31 Comment

Barcelona

el freed 1,500 prisoners Jews in Egypt

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The Spanish ambassador, Angel Sagaz with his wife Úrsula Zinsel, who also helped him in the Jewish cause.

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- The 50th anniversary of the end of the Six-Day War, narrated the saga of Angel Sagaz ambassador in Cairo
- Here the story of a survivor and papers declassified secret operation 'Passport 128'

On June 21, 1967, with the still smoldering embers of the Arab defeat in the Six-Day War, **Franco's Spain undertook a secret operation to free hundreds of Jews** confined in Egyptian and evacuate prisons throughout the country in the company of families. The coded telegram number 128 , sent from Madrid to the Spanish Embassy in Cairo, launched a work guided by absolute discretion Chronicle rebuilt when half a century of conflict that wreaked havoc in a region torn today in a thousand trenches are met . "In the first moments of the war, the services of **police UAR** [United Arab Republic, the official name of Egypt at that time] **began arresting Jews, trying, in general, every family had one in prison** in order to terrorize the entire minority , "says Angel Sagaz, the then Spanish ambassador to Egypt, in a quiet dispatch dated years after it had access to this supplement.

Shrewd a veteran diplomat who would end his days in front of the legation in Washington, was the angel that made the operation key " **Passport 128** ".

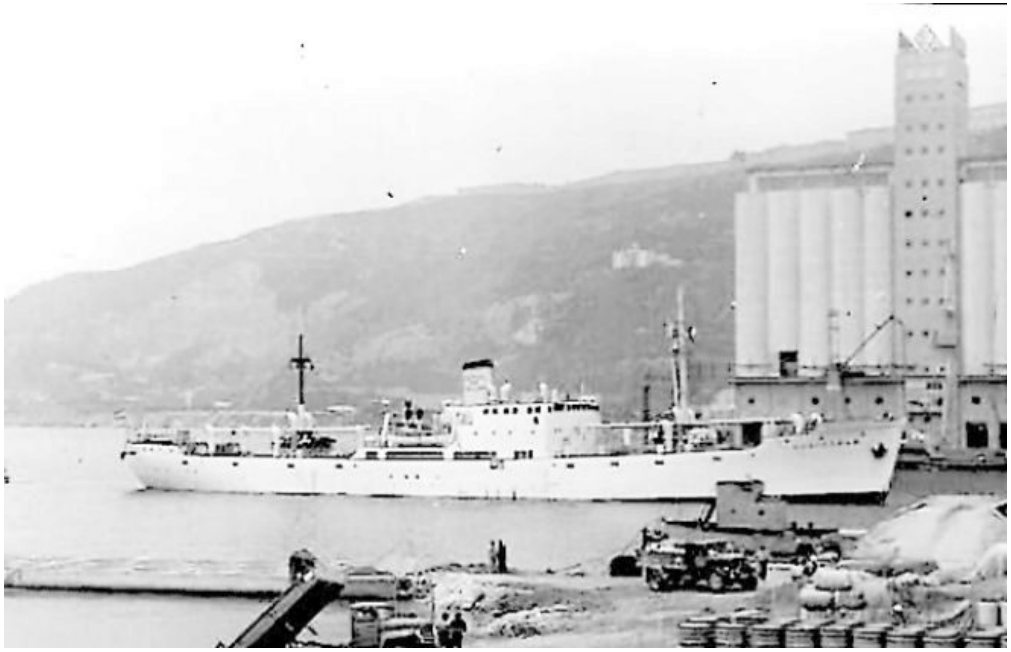
"At home the evacuation never counted as if it were a great achievement. We always understood that it was part of the job I had to do my father , " his son Manuel Sagaz slides. Ambassador efforts were decisive in an episode of the little - known Spanish diplomacy. Since that stormy summer of 1967, Sagaz paraded through the halls of the Egyptian regime in search of an intricate arrangement. **The Spanish embassy had assumed representation of US interests in Egypt** . In early June the Israeli community in Madrid and American Jewish organizations had led to the Franco government pleading for help to save the dwindling Jewish minority, which has become scapegoats of skirmishes against Israel. "The Embassy of Spain, from the outset, came into contact with police stations and the Ministry of Interior to defend all those Jews who had Spanish passport , " recalls Sagaz at the crossroads of messages in those years remained with her higher. **Foreign order, however, provide protection specifically called "Sephardim Sephardim or not** ."

Shrewd dodged a challenge concocting a clever ruse to persuade the Egyptian authorities. In his meetings with the Minister of Interior and his subordinates

Coincidences aside, Sagaz mails with outside-of which no trace remains at the Spanish embassy in Cairo and are stored in the General Archive of the Administration - up record of the details of the plan. **Telegrams sent from Cairo dripping report outputs achieved by the Spanish mediation** . "I would attach two lists of people of Jewish origin evacuated to the present. The first, 10, is formed by those Spaniards of Jewish origin prior to the Six-Day War had Spanish passport. The second list of 131 people, which corresponds to Spanish documents received after June 4th. the difference is significant , "Shrewd writes in a note to the Foreign Minister of the time, Fernando María Castiella. October 1967 and ran the Egyptians interested in expelling the last representatives of the once vibrant Jewish community had accepted the ruse.

Contributed to the success, as supported by the ambassador, " **the excellent relations with Arab countries and not recognizing the State of Israel** ". "We pound suspicion or possible political interest, thus having our work a unique humanitarian purpose , " says the diplomat. He also helped the negotiations then deployed Sagaz friendship struck up with Egyptian President **Gamal Abdel Nasser** , today wizened icon Arabism, and court officers. Ties that served to disrupt entuertos and threats such as the publication in 1967 of the first testimony of one of the deported Jews.

The story, which appeared in the French weekly *L'Express* , **revealed interrogation and torture to which they were subjected hundreds of Jews** intramural infamous prisons. "It took half a year to take up the pen, but in the end, has not resisted the temptation to present himself as a hero , " complains Sagaz in an office. Article infringed the absolute silence of those who were released about his prison experience, one of the two conditions imposed by the Egyptian ambassador. **The other requirement was that those expelled were not immediately spec toward Israel** . Aware that the pact was in danger, Sagaz went to the undersecretary of the Egyptian Ministry of Interior, who confessed: "I, each person leaving the country **I ask you to promise me not to say anything against these authorities** , for which I have nothing but gratitude reasons, and if they did, despite this warning, Mr. undersecretary, I stop doing what I'm doing and I get to play golf. "



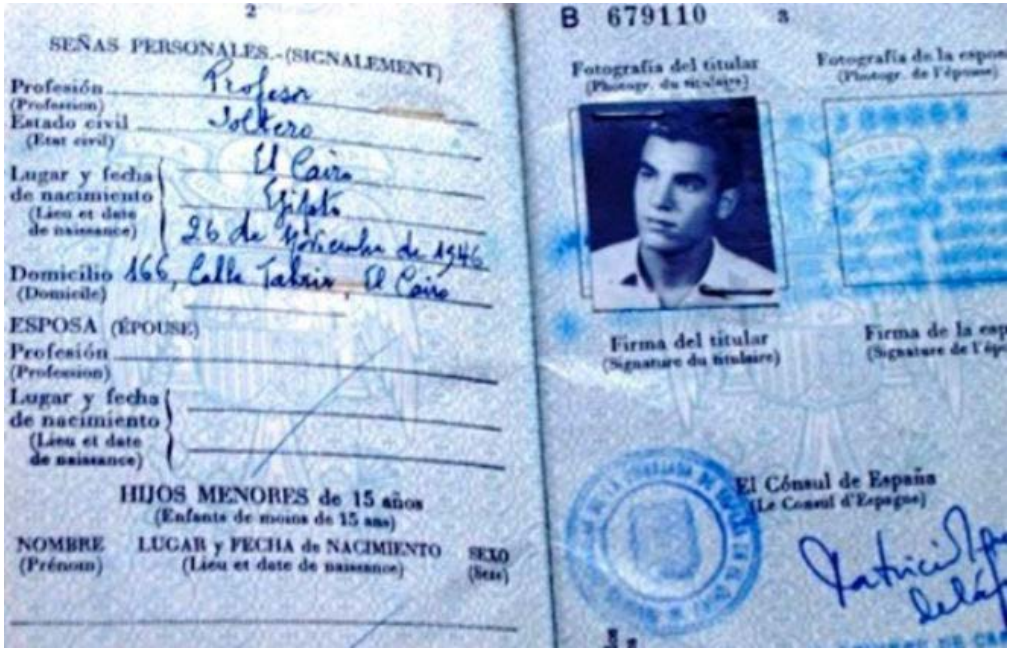
One of the ships entering Jews moved to Barcelona.

His words took effect and a second wave of departures was recorded. In its goal to complete the mission, Sagaz was not alone. His wife, **Úrsula Zinsel** , also joined the company. "He was much older than she. He played a very important volunteer work as **honorary president of Caritas Egypt** " recalls Lisbona. Ursula, who died in 2012, was the one who told their children the adventure. **" I take appointment to access women 's prisons and distribute clothing, food and medicine** . So he met Jewish who were arrested , " said one of its offshoots. Ursula's parents fled Germany after the crisis of 1929 and began a new life in the Canary Islands. "And my mother was born there. I imagine his childhood and adolescence were marked by what happened in Germany. Surely everything that helped him to become more involved in this matter, to be more supportive than average , " he adds.

Between 1967 and 1970, up to 1,500 Jews left the land of the Pharaohs by the diligence of Sagaz and your spouse. Mostly they were stateless Jews who had been confined in the prisons of Tora, south of Cairo , and Abu Zabal, in

the north of the capital, and the women's prison in Qanater, in the Nile Delta. One of Jewish prisoners those blessed by the angel was Ovadia Spanish Yerushalmi. "At that time nobody informed us of the involvement of the Spanish embassy in Cairo. **We gave the Spanish passports shortly before the flight to France** , " says the survivor, 72. "We did not have the faintest idea why those passports. We found it ironic. We had lived in Egypt as we became stateless and Spanish on our flight from the country". The past half century has not lost memories of Yerushalmi prison. "It was terrible, inhumane and humiliating. **We were arrested and imprisoned for two years without reason** . We put 72 people in a small cell without the minimum hygienic conditions. The food was horrible and small. They beat us and insulted day and night to avenge his defeat in war. "

The first shipments of refugees left the port of Alexandria in the **Spanish ships and Benicarló Benidorm to Marseilles, Genoa or Barcelona** in a few trips paid for by the Spanish Government. The protagonists of the second phase of the operation, however, departed on scheduled flights of Air France at a rate of eight every other day borne by Jewish organizations. As evidenced by the declassified documents, the Spanish embassy received and distributed among the Jewish community financial aid coming from outside behind the Egyptian authorities. "If they know they get more help from outside, have less interest in solving this problem , " warns Sagaz in one of his missives.



Shrewd a passport made for a Jewish flee Egypt.

"Shrewd was involved in the solution. **I was going to pick up the Jews who were released from prison, he signed their passports and in a car with diplomatic plates transferred them to Alexandria to take the boat** , " said Lisbona. Then the Egyptian Jewish community was becoming a vague memory of its past splendor. In the early twentieth century it surpassed 90,000 souls. The birth of the state of Israel in 1948 , growth of anti - Semitism, Israeli Arab wars and expropriations and expulsions ordered by Nasser fueled the exodus and left under minimums the census. "It was a very large community and became much notice , " says Veronica Spanish Nehama, who lived in Alexandria to 11 years. " I remember her as a beautiful city with wonderful beaches. Jews lived more European way, no frills but with running water and beds", narrates this Alexandrian who left Egypt in 1957, against the backdrop of the nationalization of the Suez Canal. "It was a society in another with parallel experiences." **Today the last Jews living in Alexandria and Cairo barely over the decade** . The youngest representative has fulfilled half a century and has no offspring.

Sagacious witnessed the sunset. "Now there is no more than 1,000 Jews between detainees and freedom throughout the country , " he explains in a letter dated

1970. His dialogue soon spread among those who succored a colony in retreat. "The Red Cross can do nothing for them and when they receive a request discreetly suggest they go to the Embassy of Spain, the" only one who can do something. " I estimate that there will soon be an amount equal to or greater on which I will trade in analogously to what has been done so far , "he had left written three years earlier. **Memory diplomat, who managed the evacuation of 40 Jewish Sudan, has attracted little public interest in Spain** . "What surprises me most is how little is known about the valuable help provided Sagaz to help save hundreds of Jews persecuted by the Egyptian authorities. More than 1,000 people owe Spain and Ambassador their lives, but very little has been done to recognize and honor him, "laments Raanan Rein, vice president of Tel Aviv University.

Most graced by his quest fulfilled the promise to Shrewd and silent . Passports granted by Spain served them as safe passage to escape the Egyptian anger. They had two years of existence and Spanish consulates abroad concise received orders not to renew. "Many stayed in France. Some went to America spreading from Canada to Brazil. All agreed not to move to Israel immediately, but after some time several families were already installed here , " says Rein. " I remember a lecture I gave at the university on this issue now for about ten years. At the end, several people came to thank me. They were Egyptian Jews who were very excited about the recognition I gave Shrewd." Spain saved us life , "I said with eyes soaked in tears."

Years after that evacuation, one of the sons of Sagaz ran into one of those who received under his father. "One of my brothers went to a bookstore in New York looking for a job to pay for his studies. The owner identified him and confessed that my father had helped him out of Egypt. It is the only survivor who could locate" outlines Manuel de a biography still in shadow area. Its true redeemer, who dealt with the Egyptian generals to remove him from the hell of Abu Zabal, Yerushalmi news was only much later, when Sagaz had already perished. "For Jews, it is a righteous man who helped us in times of need and distress. **I appreciate your courage and dedication to our cause. Hurray Angel!** " He concludes.

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