puzzled as to why his family members did not proceed to Portugal at that time, but later received Dutch Curacao visas in Toulouse almost three weeks later in July.

The reason is that after June 24 Spain was no longer honoring Sousa Mendes visas. The Freudmanns' Gissot visas were rejected when presented at the border crossing at Irun. They then returned to Toulouse, where on July 8 and 11 they obtained the Dutch Curaçao visas that satisfied the Spanish requirements for accepting the Gissot visa.

Heinrich's wife Rosalia Freudmann received the earliest known Curaçao visa from Toulouse, dated Monday, July 8, 1940. My Ringel family members and Heinrich

[12] Freudmann-Les page at the Aristides de Sousa Mendes Foundation archives, http://sousamendesfoundation.org/freudmann-les/

Freudmann (figure 8) received their Curaçao visas three days later on July 11. Otto Strasser received his on July 18 and reported seeing “dozens” of Jewish refugees on line at the Dutch embassy to do the same.

Strasser’s account is the first of several that corroborates the Toulouse Curaçao affair. Strasser was the former Nazi leader who had been ousted from the party in 1930 and had since lived in exile in Austria. In July 1940, he was again on the lam, mixed among the other refugees, and trapped in Toulouse with little hope of escape. Then he describes a chance meeting on the street with the same “portly Portuguese” who had previously denied his visa request, whom we can reasonably infer to be Emile Gissot.

> In utter despair, I was walking one night - my only time to venture into the open - along the quiet bank of the canal when I ran into the friendly man from the Portuguese consulate who had interviewed me in the first place. To him I again told my tale of frustration after repeated effort, without revealing my identity, of course. And, miraculously, the man knew a way out!
>
> "Go tomorrow to number eight Avenue Strasbourg and get a tourist's vise for Curaçao; then we can book the ship's passage by telegraph, and after that I can give you the Portuguese transit vise.”
>
> Puzzled but hopeful, next day I went to the address - and it proved to be the Netherlands consulate which was still functioning "half officially." (Afterward it was closed at Hitler's order, with all other legations and consulates of occupied countries.) The official there was an angel of salvation. Without an indiscreet word, I obtained - together with dozens of Jewish immigrants who had followed the same tip - a tourist's vise for the Dutch island of Curaçao. Now the Portuguese and Spanish transit vises were quickly obtained.[13]

Chaos at the Polish consulate

Strasser’s account is vivid and detailed, but it is not the only corroboration of Toulouse Curaçao visas that is documented in Internet sources. One case that overlaps is that of Zbigniew Kowalski, a young volunteer of the Free Polish Army in France. In July 1940 after the surrender of France, he was on the run trying to reach England to rejoin the fight. He made his way to Marseille in hopes of getting help from the Polish consulate there. This is what he writes:

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[13] *Ibid.*, Strasser

> At the Polish consulate there was a sign saying: “Closed until Victory.” I knew there was a legation in Toulouse, so I had little choice but to sneak on a train and try my luck there. Thankfully, the train was overcrowded, which stopped the ticket inspectors from doing their job....
>
> At Toulouse the Polish legation was still open and its personnel found a place for us to stay. Soon we were supplied with passports and visa for Dutch Curaçao. It was cover of course, for as soon as we were out of Vichy waters were to head for the United Kingdom. The ship we were to take was leaving from Port-Vendres, just south of Perpignan. [14]

This is significant because it is another instance of Curaçao visas in Toulouse, and also because it is a second case involving the Polish consulate. The first is the Ringels, whose trail of documentation starts off with a Polish passport issued in Toulouse on July 5, 1940. If we infer from the Kowalski case that an official at the Polish consul is also connected to the Curaçao matter, that suggests that the Ringel passport issuance was done in coordination with the Dutch and Portuguese consuls.

My research in the archive of Polish foreign ministry papers held at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University has now identified the Polish official as Stanisław Wozniak, who was acting as the Polish consul in Toulouse after the designated consul, Stanisław Dygat, later a prominent Polish cultural figure,[15] prematurely left his post on June 20.[16]

By August 2, a replacement official, Vaclav Bitner, had been appointed to fill the post. He wrote a detailed report to the Polish ambassador in Vichy about the events of the previous weeks. Bitner describes Wozniak as “the Consulate official who was left in place, a military passport clerk and accountant, and deputy head of the Consulate during absences by the station chief.”

The following excerpt comes under the heading of “Issues of citizenship and passports;”

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[14] HistoricalEye.com, “Kowalski’s War,” interview with Zbigniew Kowalski, 2011: http://www.historicaleye.com/kowalski.html

[15] Dygat was a prominent postwar Polish novelist and screenwriter. His first novel "Jezioro Bodeńskie" ("Lake Constance") is a fictionalized account of his wartime experiences.

[16] Polish Foreign Ministry Archives at Hoover Institution, Closing and Evacuation of Toulouse Consulate, 1940, Series 597, Folder 5.

While Bitner makes no mention of Curaçao, the reportage gives a rich description of the circumstances at the time of the Ringel passport issuance.

> Starting in mid-June, the Consulate experienced a one-hundred-fold increase in the rate of applications, mostly regarding the issue of passports. Previously the Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Toulouse received at most 800 passports applications in a year. In the period from June 15, the number of passports issued has increased enormously. The peak number of passports issued and submitted were up to 200 a day. From 15 June to 31 July, around 6,600 passports were issued, judging from the use of blank passports.
>
> To meet this challenge the Consulate looked very liberally at evidence of citizenship. In relation to soldiers, service in the Polish army in France was found to be sufficient evidence to issue a passport. More difficult was the issue of the civilian population, particularly the large flood of refugees from Belgium, often not possessing Polish passports. Passports were issued on the basis of the Belgian identity card, together with Polish documents as birth certificates, membership certificates, etc.. This was the case for Polish citizens.
>
> Under these conditions, it was possible for some people not already possessing Polish citizenship to get a Polish passport. These are almost exclusively those who lost Polish citizenship in 1938 or 1939 under the Law of 31 March 1938 Article 1 but retained documentation of their prior citizenship. This amount is small, however, and might amount to no more than 1% of the total number of issued passports.
>
> The working conditions during this time did not allow the Consulate to [properly index] issued passports. There could be no question of setting up a personal file for each person receiving a passport. The indexes that were kept were to avoid issuing double passports to one person.
>
> Passports issued to former soldiers were usually free of charge. From the civilian population required fees, usually equal to the sum of 146 francs. However, about 90% of the people there were workers from Belgium and northern France who had been without work for several months and persist here with benefits received from the French authorities - received passports free of charge. The collected fees received are more than 90,000 francs as 0f July 31, 1940.
>
> Time did not allow for postage stamps to be glued on passports. Fees collected by the clerk were listed on a piece of paper, with a list of people and the amount collected.
>
> There were incidents of abuse [bribery?] in the issuing of passports but these are now very few or indeed eliminated. Three contract workers who helped in the first period with

> the flood of work have been removed for this reason by the Consulate.[17]

A report by Dygat explaining his actions from Portugal in mid July gives his version of the events leading up to his departure. (I have not yet been able to translate another report from Dygat written in longhand two weeks later at an internment camp at Capvern, France.)

> On the night of 19 June, I received a telephone message from Libourne given by a Colonel (whose name I can not remember) recommending me to leave the minimum Consulate officials and evacuate towards Bayonne. In this state of things, and to the panic which swept all in Toulouse (colleagues can witness this as Consul General Kolankowski, Consul Sidorowiczi and others slept that night in Toulouse), I decided to entrust the care of the Consulate to Mr. Wozniak, accountant and passport clerk, and Mr. Jankowski, the Secretaries-General of the Union of Polish Settlers, and to leave on July 20 in the afternoon.[18]

Dutch consuls van Dobben and Pichal

Another corroborating case, which introduces us to the personnel in the Netherlands consulate, is in the oral history of Sally Noach, a Dutch resistance fighter and member of the Engelandvaarder movement. In the aftermath of the German invasion, Noach first stayed among a refugee group in a small peasant village.

> Sally understood that such a small village would not be able to support a group of hundred refugees endlessly and he decided to contact the Dutch consulate in Toulouse. The mayor gave him and Armand the necessary papers and so they could leave for Toulouse. They were received by van Dobben, the honorary Dutch consul. Sally told him what had happened to them and added that he wanted to go to England in order to join the Dutch fighting forces there. Van Dobben answered that he would not be able to help him. His powers and possibilities were limited and certainly not geared to a state of war.
>
> This man headed a large Dutch enterprise in Toulouse, but he did not dare to show any initiative, without risking a conflict with the people he was subordinated to.

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[17] *Ibid*. Letter of August 2, 1940 from V. Bitner, acting Polish consul in Toulouse, to Polish ambassador in Vichy.

[18] *Ibid.* Letter of ca. July 18, 1940, from Stanisław Dygat to the Polish foreign minister in Madrid.

Consulting the online index to the contents of the Dutch National Archives in the Hague, I was able to find an in-depth report on the organization of the Toulouse consulate in this period. The following is a rough translation.

> Shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War very many refugees from Belgium and the Netherlands gathered in France. By order of the French Government, they were directed to the coastal areas to the west so that around Bordeaux a large accumulation of refugees arose. After a period, the Dutch refugees were relocated to camps near Toulouse designated as temporary refuge pending further evacuation or repatriation.
>
> For their reception, a local organization working partly in cooperation with the Consulate in Montauban was set up with Mr. A. J. van Dobben, representative of Philips in Toulouse, as director. That he might perform his duties better, the Dutch consul in Montauban and the Dutch ambassador Loudon proposed to the Government in London that Van Dobben be given the title of vice-consul, reporting to the Consulate in Montauban. The communications with London were so troublesome, however, that a different arrangement would take hold. Van Dobben was appointed vice consul ad interim at Toulouse, under the direct orders of the Consul-General, Mr Sevenster. After the solution of the refugee problem, the post later lapsed. A proposal from London to give the Toulouse office full Consulate status was considered unnecessary by Sevenster and rejected.[19]

Here we see the first surprising parallels with a second case of “righteous diplomacy” involving Curaçao visas, that of the Zwartendijk-Sugihara affair that would unfold two weeks later and 1500 miles away in Kovno, Lithuania. In that case, Dutch vice consul Jan Zwartendijk was also a local representative of the Philips company who was pressed into government service at the height of a burgeoning refugee crisis. I’ll discuss that case further below. First, more from the foreign ministry report on the Toulouse consulate operations.

> The Vice-consulate operated as such for just a few months, because France under pressure from Germany broke official diplomatic relations with the German-occupied countries. When the Legation in Vichy closed its doors on September 5, 1940, the Consulates could still function but the Germans made it clear that they were unwanted. Soon they would be forced to close as well. To ensure that Dutch interests could be represented, the French agreed to a new arrangement in which the Consulates would officially close their doors, but continue operations under a new name, the "Offices Anglais.” The ‘Offices’ were charged with [representing] the interests of the Dutch

[19] Netherlands National Archive, Archive No. 2.05.100, Inventory of the archives of the Dutch Representation in Toulouse (France), 1940-1946

> refugees in the administrative jurisdiction of the former Consulates. They were formally put into operation on November 25, 1940, including the former Vice-Consulate in Toulouse, where Mr. Van Dobben was appointed director and acted as such until September 1941, when he got into trouble because he was associated with the illicit trade in diamonds.[20]

All of this was interesting except for one problem: It was not van Dobben's signature on the Ringel or Freudmann passports. Paul Freudman helpfully ventured that he read the signature as "Pichal." Sure enough, going back to the Dutch archives, there are two entries for G.P.C. Pichal, one on a listing of documents by "persons who were employed at Dutch embassies and consulates during the war"[21] and another relating to a subsequent posting in Madrid, where Pichal functioned as the Dutch embassy chancellor from 1941-1944.[22]

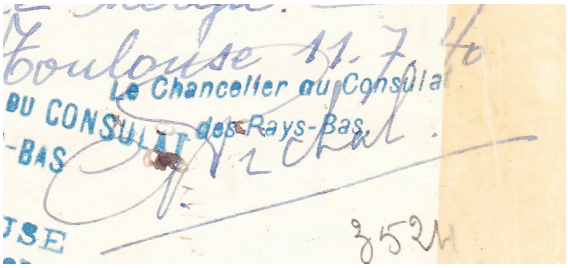

Figure 9: Signature of G. Pichal

From a separate archive, we learn that Pichal had been appointed as second Chancellor of Legation in Brussels as far back as 1913.[23] From this and the later post in Madrid, it is evident that Pichal was a career diplomat, unlike van Dobben. Maybe that is why Pichal was the one to sign the visas.[24] Further research in the Dutch National Archive in the Hague may yield more information.

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[20] *Ibid.* While the diamond business may have scuttled van Dobben's career in Toulouse, he did fine after returning home to Langbroek near Utrecht, where he served as *burgermeester* from 1947 until his death in 1975. Source: Regionaal Historisch Centrum Zuidoost Utrecht, Lists of sheriffs, assessors, mayors, councilors, and secretaries for Langbroek in the period 1818-1949

[21] Netherlands National Archive, BuZa Londens Archief. Van Dobben is listed as well.

[22] Netherlands National Archive, Inventory of the archives of the Legation Spain, 2.05.286

[23] Staten-Generaal Digitaal, Record of GPC Pichal Appointment in Brussels, 1913

[24] Pichal does not sound like a Dutch name, but it turns out to be Flemish. A number of present-day Pichals are found online, including Flemish broadcast journalist Sven Pichal. Source: Sven Pichal page on Dutch Wikipedia: http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sven_Pichal

Dutch government and policy

Before leaving France to consider the Lithuanian variation of the Curaçao visa, there is one more personal testimony to factor. Irwin Schiffres was just 10 years old in the summer of 1940 with his German family from Cologne on the run in the south of France. The Schiffres family was in Bordeaux, then Hendaye and Toulouse but failed to obtain Portuguese visas in any of those cities.

They went next to Marseille for a period of several weeks into the month of August, long enough for Irwin to start attending school there. Then the family got its big break when "my parents obtained a visa to the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) so as to enable them to get the Spanish and Portuguese visas," according to Schiffres' 2001 posting on the JewishGen discussion board.[25]

The differences and similarities between the Ringel and Schiffres stories are striking. Toulouse in July versus Marseille in August. Dutch West Indies versus Dutch East Indies. In both cases, it was Dutch consuls reporting to their government-in-exile and acting in the interest of Reich refugees (Germans) having no claim of Dutch citizenship.

Schiffres had always been puzzled about that Dutch visa and, having retired from his career as a legal editor in Rochester, N.Y., began looking into it in 2001. By then he had become aware of the Zwartendijk case but not of other cases of Dutch diplomatic righteousness. He described his investigation in the 2001 online posting.

> Having exhausted my library search, I wrote to the Dutch consulate in New York inquiring whether they knew of the issuance of such visas to Jewish refugees. I received a reply from Stef Buytendijk of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, stating that the Dutch consul-general in Marseille in 1940 was Mr. C.J. van der Waarden, the consul was Mr. J. ten Hagen, and that it was likely that either granted our visa. He further stated that a third person who could have granted the visa was Mr. D.F.W. van Lennep, "a member of Dutch lower nobility" who was in Cannes when the war broke out.
>
> I then inquired under what circumstances such visas were issued, pointing out that since my father was a Polish citizen born in Russia and my mother and I were Polish citizens born in Germany, we would not appear to be entitled to special consideration by the Netherlands Government. I received a further reply from Mr. Buytendijk which stated that

[25] Irwin Schiffres, JewishGen.org Discussion Group posting, Sept. 30, 2001, "Dutch consuls' aid to Jewish refugees": http://data.jewishgen.org/wconnect/wc.dll?jg~jgsys~archview~114947~bordeaux+1940~375;4

> the summer of 1940 was a very disturbing and confusing time and that due to bad communication, Dutch consulates in Vichy-France did not know if they could grant visa for the Dutch East Indies to people with [foreign] passports. Mr. Buytendijk further stated that he found some correspondence in the Dutch archives showing that visas could only be granted to people with [foreign] passports upon a bank guarantee and after the consul-general in Vichy, van Sevenster, was consulted. Thus, it was possible for Polish citizens to apply for visas although the Dutch consulates knew that that it was very difficult for Polish citizens to obtain a 'visa de sortie' from the French authorities. (In fact, we had no such exit visa and were smuggled out of France.) [26]

Schiffres now took that information to another source, an expert with the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C.

> I supplied the above information and asked whether, to their knowledge, (1) Did the Dutch consuls issue visas that helped refugees escape the Holocaust and (2) If so, have they gotten proper credit for this Mitzvah?
>
> Severin Hochberg of the Museum answered that at the very least, the Dutch honorary consul in Kovno issued such end visas to the Dutch East Indies., and that Yad Vashem, as well as the USHMM have honored Jan Zwartendijk, who assisted Sugihara in the rescue of perhaps 2500 Polish Jews. As to Marseilles, Hochberg thought that the information sent to me by the Dutch authorities was interesting, and was the first that he had heard about this. Hochberg also consulted some other books on the Netherlands, France, Marseilles, etc. and had not come up with anything. He emphasized that much of the diplomatic history of the Holocaust is only now beginning to be researched, even as regards the activities of the U.S. consuls! He further wrote that the behavior of Dutch consuls was no surprise, since Queen Wilhemina and the government-in-exile in London would encourage this in view of the fact that The Netherlands had given sanctuary to at least 25,000 refugees from Nazi Germany before the war.
>
> To my further query as to what criteria the consuls used for issuing such visas, Mr. Hochberg of the Museum replied that under normal circumstances, the Governor of the Dutch East Indies had to approve all end visas, but that after May l940 things were not normal and the consul or vice consul could have had broader authority than usual. [27]

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[26] *Ibid.*

[27] *Ibid.*

Figure 10: Curaçao at the center of the strategic Caribbean basin. Source: Wikipedia

For a bit more background on the history of the Dutch government-in-exile, Queen Wilhelmina and her government ministers had fled their homeland on the eve of the German invasion and set up operations in London. Even absent from their seat of government in the Hague, they still governed a global empire of colonies in the Dutch East and Dutch West Indies. In June of 1940, the urgent question for the Queen, Prime Minister Dirk Jan de Geer and his government was whether to move the seat of government to the East Indies, which was viewed as a way to protect its Asian possessions from the Japanese. Ultimately the Queen rejected that option and the government remained in London.[28]

The Dutch colonies in the Americas were no less central to strategic considerations. With its oil refineries, Curaçao in particular among the Netherlands' six American possessions was a key outpost of the Dutch empire. On the eve of the German invasion of the Netherlands, two of the most important Dutch private enterprises, Royal Dutch

[28] I. N. Gallhofer and W.E. Saris, A Decision Theoretical Analysis of Decisions of the Dutch Government in Exile, Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung, No. 26 (April 1983), pp. 3-17

Shell[29] and Philips,[30] relocated their headquarter operations to Curaçao.

On May 10, 1940, the day of the invasion, authorities in Curaçao acted quickly to confiscate German ships, taking prisoner almost 500 crew men who were sent to an internment camp in Bonaire until after the war.[31] Two years later, Willemstad harbor was the site of a naval engagement during the Battle of the Caribbean. On February 16, 1942, German submarine U-67 torpedoed three oil tankers, sinking one. Another U-boat attacked tankers and an on-shore refinery from a harbor at Aruba. Following that episode, the United States assumed responsibility for guarding Allied assets in the Caribbean.

The Zwartendijk-Sugihara rescue

With this background in Dutch geopolitics, we now come to the case of the Lithuanian Curaçao visas for which Dutch vice consul Jan Zwartendijk and Japanese consul Chiune (Sempo) Sugihara are recognized as Righteous Among the Nations. Since it is so well covered elsewhere, I will not give a complete account of the affair but will rely on two authors, Mordecai Paldiel and Jonathan Goldstein, for details of the timeline.

Another refugee situation as bad or worse as we have seen in France was festering in Lithuania, where many thousands of Polish Jews had fled the Nazis only now to be overrun by the equally dangerous Soviets. Goldstein sets the scene:

> L.P.J. de Decker, based in Riga, Latvia, represented the Dutch government-in-exile in all of the Baltic states. Ambassador de Decker, suspecting the Dutch consul in Kovno (a Lithuanian citizen but ethnic German named Dr. Tillmanns) of pro-Nazi sympathies, dismissed him and, in June 1940, only days before the Soviets occupied Lithuania, asked Zwartendijk to take over as consul in Kovno.
>
> On June 15, the Soviet Union annexed all of unoccupied Lithuania. Jews who had fled there to escape Nazi and/or Soviet cruelty felt especially vulnerable during the annexation process. Those who had fled Soviet rule once now found themselves under Soviet rule a second time. By July virtually all the foreign embassies and consulates in

[29] Mira Wilkins, “The History of Foreign Investment in the United States, 1914-1945,” 2004, p. 473.

[30] Funding Universe, “Philips Electronics North America Corp. History,” from *International Directory of Company Histories*, Vol. 13. St. James Press, 1996

[31] Jewish Virtual Library, Curaçao page: http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Curaçao.html

> the now ex-Lithuanian capital of Kovno were closing, and therewith the refugees' last probable hope of getting documents to settle abroad. [32]

In the Paldiel account, the seed of the idea that would become the Curaçao visa was planted in a series of letters between Dutch-born Polish refugee Pessia Lewin in Kovno and Dutch ambassador de Decker in Riga. Initially Lewin requested a visa to the Dutch East Indies, which de Decker politely rejected. She wrote again asking if there was any other way he could help. De Decker replied that things were no better in the Dutch West Indies. Technically no visa at all is required to enter, he wrote, but you would need a permit from the local governor to do so, something that was highly improbable.

> Attempting one more time, Mrs. Lewin asked whether the ambassador would agree to mention on her Polish passport the first part of his statement, namely that no visa was required for entrance to Curaçao, and leave out the second part on the need of a special permit by the island governor....De Dekker instructed her to send him her passport, which was returned with the ambassador's handwritten statement: "The Dutch Royal Legation in Riga hereby declares that no visa is required for entrance by foreigners to Surinam, Curaçao and the other Dutch possessions in America. Riga, July 11, 1940." [33]

Then 10 days later, according to Paldiel, Lewin visited Zwartendijk in his Kovno office to show him the de Decker notation and to request the same for her husband. By chance, he had recently fielded a similar question about the possibility of travel to the West Indies from rabbinical student Nathan Gutwirth. Seeing de Decker's language, he agreed to copy it for Lewin's husband and again the following day for Gutwirth. More from Paldiel:

> Gutwirth then spread the word of the Curaçao scheme among his fellow students, and word soon reached Dr. Zerach Warhaftig—a Polish refugee and Zionist leader who was frantically searching for ways to spirit Poish Jewish refugees out of the country.... Warhaftig then inquired with Gutwirth whether Zwartendijk would be willing to issue Curaçao visas to more people; to anyone, indeed, who requested it. Without asking permission from his superior in Riga, Zwartendijk promptly told Gutwirth that he would issue Curaçao visas to anyone demanding it, no questions asked. [34]

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[32] Jonathan Goldstein, "Motivation in Holocaust Rescue: The Case of Jan Zwartendijk in Lithuania, 1940," chapter in "Lessons and Legacies VI," Northwestern University Press, 2004.

[33] Mordecai Paldiel, Saving the Jews, Schreiber Publishing, Rockville MD, 2000

[34] *Ibid.*

By now, the Lewins and Gutwirth had already discovered that Japanese consul Chiune Sugihara would honor the Dutch Curaçao visa as a pretext for issuing a transit visa for Japan. With the Japanese visa, they could obtain a permit to cross the Soviet Union by rail to Vladivostok. Returning to Goldstein:

> Word of this possible escape mechanism spread quickly through the religious Zionist community in Lithuania and eventually to the broader Jewish refugee communities in Kovno and Vilna. It did not reach some of the more isolated Lithuanian Jewish communities. Within hours, dozens of petitioners lined up at Zwartendijk's Kovno office. Zwartendijk issued 2,345 visas between July 24 and August 3, when the Soviets commandeered his office.[35]

Coincidence or causality?

Goldstein goes on to provide a considered analysis of the motivations of the various players in the affair. However, our interest now is to determine if the two cases of Curaçao visas are interconnected in any way or are just a coincidence.

There are tantalizing hints of a possible connection. Since van Dobben and Zwartendijk are both Philips men, could they have known each other? Does the Righteousness honor also bestowed on Frits Philips, [36] son of the founder and chief of the company's European operations during the war, tell us anything more about the Philips connection? Also, since the Curaçao operations ran from July 8-18 in Toulouse and from July 24-August 3 in Kovno, is it possible that van Dobben could have communicated with Zwartendijk by diplomatic cable or pouch? Did the idea of using Curaçao as a straw destination hop from one context to another in some form of viral phenomenon?

Unfortunately, the chronology of the Pessia Lewin—Ambassador de Decker correspondence seems to rule out the possibility of a causal connection. The sources tell us that the idea for the Kovno Curaçao visa arose in that correspondence and was passed to Zwartendijk 10 days later, so any possible Philips connection would not be relevant. Also, de Decker signed Lewin's Curaçao visa on July 11, the same day the Ringels received their visas in Toulouse. The first Toulouse visa that we know of, for

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[35] *Ibid.*, Goldstein

[36] Yad Vashem, http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=4043449

Rosalia Freudmann, was issued on July 8, but that leaves a very short window for any communication to have reached Riga from Toulouse.

Much more likely, the idea for the Curaçao visa arose independently in the two cases. We have already seen how, despite its seeming remoteness, Curaçao would have been very much on the minds of Dutch diplomats across Europe, as well as of some desperately creative refugees. Given how few escape routes were available, it becomes more understandable how the same idea could occur in two places within days of each other. More than that, if we include the Schiffres case and two others referenced by Goldstein.

"In addition to Zwartendijk's voluminous visa-writing, Dutch diplomats in Stockholm (A.M. de Jong) and Kobe (N.A.G. de Voogt) later on issued identical Curaçao visas to Jewish refugess,"[37] he writes. So far, I have not yet been able to confirm these additional cases and Goldstein does not give the source of his information. However, if there are two more cases, this further bolsters the interpretation that designating a seemingly exotic location as a refugee haven was not so unlikely at all.

Goldstein's use of the word *identical* seems to suggest that the wording of the visas in these latter cases was the same as on the Zwartendijk visas. That could only be true if the Stockholm and Kobe consuls were aware of the prior usage in Kovno. Yet Goldstein gives elaborate detail about Zwartendijk's subsequent silence on the subject of his wartime deeds until 1963, when the Dutch government finally learned of his actions and called him in for a discreet interview. So just as it appears that Zwartendijk did not get the idea from van Dobben, it seems unlikely that de Jong or de Voogt would have gotten the idea from Zwartendijk.

Goldstein also dismisses the possibility of a Philips connection. Although he cites a "letter from Zwartendijk in Kovno to Philips headquarters in Eindhoven [in which he] writes obliquely of trying to help folk who were '*in de puree*,' colloquial Dutch for 'in hot water' or literally 'in the soup,'" Goldstein writes that "neither Dr. Philips nor his company were even aware until 1997 of Zwartendijk's activities to rescue Jews."[38] He concludes

[37] *Ibid.*, Goldstein, p. 78

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 76

that “the issuance of such ‘visas’ was a heroic and commendable act but in all cases the individual decision of the diplomat himself. There was no governmental policy to issue phony documents to Jewish refugees.” [39]

If Goldstein’s information and analysis is correct, we are left with the conclusion that the multiple instances of Curaçao visas were independent events arising from a common set of influencing factors but were not causally connected in any way.

Survey of consular practices

The attitudes of the various Dutch officials in response to the refugee crisis were not unique. Avraham Milgram undertakes an analysis of the norms of attitude and behavior among Portuguese diplomatic officials in his paper “Portugal, the Consuls and the Jewish Refugees, 1938-1941,” in which he finds that “solidarity with Jews was not rare in Portuguese consular circles.”[40] This was in stark contrast to Portugal’s Interior Ministry and especially its police arm, the PVDE, which consistently acted to restrict refugee immigration. Milgram finds that the country’s authoritarian prime minister, António de Oliveira Salazar, used the international branch of the PVDE to rein in frequently sympathetic impulses displayed by diplomats.

But the refugee crisis and the Salazar government’s hypersensitivity to the entry of foreigners was just one factor shaping Salazar’s immigration policies, according to Milgram. Equally important were Portugal’s relationship with Spain and its interest in navigating a neutral posture between Europe’s warring powers, Great Britain and Germany. In the early days of the refugee crisis, when the first wave of Jews were fleeing Germany and Eastern Europe between 1935 and 1938, Portugal was not seen as a desirable destination. Salazar’s government did not send a delegation to the Évian Conference, the international gathering to address the refugee crisis, in July 1938. However, things changed after Germany swallowed Austria that year in the Anschluss.

Viennese Jews became interested in Portugal as a country of transit only when the

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 79

[40] Avraham Milgram, “Portugal, the Consuls and the Jewish Refugees, 1938-1941,” Yad Vashem Publications, 1999. See also Milgram, *Portugal, Salazar and the Jews* (Yad Vashem, 2011), which contains an updated version of the earlier paper.

> consuls of Holland, Belgium, and Switzerland stopped granting them visas. The majority of those who received transit visas for these countries did not continue their journey, preferring to remain in Europe for various reasons — sometimes simply due to lack of funds for the trip. Those with German or Austrian passports did not need a visa to enter Portugal as tourists for a period of less than thirty days, an exemption which applied to Jews as well. [41]

Then follows the chaotic period until the end of 1941 when tens of thousands of Jewish refugees succeeded in gaining passage through Lisbon on their way to later resettlement in North and South America. The greatest numbers of these came in the summer and fall of 1940, and the majority of these were Sousa Mendes visa recipients. Milgram cites the chief of the PVDE's statement that there were 15,000 refugees in Lisbon in August 1940, the month that the Ringels and Freudmanns arrived.[42]

But Sousa Mendes was not the only diplomat that caused problems for Salazar and the PVDE. Pleas for special consideration on behalf of particular Jews came in from consulates across the continent. One especially vocal diplomat was Alberto da Veiga Simões, the Portuguese ambassador in Berlin, formerly the foreign minister, who sent Salazar frequent disapproving reports on developments in the German capital, according to Milgram. Relative to the refugee problem, shortly after Kristallnacht in November 1938, he warned of the possibility of a mass emigration of impoverished Jews to Portugal and lobbied for flexible administration of immigration policy.

> He tried to ensure that consuls retain the exclusive right to grant or refuse visas, a right which was being systematically undermined by the PVDE with Salazar's connivance. He [also] tried to protect certain Jews against the wishes of the PVDE, deliberately overlooking the warnings by the police and justifying himself to Salazar for the visas issued to people in whom he was interested. [43]

Despite his interventions, the new policy in the foreign ministry required that all visa applications must have prior authorization from Lisbon. As a result of this restriction, "the number of authorized visas without prior consultation which [Veiga Simões]

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[41] *Ibid.*, p. 5

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 5

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 14

advocated was considerably reduced, but was still high enough for him to be reprimanded by Salazar." [44]

Milgram cites three particular cases of prominent Jews for whom Veiga Simões lobbied, including the personal doctor of several Berlin diplomats and the widow of an important industrialist. He also notes that the consul in Hamburg granted visas to Jews on his own accord and with the approval of Veiga Simões, thus bypassing the PVDE.[45]

On July 31, 1940, Veiga Simões was recalled from the Berlin mission in favor of a pro-German ambassador, the Count of Tovar, whom weeks earlier had played a key role in shutting down Sousa Mendes. Salazar's subsequent treatment of Veiga Simões was something of a model for how he would also freeze out Sousa Mendes. He was offered an unattractive posting in Asia, and when he declined, was discharged from the foreign service.

> Salazar, who did not tolerate any opposition and, still less, any disregard of his authority, had a special ability to undo undisciplined subordinates who acted as circumstances and their consciences dictated: he ostracized them. For these reasons he punished Veiga Simões, avenged himself on Aristides Mendes, and humiliated Sampayo Garrido, head of the Portuguese Legation in Budapest. [46]

Italian cases and Sousa Mendes

Two consular officials in Italy also caused problems for Salazar and his immigration police. In late 1938, Consul Alfredo Casanova in the port city Genoa authorized a transit visa for a stranded Polish Jew that was rejected by the PVDE in Lisbon, where the passenger was not permitted to disembark. The passenger continued on the ship to America, back to Lisbon and back to Genoa, where the shipping company complained that it had been stuck with the costs of transporting and feeding the passenger.

Casanova figured in events again in 1940, when an honorary consul reporting to him, Giuseppe Agenore Magno of Milan, issued a visa to a Rumanian refugee even though

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[44] *Ibid.*, p. 15

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 16

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 18. Garrido's actions to shelter more than 1000 Jews in Budapest occurred in 1944.

the foreign ministry had previously refused entry to the refugee. When he arrived in Portugal by air on September 6, 1940, he was forbidden entry and forced to return to Italy on the same plane. Around the same time, the Milanese consul was involved in a scheme with a Panamanian consul to authorize visas for Portugal.

Following these multiple incidents, Magno was discharged from his consular functions. The Consul General Casanova in Genoa protested that action in a letter to Salazar, arguing that consuls should have the authority to make exceptions based on humanitarian grounds. Milgram quotes from the letter.

> Mr. Agenore Magno did indeed grant some passports which I suppose were not quite regular, but...if he has transgressed, it was certainly because of his warm heart, his open and sound mind and not for dishonest reasons. There are transgressions which on certain occasions constitute facts which, according to my way of seeing and feeling, should be accorded a generous absolution, due to the tragic situations, such as were those of the Hebrews. [47]

Finally, Milgram considers the case of Sousa Mendes and fills in some important details. Because of the deteriorating refugee situation, Salazar's foreign ministry issued a new policy in Circular 14 on November 11, 1939. For the first time, it called out "Jews expelled from the countries of their nationality" as subject to more restrictive treatment than other groups of refugees. Even so, the new restrictions applied to refugees lacking a visa to a final destination and an air or sea ticket out of Portugal, leaving open a loophole for passengers meeting those conditions.

The troubles began for Sousa Mendes later in November when he issued a visa for a history professor and his wife even though a previous request to the foreign ministry on their behalf had been denied. In March of 1940, Sousa Mendes again disregarded policy in issuing a visa to an anti-Franco Spanish doctor. Milgrams writes:

> Sousa Mendes was reprimanded and warned in writing that "any new transgression or violation on this issue will be considered disobedience and will entail a disciplinary procedure where it will not be possible to overlook that you have repeatedly committed acts which have entailed warnings and reprimands...." [48]

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[47] *Ibid.*, p.

[48] *Ibid.*, p.

These two cases highlight the fact that Sousa Mendes issued visas on the more limited basis throughout the period leading up to his moment of disobedience. Milgram cites the numbers from the Bordeaux consulate visa log: Sousa Mendes issued 2862 visas between January 1 and June 22, 1940. Of these, 1575—more than half—were issued between June 11 and 22. He notes that this does not account for the visas issued after June 22 in the cities of Bayonne and Hendaye, or those issued in other cities such as Toulouse by consuls acting under his instructions. [49]

From those numbers, we see that during the final week in Bordeaux he averaged more than 200 visas per day whereas in the previous five months of 1940 he averaged about 20 visas a day. Thus we should view his moment of decision not as a binary transition from no visas to unlimited visas but rather as a dramatic increase in the rate of ongoing visa issuances.

What we may have begun viewing as a unique circumstance with Sousa Mendes is more rightly seen as an exceptional instance of attitudes and behaviors somewhat commonly exhibited within the Portuguese consular corps. Milgram notes that the diplomats came from a wide range of political backgrounds.

> "Compassion for the suffering of others, in the case of the Jews, was shared by the monarchist Aristides de Sousa Mendes, the anti-Marxist Alfredo Casanova, the republican Alberto Veiga Simões, the liberal Giuseppe Agenore Magno, and other less well-known patriots of the Portuguese consular service." [50]

One figure who is not mentioned is the Toulouse honorary vice consul Emile Gissot, because he is known to Milgram only as a minor actor in the Sousa Mendes affair. The fact that he was subject to a formal disciplinary hearing is a clue that his case should be considered among the others on Milgram's list. Rui Afonso had long been surprised that Portugal bothered to punish Gissot, being that he was only an honorary vice consul.[51] But that action is less surprising if one assumes the inquiry is not about Gissot's role with Sousa Mendes but rather his subsequent activities concerning Curaçao visas.

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[49] *Ibid.*, p.

[50] *Ibid.*, p.

[51] Private correspondence with the author.

Implications for righteousness

With Milgram's help, we have gained an overall picture of the Portuguese foreign service as a culture that tolerated expression of some humanitarian views, just as we have seen examples of similar views among Dutch officials. Outside the cases discussed here, there are dozens of other diplomatic rescuers representing many nationalities who have been recognized by various list-makers. Some famous examples are Raoul Wallenberg (Sweden), Frank Foley (Great Britain), Jan Karski (Poland), Feng Shan Ho (China) and Hiram Bingham (United States), among others. The Raoul Wallenberg Foundation's full list of what it calls "savior diplomats" contains 60 names. [52]

The official designator of the Righteous Among the Nations title is Yad Vashem, the Israeli remembrance authority. In *Saving the Jews* (2000), Mordecai Paldiel, the former long-time chairman of Yad Vashem's designation commission, tallied more than 17,000 awards and 8000 accredited rescue stories. Yad Vashem does not have a separate category for diplomats only, including government officials among the general definition of righteous. However, Paldiel devotes a chapter of *Saving the Jews* to righteous diplomats, evoking their special role in mediating the movement of refugees.

> A few diplomats, public servants and official emissaries, who were stationed or found themselves at critical junctures on the refugees' flight paths, found ways to bend the rules and the mandates of their assignments, and grant life-saving visas to the refugees. These were times when a brief-worded official seal on a piece of paper meant the difference between life and death...[53]

Rescuers provided help to Jews in various forms, which Paldiel groups into four types--sheltering, dissimulating, moving and saving children. Dissimulating means changing identity or passing as a non-Jew, and a number of the diplomatic rescuers including Wallenberg fall in this category. Others like Sousa Mendes and Zwartendijk helped by enabling movement of Jews from areas of imminent danger to areas of lower risk.

> Another major form of assistance was to help Jews flee from one place to another; either within German-dominated regions, or across frontiers to countries not embroiled in the war, such as Switzerland, Sweden, Spain and Turkey. In all of these endeavors, to travel

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[52] http://www.raoulwallenberg.net/category/saviors/diplomats/list/

[53] *Ibid.*, Paldiel, p.

> over long distances and tortuous trails and negotiate well-guarded border crossings, without being apprehended, help was needed by non-Jews... [54]

All help is not equal, however. Among diplomats, we see extraordinary cases like Wallenberg and Sousa Mendes and lesser but still significant actions by people like Magno and Emile Gissot. Yad Vashem has the thankless job of evaluating claims of righteousness, factoring in the variable circumstances and degrees of compassion and personal risk. In *Saving the Jews*, Paldiel lists seven conditions that must be met to merit the title. [55]

- Personal participation in a serious attempt to help at least one Jewish person to survive, irrespective of whether the rescue operation proved successful or not;
- At a time when the Jewish person was helpless and in order to survive had to rely on the help of others;
- The rescuer placed his own life and well being in jeopardy;
- The rescue act was not preconditioned on the receipt of a substantial monetary or other tangible reward and compensation;
- The humanitarian motivation proved to be the rescuer's principal incentive;
- The rescuer not having, before and during the rescue operation, been in a position to cause physical harm to Jews and others;
- Verification of the story exists though testimony or incontestable documentation.

Based on these criteria, how do we assess the actions of Emile Gissot and the other consuls of Toulouse? On a first analysis, it seems that they generally meet the requirements. It is clear that Gissot, van Dobben, Pichal and Wozniak each made a deliberate choice to circumvent regulations in order to help people in distress. There is no indication that they undertook their actions for any kind of personal gain. But to what degree did they put themselves at risk, act out of humanitarian motivation, and act on their own initiative?

Their collaboration to issue hundreds of transit visas based on phony Curaçao papers is clearly a lesser act of disobedience than Sousa Mendes' issuance of many thousands

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[54] *Ibid.*, p.

[55] *Ibid.*, p.

of visas with no documentation required, but also greater than the non-actions of many others who stood by and did nothing. Where is the line to be drawn between those who merely bent the rules and those who shattered them?

To apportion righteousness, one must assess the degree to which the event is derivative of a previous event or an independent occurrence. From the history, it is clear that Gissot's involvement began under instructions from Sousa Mendes. But we now know that Gissot issued an unrelated round of visas after Sousa Mendes had been removed from office and whose previous authorization was no longer in effect. The Curaçao visas can be interpreted either as an extension of Gissot's earlier involvement with Sousa Mendes or as a separate and independent action.

An assessment would also consider the degree to which the actions were personally versus professionally motivated. How did the policy postures of the various countries involved influence the individual official's actions? Since Portugal practiced a more restrictive policy than the Netherlands, should Gissot get more credit than Pichal and van Dobben for their otherwise comparable actions?

Finally, one also must assess the degree of personal risk assumed by the diplomat in question. We know that Raoul Wallenberg gave his life and Sousa Mendes his livelihood and reputation. Emile Gissot was disciplined by the Salazar government and later dismissed from his position—a lesser outcome but still significant. With van Dobben, we get a sense in the Kowalski testimony that he is more risk-averse and chooses not to go outside the rules in that case. However, he is willing to do so in collaboration with Gissot and others.

Ultimately it is not my purpose to make a case for righteousness for Emile Gissot, A.J. van Dobben and the other consuls of Toulouse. Rather I mean to demonstrate that Holocaust heroism was not an either-or proposition but something that happened along a spectrum of behaviors. Numerous small acts of humanity along the way may have saved as many lives as did a few celebrated cases. At a time and place when the lives of families like the Ringels and Freudmanns, and even of a scoundrel like Otto Strasser, hung in the balance, these men acted within their own abilities and limitations to make the situation just a little bit better.

Postscript

With Curaçao being the subject of so many wartime visa issuances, it is natural to wonder if any Jewish refugees actually ended up on the Dutch island. The answer is that very few did. The Ringel and Freudmann cases are typical in that those families ultimately settled in the United States. Strasser ended in Canada. Undoubtedly, other Curaçao visa holders settled in various South American countries.

But refugees did arrive in Curaçao on two occasions that we know of, and at least one prominent individual stayed and prospered there. One group arrived on the SS Cabo de Hornos in November 1941 when the Dutch government gave sanctuary to 83 refugees who had been turned away in Brazil and Argentina. The local established Jewish community provided for these individuals until they found passage elsewhere. At the end of the war, 19 of the Cabo de Hornos passengers were still living on the island, according to records in the Dutch National Archive.[56]

Records are much sketchier for the other arrival, but the Dutch archives also have a record of the SS Cuba arriving in Curaçao from Santa Domingo sometime in 1940 with the families Anholt, Mendels and Perlman on board.[57] Searching for those names and Curaçao returns extensive information about a Suzanne Perlman.

Born Susan Asenath Sternberg in Budapest in October 1923, Perlman was 17 and married to Heinz Perlman when they arrived in Willemstad in 1940. I have not yet learned on what ship or with what visas they had reached the Dominican Republic, and we don't know if the Perlmans or other SS Cuba families could have previously been in either Toulouse or Kovno.

We do know that the Perlmans settled in Curaçao and raised three sons there.[58] Suzanne went on to become a quite successful artist, known for her paintings of

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[56] Netherlands National Archive, Governor Suriname / Secret Archives, 2.10.18, Files 567-568 (Cabo de Hornos): http://www.gahetna.nl/collectie/archief/ead/zoekresultaat/zoekterm/cabo%20de%20hornos/eadid/2.10.18/wollig/uit/volledige-tekst/aan/gebruikersinbreng/aan

[57] Netherlands National Archive, Netherlands Consulate in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), 2.05.336, Inventory Nos. 3-94 (Perlman) and 4-108 (SS Cuba): http://www.gahetna.nl/collectie/archief/ead/zoekresultaat/zoekterm/perlman/eadid/2.05.336/aantal/20

[58] Hirschler Family Tree (Sternberg-Perlman): http://www.loebtree.com/hirscheler.html

Curaçao scenes as well as of Jewish subjects (figure 1). Some of her works have sold at auction and others are available to view or purchase online.[59] She also has been a long-time supporter of Zionist causes, particularly WIZO[60] (Women's International Zionist Organization) and Hebrew University.[61] Her brother is Sir Simon Sternberg, the British philanthropist and interfaith leader.[62] In April 2009, she received a royal ribbon for her service to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.[63] She is still living at 90 years of age.

Finally, one member of Curaçao's long-established Jewish community, George Maduro, earned an honored place in Dutch history for his military role in the Battle of the Netherlands, actions with the Dutch resistance, and death at Dachau. The miniature Dutch city Madurodam in Scheveningen is named for him. [64]

Figure 11: Suzanne Sternberg Perlman received a royal ribbon for distinguished service to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

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[59] Galleries-Online, Suzanne Perlman Gallery: http://www.galleries-online.co.uk/suzanneperlman

[60] Tricia Schwitzer, "From the Beginning: WIZO Curaçao," WIZO Review, Spring Summer 2010, pp. 20-21: http://www.wizo.org/media/Uploads/1854-wizo_review_spring_summer_2011-326_50_pages_for_Internet.pdf

[61] British Friends of Hebrew University website, Council of Patrons page: https://www.bfhu.org/parent/336/

[62] Ibid, Hirschler

[63] Kingdom of the Netherlands, "Shower of Medals at Dutch Embassy," http://www.netherlands-embassy.org.uk/page/index.php?i=334

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