



ARISTIDES - *the outcast hero*

A film script by Alice de Sousa

(Inspired by true events)

A mysterious looking woman sits in a Lisbon café staring into emptiness. She has sat there for a while when she attracts the attention of the bar tender, who proceeds to engage her in a conversation, which at first is awkward but subsequently, follows like water from a fountain. The woman has been visiting a man who is dying a penniless outcast at the nearby pauper's asylum. She asks if the bar tender has heard of Aristides de Sousa Mendes. He hasn't and so, she tells him a remarkable but entirely true story...

It begins in a war torn Europe, in Bordeaux and in May 1940. As the invading German army advance, thousands of desperate refugees surround the Portuguese consulate hoping to obtain visas to enter a neutral Portugal. Inside the Portuguese consul, Aristides de Sousa Mendes, pleads with his government, in Lisbon, for authority to grant the necessary visas. The official reply is a categorical – '*no visas*'.

As soldiers surround the Consulate, Aristides orders the doors to be open thus providing diplomatic sanctuary to many desperate people. His wife tries to give food and drink to as many as possible; whilst the anxious and deeply troubled Consul becomes ill and bed ridden. When he emerges three days later, his hair has turned completely white. On the fourth day, 16th June 1940, faced with an ever increasing crowd, Aristides orders an assembly-line to be created and with his sons, secretary and a Rabbi proceeds to issue thousands of life saving visas.

On the 19th June the Germans bomb Bordeaux and the mass of terrified refugees flee to the South. Aristides follows them: in Toulouse he orders the vice-consul to issue more visas and at the border in Bayonne he continues pass more visas. Meanwhile, the British Embassy denounces his irregular actions to the Portuguese Fascist government who send officials to stop him. Undeterred, Aristides makes his way to Biarritz and at the small border point near Hendaye, he personally escorts refugees across the Spanish border and on their journey into safety. In those last hours, he places his signature and official stamp on numerous passports, identities cards, and for those who have no documents, on pieces of paper, even bits of newspaper, stating that the bearer of the visa had permission to enter Portugal.

On the 23rd June, Aristides is finally stopped and unceremoniously returned to his homeland, where he is stripped of diplomatic office and politically and socially disgraced. For years, he tries unsuccessfully to clear his name. Prevented from returning to diplomatic office and from practicing as a barrister, he is unable to earn a living and is driven into abject poverty.

The mysterious woman says that Aristides died earlier that day, the 3rd April 1954, a ruined outcast with nobody by his side. As she stands and makes to exit the bar tender says, '*You haven't told me your name?*' The intriguing woman fixes him briefly with a glance and then leaves.

Further information:

Aristides de Sousa Mendes issued, selflessly and indiscriminately, transit visas to some 30,000 families and thus created, where previously none existed, an escape route through Portugal for those flee Nazi concentration camps - this was used by an estimated **one million refugees**.

Although posthumously Aristides has received some acknowledgement, he remains an internationally unknown figure and his story has never been told on film. **Galleon Films Ltd.** proposes to assemble an internationally respected team of film makers on this extraordinary project and create a beautiful, thought provoking and evocative feature film which will finally, bring world wide recognition of one of WWII greatest of humanitarian figures – Aristides de Sousa Mendes.

'I would rather stand with God against men, than with men against God'.
– Aristides de Sousa Mendes

Feature Films of relevance:

- Schindler's List
- The Pianist
- Sophie's Choice
- Holocaust

For further information contact: GALLEON FILMS LTD.
alice@galleontheatre.co.uk; www.galleontheatre.co.uk

A full treatment is available on request