

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 457

Honoring the humanitarian work of Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes do Amaral e Abranches to save the lives of French Jews and other persons during the Holocaust.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 30, 2023

Mr. COSTA (for himself, Mr. VALADAO, Mrs. TRAHAN, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. MAGAZINER, Mr. PETERS, Mr. AUCHINCLOSS, and Mr. KEATING) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Honoring the humanitarian work of Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes do Amaral e Abranches to save the lives of French Jews and other persons during the Holocaust.

Whereas Nazi Germany invaded France on May 10, 1940, and after brief but intense hostilities, secured the surrender of France on June 22, 1940;

Whereas, as a consequence of the Nazi conquest, the lives of French Jews and Jewish and non-Jewish persons of other nationalities seeking refuge in France were put in grave and imminent danger;

Whereas many thousands of those persons fled to Bordeaux, France, and elsewhere in southwest France, seeking to traverse Spain and escape to Portugal;

Whereas, in 1939, the Government of Portugal under Antonio de Oliveira Salazar issued Circular 14, which sharply restricted the availability of visas to displaced persons;

Whereas the Consul General of Portugal in Bordeaux was Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes do Amaral e Abranches;

Whereas, in June 1940, confronting a humanitarian crisis and in defiance of Circular 14, Sousa Mendes, assisted principally by his diplomatic colleagues Jose de Seabra, Manuel de Vieira Braga, and Emile Gissot, issued without charge tens of thousands of visas, including thousands to fleeing Jews;

Whereas Sousa Mendes reportedly stated, “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.”;

Whereas those visas, as well as Sousa Mendes’ personal intervention at the border between France and Spain, enabled the refugees to reach safety in Portugal;

Whereas, in July 1940, the Government of Portugal under Oliveira Salazar responded by recalling Sousa Mendes, dismissing Sousa Mendes later from active diplomatic service, and subjecting him to economic retribution and subsequent ostracism;

Whereas, in 1941, Sousa Mendes explained, “In truth, I disobeyed, but my disobedience does not dishonor me. I chose to defy an order that to me represented the persecution of true castaways who sought with all their strength to be saved from Hitler’s wrath. Above the order, for me, was God’s law, and that’s the one I have always sought to adhere to without hesitation. The true lesson of Christianity is to love one’s neighbor.”;

Whereas, in 1954, Sousa Mendes died penniless in Lisbon, Portugal, under the cloud of the discipline imposed for his defiance;

Whereas, in 1966, Yad Vashem recognized Sousa Mendes as a Righteous Among the Nations for his selfless efforts to save Jewish lives at personal risk to himself, making Sousa Mendes the first of a number of diplomatic rescuers to be so honored;

Whereas, in 1988, the United States Senate passed Senate Resolution 270, 100th Congress, agreed to June 23, 1988, to commemorate Sousa Mendes' humanitarian efforts;

Whereas, in 1986, President of Portugal Mario Soares posthumously rehabilitated Sousa Mendes, decorating Sousa Mendes as an Officer of the Order of Liberty;

Whereas, in 1988, the Parliament of Portugal posthumously granted Sousa Mendes the status of Ambassador;

Whereas, in 1995, President of Portugal Mario Soares posthumously bestowed on Sousa Mendes the Grand Cross of the Order of Christ;

Whereas, in 2017, President of Portugal Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa posthumously bestowed on Sousa Mendes Portugal's highest honor, the Grand Cross of the Order of Liberty;

Whereas, in 2020, the Parliament of Portugal unanimously voted to memorialize Sousa Mendes in the National Pantheon in Lisbon; and

Whereas, in 2020, on the 80th anniversary of his heroism, the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad initiated commemorations in

honor of Sousa Mendes in Bordeaux, France, and Portugal: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) honors and salutes the humanitarian and
3 principled work of Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes do
4 Amaral e Abranches, Consul of Portugal in Bor-
5 deaux, France, for acting with great courage and at
6 personal risk to issue transit visas to French Jews
7 and other persons, sparing them from Nazi occupa-
8 tion and the Holocaust, thus saving many thousands
9 of innocent lives; and

10 (2) directs the Clerk of the House of Represent-
11 atives to transmit copies of this resolution to—

12 (A) the President; and

13 (B) the President of the Assembly of the
14 Republic of Portugal.

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