

Ordre Souverain et Militaire du Temple de Jérusalem.
Sovereign and Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem.



**VERIFYING THE CONTINUATION FROM EMILE
ISAAC VANDENBERG TO ANTONIO FONTES**

1935-1943



PROLOGUE

Among the various rumors and claims that exist in the lore of the Order, one common refrain is that Emile Isaac Vandenberg, after having transferred the Archive of the Order to Portugal in 1942 to Antonio Fontes for safekeeping in WWII, asked for the Archive back, but Fontes refused. Then, when Emile Isaac died unexpectedly in 1943, Fontes used his possession of the Archives to assert himself as Head of the Order.

This assertion is an odd one, because unlike other claims of problematic succession that are given by various splits in the Order, this claim does not benefit any particular splinter group. In fact, if it is true, it delegitimizes virtually all recognized present-day Templar branches since they all descend through the line of Antonio de Sousa Fontes. Antonio Fontes is one of the key links of the continuity of the Ordre du Temple of the 1800s to the present day. If Fontes Sr. falls, we all fall with him. If Fontes is illegitimate, then we are all illegitimate and the true succession died with Emile Isaac Vandenberg.

To be clear, the mission of this author is to seek truth, whether it is helpful or harmful, not to bolster any particular point of view, as is frequently done in Templar research. One should just be aware of the implications of this particular argument.

ORIGIN OF THE ARGUMENT

It should be noted that as far as this researcher is aware, the claim that Fontes Sr. refused to return the Archive is not a particularly old one, and cannot be traced back further than the late 20th century. Since the authority of Antonio Fontes was not readily challenged in 1943, and there is no split or schism extant to represent an alternative point of view, one must conclude that the origination of this argument is exactly when it first appears, in the years following the Zdrojewski/Fontes Jr. split, when undermining the Fontes name and claim would be advantageous to someone.

Once dissention arose from the apparent hereditary appointment from Fontes Sr. to Fontes Jr in 1960, the integrity of the Fontes name was called into question. Yet even with discontent about it, affairs largely held together. After the Zdrojewski split in 1970, there existed a strong and robust branch that was willing to make arguments to undermine the legitimacy of the opposing side.

Sadly, despite Statutory assertions to the contrary, the Templar branches of the mid to late 20th century were deeply political, both externally and internally. It is this political atmosphere of trading shots, asserting and dismissing claims, that we seem to find the origins of this argument. An argument, which although designed to besmirch the integrity of the Fontes name, nevertheless, ends up cutting the leg of the stool we sit upon.

TIMELINE REASONING

To begin to assess the likelihood that Fontes refused the return of the Archive, we must establish a timeline.

- The order to transfer the documents from Belgium to Portugal occurred in December 1942.
- Emile Isaac Vandenberg died in April 1943.

It should be noted that the first appearance of this argument on the Internet in 2002, retrieved through the use of the *Internet Archive*, claims that the request for the documents back took place in 1945. Certainly Emile Isaac could not have requested the Archive back when he had been dead for two years. Once researchers began to point this out, the claim evolved to match the death of Emile Isaac, thereby creating this timeline issue.

In order for this amended claim to be true, Emile Isaac would have had to send the Archives and then request them back, all within 3 to 4 months. Considering the transfer was made for the purpose of safekeeping the Archive during a war where Germany did not surrender until May 1945, this seems unlikely.

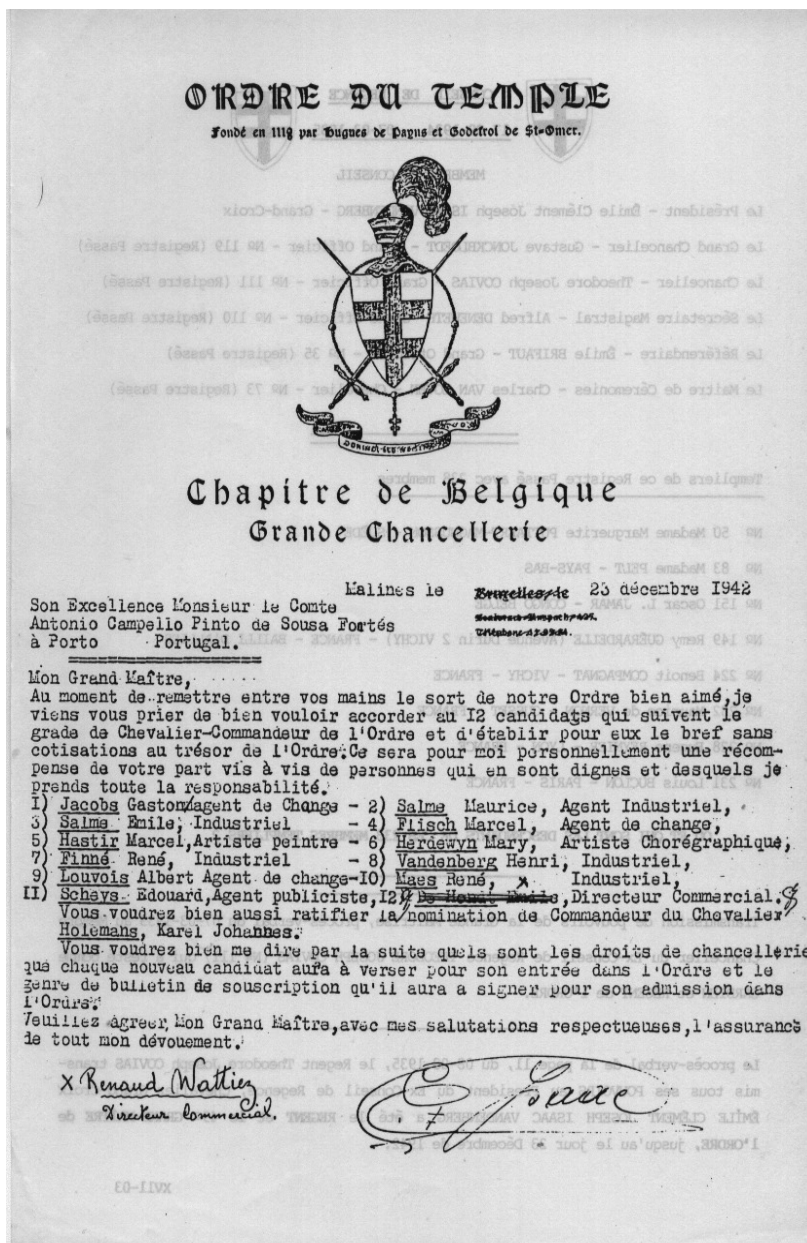
In order to avoid this rationale, some have argued that Emile Isaac asked for the

Archive back because local conflict had died down. However, one must recognize that Belgium itself was under German occupation from May 1940 until February 1945. Sending the Archive away, and then asking for it back in 1943 over a 3 to 4 month span is simply not rational for the stated purpose of safekeeping.

EVIDENTIARY REASONING

Documents and correspondance still exist between Emile Isaac Vandenberg and Antonio de Sousa Fontes. In them is a noted personal warmth between them. Warmth aside, we have documentary evidence which establishes not only a transfer of Archives, but a transfer of authority.

Consider the following document, dated December 23, 1942, the same day as the document transfer, printed on letter head of the Grand Priory of Belgium, addressed to de Sousa Fontes, signed by Emile Isaac:



The letter begins with a very particular address:

"My Grand Master,

At the time of handing over the fate of our beloved Order in your hands, I come to ask you to kindly grant 12 candidates who follow, to rank of Knight Commander..."

Several points should be noted.

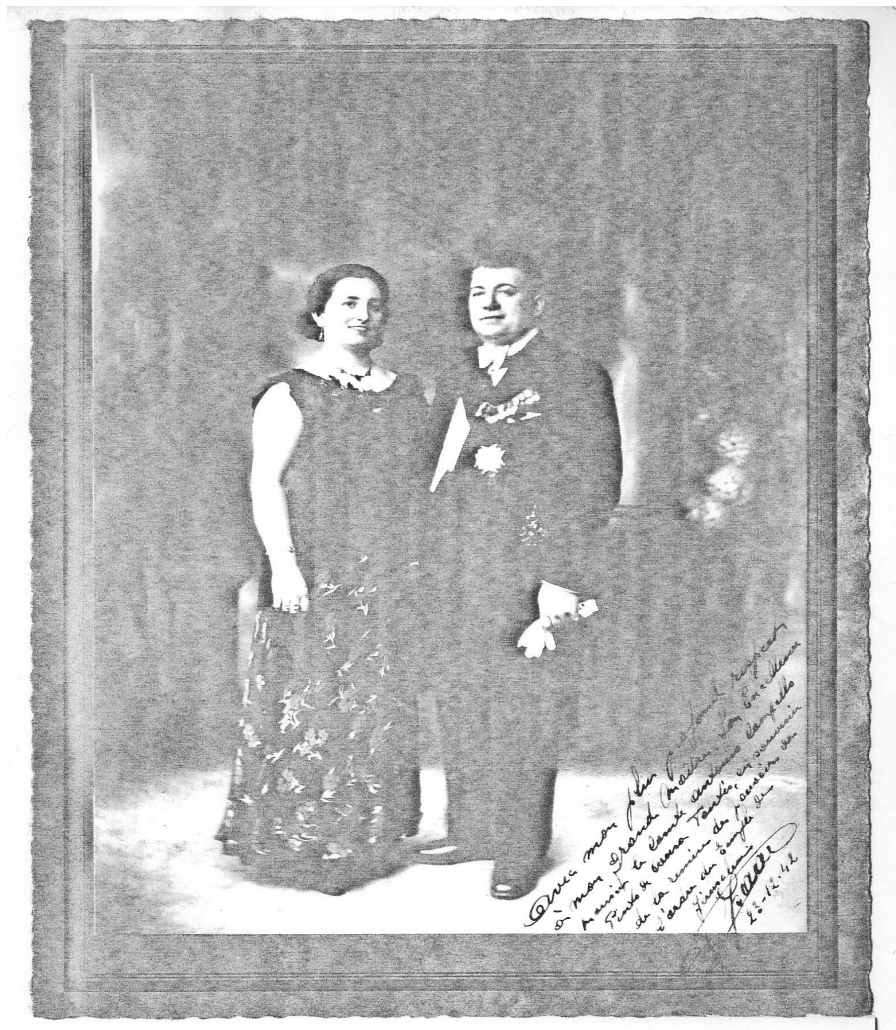
1. Emile Isaac addresses Fontes as *"My Grand Master"*, not only subordinate, but also indicating a transfer of power.

2. *"At the time of handing over the fate of our beloved Order in your hands"* demonstrates that the direction and control of the Order was relinquished from Emile Isaac, into the hands of another, namely Fontes.

3. *"I ask you to kindly grant 12 candidates ... to the rank of Knight Commander"* shows a Subordinate asking his Authority to utilize a power he no longer has.

4. The letter concludes with these impactful remarks, *"Please accept, my Grandmaster, my respectful salutations and the assurance of my devotion."*

This is not the only instance, however. A photograph of Emile Isaac and his wife, with a personal note to Fontes also addresses him as "My Grand Master."



There is even a third witness of the same in the Documents of Transfer themselves. They are too lengthy to include in full in this paper, however, a few excerpts with rough translation should convey the point:

*Ce jour à Halifax, le 23 décembre
désigné Emile Clément Joseph
Chevalier Grand' Croix de l'Ordre -*

"This day ... 23 December... Emile Clement Joseph, Knight Grand Croix of the Order.."

*De remettre entre les mains de Son Excellence
Monsieur le Comte Antonio Campello Pinto de Sousa
Fontes, Noble Portugais, Ancien diplomate et Héraldiste
sous mes droits et privilèges que je possède sur
l'Ordre du Temple de Jérusalem, pour qu'il puisse
en assurer l'existence et la continuité.*

"...to hand over to his Excellency, Mr. Count Antonio Campello de Sousa Fontes... my rights and priviledges so he can assure the existence and continuity."

*Son Excellence, Monsieur le Comte Antonio
Campello Pinto de Sousa Fontes, à la Haute
dignité de :*

*Grand' Croix avec Collier de l'Ordre
et le reconnais dès à présent comme*

" Grand Maître de l'Ordre "

"His Excellence, Mr. Count Antonio Campello Pinto de Sousa Fontes, to the high dignity of: Grand Cross with Collar of the Order, and recognize now as 'Grand Master of the Order.'"

The transfer of the documents as well as the authority of the Order appears to be done freely, deliberately, and without compulsion or duress. The intent of Emile Isaac is communicated overtly, brought about by a need to secure the survival of the Order. Then, not only addressing him in word, but in action, he appeals to Fontes' authority for the promotions of certain Knight Commanders.

CONCLUSION

When we consider the summary of points in this paper, the evidence suggests that the transfer of documents from Belgium to Portugal occurred, not only as a means of safekeeping valuable papers, but also as a means for safekeeping the Order itself.

The concern of Emile Isaac Vandenberg was well-founded, having died only a few short months after the sending of these documents.

The idea that Emile Isaac shortly after asked for the documents back fails both the test of evidence and rationality.

In review:

1. The origin of the argument seems to be late, from a later time of political strife.
2. The timeline for requesting the documents back seems irrational.
3. Documents show not only a transfer of papers, but of authority as well.

Therefore, the transition of power between Emile Isaac Vandenberg and Antonio de Sousa Fontes was intentional and done with great foresight. Whatever may be said about other claims and issues regarding the Fontes name, the continuity of the Order into the hands of Antonio de Sousa Fontes is evidentially secure.



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