

The story of the humanist Julio Palencia

The official record of the diplomatic career of Julio Palencia and Alvarez (1884 - 1952) makes it clear that he has not only roamed many lands around the world, but also inhaled the dust of many buried crops. His career paths have consistently passed through the following positions: Vice-Consul in Buenos Aires, Thessaloniki and Costa Rica; 2nd grade consul in San Jose - the capital of Costa Rica, Shanghai; 1st Class Consul in Panama, Cape Town, Tetuan / Morocco /, Milan; Consul General in Istanbul; then Consul Class I in Hamburg, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Athens; Head of the Print Sector at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Madrid.

For the first time, the name of Julio Palencia and Alvarez in Bulgaria appeared in a confidential note dated March 11, 1940, written by the Chief of Protocol at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Religious Affairs. It is addressed to Prime Minister Bogdan Filov and reads as follows: "The Spanish Government requests the consent of the Royal Government to appoint Mr Julio Palencia, Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Madrid, as Extraordinary Envoy and Minister Plenipotentiary of our Court. J.Palencia was the Spanish minister in Athens. His wife, Zina, is the daughter of old Dragulis, the founder of socialist ideas in Greece. "

The diplomatic career of Julio Palencia in Bulgaria begins with the well-known binding protocol - service of his credentials personally to Tsar Boris III. In his speech on this occasion, the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Minister of Spain in Bulgaria stated: "I have the honor to give to Your Majesty the credentials by which His Excellency Generalissimo Franco accredited me to Your Augustine as his extraordinary and plenipotentiary minister. . I hasten to express, on this so exciting occasion, on behalf of the President of Spain, his sincere wishes for the prosperity of Your Majesty, Her Majesty the Queen, the whole royal family and Bulgaria, as he hopes that the friendly relations that exist so happy between our two countries, based on the feelings and traditions of true friendship, will continue to become even more cordial. I am extremely happy to be honored to be designated as the representative of Spain in a country to which I have the deepest sympathy and in which I am pleased to take on the high mission of supporting, developing and contributing even more to the development of good Spanish-Bulgarian relationships ". In his reply, King Boris III stated: "Mr Minister, I am pleased to accept from your hands the letters accrediting the Head of State of Spain to me in your capacity of Minister of Emergency and Plenipotentiary. I acknowledge with gratitude the words by which you determine the assumption of high responsibility entrusted to you. I assure you that I will gladly support and strengthen the always good and traditional friendship that luckily exists between Spain and Bulgaria. I am convinced, Minister, that your personal contribution that you are proposing to make here will be particularly effective, and I assure you that all the efforts you devote to the accomplishment of your task in our country will have my continued support and the diligent participation of the Bulgarian Government. "

Personally, it was a complete surprise to me when I discovered in the first archival documents, which state that only about two months later, the Palencia family came under the scrutiny of the Bulgarian secret services. A curious detail is that the "honor" was the first to fall on Ms. Palencia. Earlier in the material, which proves the existence of such a trend, it is written that: "From a reliable source I learned that the wife of the Spanish Minister of Minister in

Sofia, who was a Greek national by nationality, had recently been intensifying anti-Bulgarian activity. She organized for a fee and obliged the maids at the legation to knit socks and gloves, which she sent to Greece for the Greek army in various ways. The same lady organized frequent receptions at a villa in Knyazhevo, with the guests being extremely Jewish. She used to go around the city all day and visit mostly Jews. " This message is taken very seriously, which is referred to in Task No. 227, signed on 27 June 1941, entitled "Investigate the most important points in the attached report of the mayor". During this period, he was drawn up by the police of Model Card No. 1 of Julio Palencia. Then comes another document that reveals new details of the follow-up of the wife of the Spanish ambassador: "From the studies and information gathered, it is revealed that the wife of the Spanish Minister of Power is named Zoe Dragulis da Palencia, a nationally pure-blooded Greek woman and is a thoroughbred Greek woman. together with her husband on the 23rd of XII.1940. After arriving in Sofia, she contacted other officials of the Greek Legation. When setting up the Aid Committee to collect and send aid to the Greek army, Zoe Dragulis gave quite a lot of cash, as well as underwear, flannel, gloves and more. She has been seen several times attending the Greek Legation as a guest of the Greek Minister Plenipotentiary, with whom the woman is very close and friendly. It is also confirmed that she attended receptions held at the villa of Jacques / Santiago / Nissim Elias, Vice-Consul of the Spanish Legation. Zoe Dragulis was found to be a fanatical Greek woman, a great Bulgarian artist, and as such developed a great anti-Bulgarian activity. It cannot be ruled out that the Greek Minister of State has all the secrets of Spain learned by Spain through her husband. " The surveillance file of Julio Palencia's wife continues with a new report, which states: "According to positive information, the ambassador of Spain's ambassador Zoe Julio Palencia is native Greek. Her father was the governor of the White Sea Thrace until the German troops entered. Zoë Palencia is a classmate of the American College in Constantinople with the wife of German Plenipotentiary Minister Richthofen, with whom she is on friendly terms. Julio Palencia was the Spanish Minister Plenipotentiary in Athens. After he was recalled from there, he stayed for 8 months in Spain and was subsequently appointed Minister Plenipotentiary in Turkey and then appointed Minister Plenipotentiary in November in Sofia. He has been very cautious about political developments in Europe and would have a hard time grasping his sympathy for one or the other of the warring countries. " In another document, we find the following rather significant finding: "According to our information, Minister Palencia and Alvarez in the recent past have been in close friendship with former French Minister of State Blondel, with former Romanian Consul Baboian and with Minister Plenipotentiary Caranfil. This connection between the aforementioned was created by the common interest - to be of service to English military intelligence. And so, after the discovery of the Romanian espionage affair, a great deal of nervousness and embarrassment have recently been noticed in the Spanish Legation. Minister of Palencia and Jew Santiago Santiago Behar serve the English intelligence in the Spanish Legation. All currency scams, frauds and dark deals are for the latter's personal gain. " In his capacity as ambassador of Palencia, he has made a definite contribution to a completely new field of economic relations between Bulgaria and Spain, of which we learned from one of his letters: "To the Director of the Central Agricultural Testing Institute. Mr Director, I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 12 this month, as well as the seed samples you so kindly sent to the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture. To express my sincere thanks, I can assure you that this case will initiate closer scientific cooperation and regular exchange of seeds of agricultural plants between Bulgaria and Spain. "

Observing the chronological tracing of the archival documents we have discovered, we will turn to the following police report: "Palencia adopted the children of Arie, the last who was hanged over a business affair. The children, a son of 21 years and a daughter of 13, live permanently in the Legation. Palencia gave his name to his son - Julio. Yesterday, upon his return from Prime Minister Filov's reception, Palencia said the following: "This filthy Philov promised me not to do anything with my Jewish subjects, and in an hour they arrested Behar. Bulgarian scoundrel, I can't stand it. " A new report contains the following information: "Palencia has made arrangements for the Foreign Ministry to issue diplomatic cards to his adopted children (those of the hanged Jew Arie). Palencia has not yet christened its children. They need these ID cards to be able to move freely in Sofia and Bulgaria and for their recent departure for Vidin, where their mother is now. " A new attempt by Julio Palencia to rescue endangered Jews was noted in a Report of July 13, 1943: "Spanish national Sebastian Avtalion, a Jew living in Sofia, has been arrested by police for some dark dealings revealed by Department B" at the Police Directorate. His mother went to Minister Palencia asking her to intercede for her son. In a moment, Palencia prepares a note with the Foreign Office demanding the release of Sebastian. " As it turned out, police reports find a place and information about his mood for the Spanish ambassador: "Palencia has been in a very bad mood for a few days due to the fact that he has officially learned that the Bulgarian government through the Bulgarian Minister for Plenipotentiary in Spain Draganov has requested the recall of Palencia as inconvenient for our country. " Another report states that "At 28 m. the passports of the adopted Jews of Palencia were taken to the Romanian Embassy for certification. "

In the meantime, the Spanish ambassador is personally embarking on yet another, deeply moving, humane nature, a move that, as we will see, is only part of his moral choice, which has turned into an active diplomatic struggle aimed at saving lives. We understand all this from the letter he officially sent on May 25, 1943 to the Bulgarian Minister of the Interior. It is more than apparent from the text that Palencia cleverly used the unofficial opportunity given to him in this case to carry out his plan: "Dear Minister, I continue the conversation I had the pleasure of having with you yesterday at the Embassy of the Kingdom of Romania, and I allow myself to point out below is the name of this lady and her little daughter, for whom I was pleased to receive your promise that they would avoid the last measures affecting all Israeli people. I take this opportunity to express, my Dear Ministers, my sincere thanks in advance for your service on this occasion, with assurances of my highest consideration. Julio Palencia ". At the bottom of the letter is added: "Refers to Madame Zelma Vrajali, 68 Clementina Street, II floor, to the right and her daughter of 4 years." An important detail should be noted in this regard. The Minister personally initialed the letter of Julio Palencia the same day as it was received, writing: "To the Commissioner for Jewish Affairs - Let the person remain in Sofia; 25.V.43. " Two weeks later, Palencia sent a second letter to the Minister of the Interior, which was no less interesting for our study. Because, in all likelihood, it seems that the relevant mechanism on the part of the Jewish Commission has not been moved in the right direction: "Sofia, June 10, 1943. Mr. Minister and Dear Friend, I would like to introduce you once more with regard to Madame Zelma Vrajali and her 3-year-old daughter, for whom you had the kind benevolence to promise me that they would continue to live permanently in the capital. By the way, giving them permission, I should point out that their 15-day restriction imposed on them expires next Wednesday, so please, My dear Minister, to give your orders to the Jewish Affairs Commission, thanks to which they are staying in Sofia of the said Madame Vrajali to be permanently insured. In introducing you again to this case, Mr Minister and Dear Friend, I

would like to express my gratitude for the service and in this regard to assure you of my highest honor. Minister of Spain - Julio Palencia.

This is how Julio Palencia's diplomatic calendar in Bulgaria was scrolled through. And we come across more and more data characterizing this diplomat's exceptional humanism:

"To His Excellency, Mr. Palencia and Alvarez, Minister of State of Spain in Sofia.

Minister,

The undersigned Spanish nationals of this city, excited by the joyful news that was given to them by Mr. Kalev, to whom we are so indebted for the care he has always taken to be our representative before you and Your Highness, charged with the mission of communicating to us the wonderful news that, thanks to your intervention with the Spanish Government, which allowed us to return to Spain, we sincerely wish to express their deep gratitude to you. Our joy is great, because it is a continuation of the valiant and generous mission that you have taken and we have no words to tell you how excited we are about this event. We are happy to have in Your Excellency the most worthy patron, and in this case we would like to reiterate our gratitude to the Government and assure him of our devotion, and we will be greatly obliged if you duly convey this basic wish of ours. . Please welcome, Minister, again the assurance of the highest consideration of your very much indebted! May 2, 1943 ” . / Following are the names of 23 people /.

In a code list sent on May 15, 1943, Julio Palencia offered the Spanish Foreign Minister the following: “Please allow rapid repatriation from the Bulgarian territories of all Spanish Jews, with travel expenses at their own expense. It's about 300 people. ” The answer did not follow. In all likelihood, they wanted to break the temptation of their ambassador to Sofia to go beyond what was accepted. This goes beyond the emotional toleration of the Palencia philanthropist, and he finally decides to take matters into his own hands. As we shall ascertain from his subsequent actions, he was very quickly confronted with reality, not a legal definition, which raised the clear question: can a desire for virility be nourished if one does not despise cowardice? Without waiting for anyone's permission, he paves the way for rescuing these stitches from concentration camps in Poland. By chance, this document was retained, falling into the hands of the Allies after the end of World War II.

We also came across a letter shot by the Bulgarian police sent on 8 June 1943 from Madrid to Sofia, in which we again find direct evidence of the humane activity of the Spanish ambassador: "My son, love, I am writing this letter to you through the Spanish Legation in Sofia, to which a request from us has also been sent asking us to be sent with all the Spanish subjects as we advertise you here. As a resident of four years in this country, your father as a stable and recognized merchant, we ask for Spanish citizenship, for which you automatically become a minor. It is in this sense that we have submitted our application here to the Minister Plenipotentiary in Sofia. Your mom is Rose. "

On August 9, 1943, the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency circulated the following message: "His Majesty the King received, at a farewell audience, the former Ministerial Plenipotentiary in Sofia, Palencia and Alvarez, whom he pleased to award with the Order of Civil Merit, First Degree." Two weeks later, on August 25, the same news agency reported that "The current

Spanish Minister of Minister in Sofia, Palencia and Alvarez, left our country tonight at 7 hours and 5 minutes. At the metropolitan city of Palencia and Alvarez, he was sent by the Legation Secretary from His Majesty the King, by the Viceroy of the Protocol, by members of the diplomatic body, by the staff of the Spanish Legation and by others. "

After all the above, it is hardly necessary to ask in what order we should put Spanish Ambassador Julio Palencia. Because in his honor, he is among the people who, as we will see, do not stand with their hands crossed at the evils of life. With his effective altruism and unconditional service to the good, he reveals to us, without rest, his rich morality as a moralist, making his real and not theoretical choice. As a realist in his observations on Bulgarian political reality, he is quick to see the potential of those forces in our country that refuse to give all the chances of a killer Germany. Therefore, it is no coincidence that today we feel that with his behavior, Palencia has overtaken us too much in time, seeing above all the key to the future of the Old Continent in mutual and constructive compromises, not in aggressive positions and actions. Because he served universal values, standing uncompromisingly for the humanism born in the convulsions of World War II. Compared to the international situation during that period, his position clearly indicated the path to overcoming the invisible boundaries of the psychology of behavior. What the Spanish ambassador in Bulgaria has done is a striking phenomenon, which can only be understood by comparing it with the geopolitical seismograph of that period. Julio Palencia was a true career diplomat. Person of constant action, not episodic reflexes. He was sensitive to any tectonic trembling in the bowels of public-political life in Bulgaria. And that is to say, he has always reacted adequately.

Compared to the well-known cliché that a diplomat who is cynical without principles is good, Julio Palencia proves throughout his stay in Bulgaria that he is a model of a person able to maneuver in extremely difficult conditions, but without losing his moral compass . With his behavior, he reveals that the first task of a diploma is, especially in the extreme conditions of World War II, to constantly call upon his contemporaries, above all, for humanity. And that in his professional sphere he deals only with the existing reality. It is a complex spiritual world in which the art of living in realities without becoming addicted dominates. With his actions, the Spanish ambassador wanted to show / and prove! / That every society should not lose sight of its moral orientations. By which he calls us today, from the distance of the past seven decades, to look again at the roots of our human qualities and to learn to live, guided solely by reason, not by instincts that reign in our subconscious from the Paleolithic era.

After completing his diplomatic mission, upon his return to Madrid, Palencia was seriously investigated for his unregulated activities on Bulgarian territory and practically literally "sent to the corner", ending his career as an ordinary official. He died in oblivion on March 25, 1952. Eight decades have passed since those troubled times. But what Julio Palencia has done remains in the minds of the appreciative generations. On October 28, 2011, Spain honored the memory of former Plenipotentiary Minister Julio Palencia in a sufficiently formal manner, saving the lives of hundreds of Jews in our country by placing a commemorative plaque on the building of the Spanish embassy in Sofia.

In the interest of Julio Palencia's exploits, until recently, almost nothing was known in our country. But thanks to the extensive research of the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, many documents have been collected proving Palencia's primary role in saving the

lives of several hundred Bulgarian Jews. Recently, we learned that the Jewish organization Yad Vashem, which researches the Holocaust extensively, has suggested Julio Palencia be declared righteous. Based on the archival documents we have discovered, we find this proposal worthy of respect.

Faced with the tasks of a harsh present, we are often forced to turn to the past in order to draw on it the hope and strength against the trials. The actions of the Spanish ambassador, dictated by his personal ideological gravitas, cause him to see not only the meaning of human existence in moral perfection. But also to take real steps created by a deeply humane ideal, ignited by the power of emotional urge and philanthropy.

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