

## **Rosamund Huebener, née Benson**

### **Rosamund BENSON (married name Huebener).**

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## **Rosamund Huebener, née Benson**

This is Malcolm McBain interviewing Rosamund Huebener on Thursday, 11 May, 2000.

**MMcB:** I understand that you went to Roedean School and then Somerville College, Oxford, and then joined the Diplomatic Service or Foreign Service as it then was. Could you tell me by which means you joined?

**RH:** Yes, there was a gap between Somerville and the Foreign Service. I took my degree just at the end of the war when women were still subject to the provisions of the National Service Act and had to take one of several useful professions: Armed Forces, Nursing, Teaching or Civil Service. I chose the Civil Service and chose the Board of Trade because I thought in my youthful innocence that commerce was going to be the most important thing of the future. So I went to the Board of Trade as a Temporary Assistant Principal and stayed there until I was wooed across to the Employers' Trade Federation of the furniture industry, which I had been helping to control in the Board of Trade. They asked me to be Assistant Secretary of the Federation, so I did that, and enjoyed it very much, and would probably have stayed there but that all my friends were taking the Foreign Service exam. I was not specially interested, but my background led me to think that it might be interesting for me. I'm an army daughter so had moved around the world a bit. The first school that I ever attended was a French one in Ismailia on the Suez Canal so that gave me French for the rest of my life, and I thought I might as well take the exam. In those days, I don't know how it is now, the marking was done in blocks of five and I don't remember the exact figure but something like one hundred and thirty-five was pass mark for the Home Civil Service and one hundred and forty was pass mark for the Foreign Service. I attended the country house weekend at Chobham and after the final interview in front of the Board, I got one hundred and thirty-five marks. In other words, I had passed for the Home Civil Service, not for the Foreign. I was not interested in the Home Civil Service, so I let it be. Soon after that I was asked by my uncle who had lost his wife in a tragic accident in Burma to go to Burma with him to keep house for him, which I did.

**MMcB:** What year was that?

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**RH:** That was in 1948. And I was there for just under a year until 1949. When I came back to England I found a letter from the Foreign Office, saying that they had not got enough people from the last exam and would I care to join after all? I thought, why not? [laughter] And since then I never looked back until, of course, I resigned to get married.

**MMcB:** So you joined in 1949?

**RH:** 1949.

**MMcB:** And you went to which department, West Organisations...?

**RH:** It was not then called Western Organisations. There was Western Department and within it there was a small new section called Western Union Secretariat.

**MMcB:** And .. what do you remember of those days?

**RH:** I remember being flung in head first, having no idea of anything, and nobody gave me any kind of instruction.

**MMcB:** Nothing has changed.

**RH:** Really, really? I thought there were courses now. [laughter] Anyway, I was put into a room with Anthony Montague Brown and Reggie Secondé. And Reggie Secondé was in exactly the same position as me. He had also not got through the exam first time round and had been called up a year later. And nobody knew what to do with me. There was no special work for me to do so Anthony Montague Brown, after riffling through his piles of papers for a time, handed me a bundle of papers which he hadn't had time to look at, dealing with a conference to be held in London at the Foreign Office under the chairmanship of the then Legal Adviser, Sir Eric Beckett, in order to negotiate an agreement on the Status of Forces of Brussels Treaty countries when on each other's territory. So I read up all those files and then found myself a few weeks later acting as secretary to the conference and sort of bag carrier

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for Sir Eric Beckett. Well that was all right, and at some point I was instructed in the department to go and report on this conference to “Gladwyn”. I had no idea who Gladwyn was and I suppose I was too shy to ask, but they said that he was in Room so-and-so in the Main Building, (we were in the old India Office), so I set out, and I found the room, went in, and in it was Miss Marchant, very grand, his PA, and she ushered me in with due ceremony and awe and reverence to the presence of Sir Gladwyn Jebb, Deputy Under-Secretary. That was at a time when there were only two Deputy Under-Secretaries, and he was the Political one. As I say, I was a bit surprised by all this. I still didn’t know who Gladwyn was but I made my little report and it seemed all right. Shortly after that Western Organisations Department was formed and I went with it. In the early months, the first year or so I suppose, I used to accompany Sir Gladwyn Jebb to meetings of the Brussels Treaty Council in Eaton Place. And gradually....

**MMcB:** The Brussels Treaty Council. Could you tell me a little more about that?

**RH:** Yes.

**MMcB:** Can you remember?

**RH:** Yes. Well, the Treaty was signed in 1948, with Britain, France and the Benelux countries. Not Italy.

**MMcB:** Yes, Treaty...?

**RH:** The Brussels Treaty. And the organisation of it was called Western Union, in those days. It had a Secretariat at 3, I think, no.3 Eaton Place, and had a Secretary General, who in my day was a Dutchman rejoicing in the name of Star-Bussman. (I’m pronouncing it the English way, of course.) And the Permanent Representatives, that is to say the Deputy Under-Secretary from the Foreign Office, the Ambassadors of the other three bigger Powers, and the Minister of Luxembourg (because they still had only a Legation, not yet an Embassy), met, I think, about once a week, and discussed issues, desirability of pooling armament production, and things

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like that, which didn't come until many many years later. And a few, sort of, cultural things, and the Status of Forces business.

**MMcB:** Yes. So Germany was, of course, still controlled by the Allied Powers.

**RH:** Yes.

**MMcB:** There had been no Treaty or any arrangements of that sort.

**RH:** Not yet, no.

**MMcB:** Did you have anything to do with the High Commissioners in Germany?

**RH:** Not at that stage. Later on I served in the British High Commission for six months or so until it became an Embassy on the termination of the Occupation.

**MMcB:** Right. That was in 1955?

**RH:** '55 yes.

**MMcB:** So there was this Brussels Treaty in operation. Do you recall any sort of approach to the Foreign Office by any of the European Powers to form the Coal and Steel Community or anything of that sort or did that come later?

**RH:** Oh, that was in about 1950.

**MMcB:** Yes, we are still talking about 1949, are we?

**RH:** No we are in 1950 now but I don't think there was any kind of connection between the Brussels Treaty and the suggestions for forming the Coal and Steel Community. I'm just trying to think what department of the Foreign Office was concerned in that. I don't think it was Western Organisations.

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**MMcB:** It wasn't? Do you recall....

**RH:** Economic Relations Department probably.

**MMcB:** Ah. Do you recall a girl called Allison Barley?

**RH:** Barley Allison.

**MMcB:** Yes. Barley Alison.

**RH:** Barley Allison.[laughter]. Yes. Indeed. She was in Western Department when I first arrived and became a friend, a wonderful person she was.

**MMcB:** Yes...

**RH:** She died.

**MMcB:** Oh did she?

**RH:** Yes.

**MMcB:** Michael Butler?

**RH:** Yes, he was much younger.

**MMcB:** Yes. Well, not much younger, surely?

**RH:** Well, junior anyway.

**MMcB:** Yes. To you?

**RH:** Yes.

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**MMcB:** And....he has a fairly vivid recollection of this approach being made.

**RH:** Well he wasn't in Western Organisations Department in my time. I think it was probably Economic Relations.

**MMcB:** Right. So anyway this didn't cross your path?

**RH:** That did not. Later on I became involved with the European Defence Community ...known as the Pleven Plan.

**MMcB:** Can you tell me about that?

**RH:** Yes, that was when I was transferred to Paris to the U.K. Delegation to NATO [UKDEL]

**MMcB:** When was that?

**RH:** That was in May 1952. The Delegation had just been set up in about March of that year, because the NATO civilian headquarters, such as it then was, was then in London, it started in London and moved to Paris in early 1952. And so the UK Delegation was set up to go to it. I don't know how much kind of anecdotes and fluff you want?

**MMcB:** Yes, anecdotes would be useful.

**RH:** Yes all right. This is one really only affecting me but I think I may be the only person ever in the Foreign Office to have asked not to be sent to Paris. And that was because I was getting rather sick of NATO and it was about the time for me to be posted abroad, I'd been serving nearly two and half years, and I began to put two and two together and thought it might occur to Them [the Foreign Office] to send me, yes, Personnel Department, to send me to the new UK Delegation to NATO. And of course I had nothing against Paris as such, but I didn't want to go on having anything to do with NATO. So I rang up Personnel Department and said "look, it occurs to me that it might occur to you to post me there, and I just wanted to tell you

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that I don't want to go." And they said "Oh, very well". And then I heard nothing for a few weeks and then Personnel Department rang me and said "This has put us in rather a difficult position because we did, in fact, intend to send you there, and when we had to find a replacement, we asked for so-and-so, but the Head of Department said "No" he wouldn't let , I think it was her, he didn't want to let her go at the moment because there had been some other changes. So would you after all please consider being posted to Paris?" So I graciously agreed and, of course, enjoyed it immensely.

**MMcB:** What was NATO doing at that stage?

**RH:** Well, it was ...'52 to '54. It was building up the whole Secretariat and, of course, the Forces side was building up too, at SACEUR, SHAPE [Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe], and I remember that was the first time that any non-French had heard the word 'infrastructure'. It meant nothing to all of us - infrastructure - but the French insisted on calling one of the committees the Infrastructure Committee. Quite rightly, and its job was to set up telecommunications and generally speaking lines of communication for NATO Forces.

**MMcB:** I see, so quite important really.

**RH:** Yes, well I didn't serve on that committee, but I was Observer at the negotiations for a European Defence Community. The negotiations were concluded ..but the treaty was thrown out by the French Assembly, the National Assembly, in the summer of 1954. So that died.

**MMcB:** I see, that killed it.

**RH:** Yes.

**MMcB:** When was it that de Gaulle threw NATO out?

**RH:** That was much later. It was after, long after my time in Paris, because after Paris I was in Bonn and London and Prague. But it must have been in about

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1960, I think, '60 or '61.

**MMcB:** Oh as late as that.

**RH:** So far as I know, and by that time the NATO International Secretariat had left its temporary premises in the Palais de Chaillot, which is the one that I used to attend, and had moved to a rather splendid building on the edge of the Bois de Boulogne, and he threw them out from there. I think about '61 because I remember going to meetings at NATO as a delegate sent by Far Eastern Department to political talks about the Far East, and that must have been in 1959 or '61 and at that point they were still in Paris. Perhaps 1960, '61, I don't know.

**MMcB:** Did you, going back a little to Burma, did you ever have any further connection with that country?

**RH:** Hardly. In January of last year, after much consideration whether to go or not, I made a little river cruise on the Irrawaddy, really to see Burma again, and it was a very pleasant cruise and a very pleasant holiday, but of course, the country itself is an unpleasant place to be and I had known it just after it became independent, when it was still more or less British.

**MMcB:** And was still rich.

**RH:** Yes, yes, and my uncle, who was the General Manager of the Burmah Oil Company, had a very nice house in Rangoon, on a lake, and of course I wanted to see that. But it has been for many years now the state guest house, under armed guard, and I was allowed to peer through the gate, but that didn't help much because at some point the Burmese had built a huge white ornamental wall right across the front entrance so that you couldn't see our house at all. But I've had no more contact.

**MMcB:** Going back to Europe, you're in Paris, for two years or so, and then what happened after that? Is there anything further you'd like to say about your time in Paris?

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**RH:** Well, perhaps it's interesting that in the European Defence Community negotiations I met Germans for the first time.

**MMcB:** Yes, so before 1955?

**RH:** Yes, yes. The delegates to the negotiations, you see, and it was in fact particularly interesting considering my later life, because the delegates they sent naturally enough were nearly all former Generals, quite senior, important ones, and one or two of them then rejoined the Bundeswehr when the new German forces were set up.

**MMcB:** Ah, that is interesting. So what was your impression of them?

**RH:** Well, they were very sensible, matter of fact, and didn't throw their weight about, naturally enough, and were perfectly good negotiating partners.

**MMcB:** And who had they been sent by?

**RH:** By the German Government which was set up in 1949. This is another story, but in 1950 I had been at a conference in New York of the three Foreign Ministers, Britain, France and America, whose object really was to discuss trying to persuade the Germans to produce what was then called a German Defence Contribution. In other words, to recreate their own armed forces, which they were reluctant to do, of course. But they were more or less pressured into it by the three Powers and part of the bargain was that there would be set up in Europe a Supreme Command of NATO forces, SHAPE in other words, and that the Commander of it, SACEUR, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, should always be an American. And that, of course, was a shield.

**MMcB:** And that was acceptable to the Germans?

**RH:** Reluctantly, yes. The authority that had sent people to the negotiations in Paris was an office called the Amt Blank. Herr Blank, Theodore Blank, was a man, actually I think he was a Trade Unionist, who was appointed to head a new mini-

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authority to prepare the new German forces, and it was called the Blank Office, as you might say the McBain Office. And he was allocated a few civil servants including one or two people from the Auswärtiges Amt, the Foreign Office, which had also been started up in 1949. And the generals were just called out of retirement to go, well they were called to be members of the Amt Blank.

**MMcB:** Yes, yes, I see. How fascinating. And so it grew up. Where did you meet your husband?

**RH:** I met him when I was serving at the British Embassy in Bonn.

**MMcB:** Oh I see, that's at a later stage.

**RH:** Well, not very much later, because I was posted from Paris to Bonn in 1954 and he was also in Bonn then. But we didn't, in fact, get engaged until about six years later, during which time I had gone back to London to the Far Eastern Department and then to Prague.

**MMcB:** So, anyway, Bonn was in 1954 and what was your job there?

**RH:** Well, ironically enough, it was good old NATO Status of Forces again. I was very much typecast, and that was, of course, a much bigger conference with..how many of us were there then? Fourteen I think, yes. But it was quite interesting, it was quite interesting seeing the methods of other countries and of course the military were engaged in that too because it was all about the Forces. I remember that the other countries had the greatest difficulty in understanding how and why the British Army looked after the welfare of its soldiers. In all the other countries the sort of NAAFI is a military unit and I had to try and explain that Lord Roberts's Workshops and SSAFA and things like that and NAAFI were not military units but were voluntary organisations which catered to the Forces. If a soldier wanted a cup of tea and a wad he had to go to somewhere where there might be old ladies in green uniforms voluntarily serving tea. They couldn't understand that at all.

**MMcB:** And the Americans, of course, have got their PX., haven't they?

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**RH:** Oh yes, but that's military, that's part of the Forces, you see. That's subject to military discipline, and everything else, it's a military unit, whereas NAAFI is not. And still less all these curious voluntary associations

**MMcB:** Yes, Toc H.

**RH:** That sort of thing, yes.

**MMcB:** What about the French, don't they have anything equivalent to it?

**RH:** No, as far as I remember, all the others, sensibly to my mind, had those services as part of the military structure. I mean commanded by a Quartermaster or something.

**MMcB:** So you were dealing with Status of Forces and ...

**RH:** Mostly. Also with .. liaison with ... between the British Forces in Germany and the German authorities. Minor things like British dogs, dogs in British stations in Germany not having the same rabies injections that were required by German regulations, that sort of thing. Yes, well, whenever you have a group of people in a foreign country, of course there are differences in their customs, and so on.

**MMcB:** Did you have any problems over the British tanks careering around the country?

**RH:** Yes, that was a permanent source of trouble between the British ..

**MMcB:** Low flying aircraft...

**RH:** Low flying aircraft, no, I don't think aircraft did fly particularly low in those days. There was a row about the RAF using Heligoland as a bombing practice target and there was nobody living there, no people living there, but a rare species of

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sheld-duck was living there, and all the scientists were very upset about that.

**MMcB:** (Laughing) That's a foretaste of things.. things then to come. Did you ever get up to Berlin?

**RH:** Yes, once or twice. I didn't.. can't really comment on that, I didn't notice anything ...

**MMcB:** There were no further problems over the access to Berlin?

**RH:** No, one had to fly as far as I remember and, no at that point there were no particular problems I can recall.

**MMcB:** Did you come across any of the German leaders?

**RH:** Leaders. Well Walter Hallstein. I occasionally met Hallstein at dinner parties and things and sat beside him, yes. He was then State Secretary.

**MMcB:** So an important contact?

**RH:** Yes, I mean .. contact...I was a Second Secretary at that point, so I couldn't really pump him or anything.

**MMcB:** No, no, but still, I mean, it was ... {RH's reply not clear} ..And how about the Ambassador at that stage. Who was he?

**RH:** Our Ambassador? The British Ambassador. Well, when I first arrived there the Ambassador was Sir Derick Hoyer Millar and he then left in about 1956, I think it was. I don't know the date, but he left Bonn to return to the Office as PUS. And he was replaced by Sir Kit Steel, who had also replaced Sir Derick Hoyer Millar in Paris, so I only ever had two Ambassadors in those two posts.

**MMcB:** Have you any observations to make about their methods of operation?

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**RH:** Yes, well, Derick Hoyer Millar was one of those Englishmen who pretends to be rather stupid, which he certainly wasn't. But always very relaxed and he used to go off for an afternoon of golf when he felt that there was nothing pressing to be done. He was not, by any means, a workaholic. But he was very astute. And the reason that he got the job as PUS and not Gladwyn Jebb was, I think, that he had absolutely no enemies. Everybody liked him. And Gladwyn Jebb had made quite a lot of enemies by his unfortunate manner.

**MMcB:** And of course they undoubtedly had extremely good contacts among the German authorities?

**RH:** Well, Kit Steel had the great advantage that he spoke excellent German, and he had been in the Commission in the early days. So he knew Adenauer and a lot of the other people which Derick Hoyer Millar didn't. He was not really a German expert in any way.

**MMcB:** Did...I think that our relations with Konrad Adenauer were somewhat unfortunate as a result of some..well... undiplomatic behaviour by early military gentlemen on the scene. Were our Ambassadors able to patch over his undoubtedly feelings of disgruntlement?

**RH:** I think so. He was a very good statesman, and his great dream, which he more or less achieved, was Franco-German friendship and that he pursued with great success. Once he agreed that there should be a German Army again he was very keen to bring Germany back into the European family. And to that extent, of course, meant good relations with Britain as well as the others.

**MMcB:** But priority to the French.

**RH:** Well, because that was the traditional enemy. And he realised that that was the most important thing, that there should never be another Franco-German war. Germany is, after all, in the very unfortunate position of being right in the middle of Europe with potential enemies on both sides. France on one side and Russia on the other.

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**MMcB:** Exactly. Yes. Yes. Very difficult.

**RH:** Yes, therefore, I think Adenauer, as I said then, was very keen to get Germany tied in again. Which he managed.

**MMcB:** And they were, of course, by then signed up for the European Coal and Steel Community..... which obviously foresaw much closer developments.

**RH:** Yes, it was Schuman's first attempt to get Europe together.

**MMcB:** And Monet as well, of course.

**RH:** Yes, yes, it was I think probably Monet's original idea, but Schuman was the Foreign Minister and the Coal and Steel Community was given the name of Schuman Plan.

**MMcB:** Have you got anything further to say about Germany at that stage?

**RH:** I don't think so. I mean it was catching up economically in a most impressive way.

**MMcB:** Yes. So it was already evident then.

**RH:** Yes. Erhard, the economic miracle, and all that.. Germany .. seemed when I first arrived there in 1954 to be very much a peasant sort of a place, people were much more economical with everything. Backward is too big a word, but not so sophisticated as England.

**MMcB:** Were the girls wearing lipstick and shaving under their arms?

**RH:** Oh always, always. I mean that is, that is a myth.

**MMcB:** Well they jolly well weren't when I went there in 1948.

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**RH:** They were still recovering from the war.

**MMcB:** Yes, of course, and it made a tremendous dent in all sorts of ways. I formed the impression in 1948 that before the war the Germans must have been very much better off than the British were.

**RH:** I wonder. I mean I just don't know but what I do know since I've been married is the dreadful times they all went through just after the war (much worse than during the war), when there was really nothing to eat and they were very hungry. And you couldn't get anything, nothing was available, you know, until Erhard brought in the currency reform in 1948 and suddenly things that had been hidden or concealed appeared. Each person had 40 marks, only. Whatever bank assets they'd had disappeared and everybody got 40 marks.

**MMcB:** Yes, I was there. And that happened. It was remarkable.

**RH:** Yes. And then they started wearing lipstick, surely, did they not?

**MMcB:** Oh no, no.

**RH:** Not yet? No, .. it took some time for there to be lipstick, of course.

**MMcB:** Or stockings. Silk stockings were the great thing.

**RH:** Oh, I remember being very grateful for nylon stockings in 1946, or so. Very grateful. [laughter]

**MMcB:** Well, anyway, after you left Bonn where did you go next?

**RH:** I had asked for a purely political job and nothing to do with the Status of Forces and so I was sent to Far Eastern Department to one of the two China desks. China Political. Of course, I knew nothing about China, but in a typical Foreign Office way, they thought I would be suitable. And I was very much propped up by a

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delightful man in Research Department called Joe Ford, who was a Chinese scholar, and who helped in many ways. And that was very interesting. We used to have conferences with the Americans, with the CIA, about their appreciation of China. We were all absolutely wrong, by the way. I used to go to the JIC occasionally too, and all our papers were based on the premise that the Chinese/Russian/Soviet friendship was a monolithic thing that would last forever. And only a few years after that they fell out. The situation so far as the British was concerned in China was interesting in those days. Britain had been among the very few Western Powers to recognise Communist China in 1949, straight away, after Mao took over Shanghai. So did the Dutch. But the Chinese didn't agree to diplomatic relations, there was an office in each country, but the British Embassy in Peking was called the Office of the British Chargé d'Affaires. And it took them a long time to recognise us, so to speak.

**MMcB:** Was this to do with Hong Kong?

**RH:** Was that the reason, do you mean? No, not to do with Hong Kong but to do with Formosa, with Taiwan. And we were very wicked because we had a Consul in Taiwan. By one of those typical diplomatic, rather stupid little tricks he was not based in Taipei, the capital, but in some suburb or minor town called Tamsui. But he was an official envoy of the British Government to Nationalist China, and that was why the Communist Chinese wouldn't recognise us.

**MMcB:** So did you stay in Far Eastern Department long?

**RH:** I think it was about three years, and then I was posted to Prague as HM Consul and First Secretary Commercial. It was quite a small Embassy in those days. And the Commercial Section consisted of me and the Consular Section consisted of me plus a Vice Consul whose real duties lay elsewhere. Issuing visas and things.

**MMcB:** Yes, of course. In other words he was a member of the Security Services. {laughter}

**RH:** Yes, yes, so I was the Consular Department and the Commercial Department.

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**MMcB:** Did you have much to do?

**RH:** Oh yes, an enormous amount, because there was quite a lot of British trade with Czechoslovakia and there were a large number of unfortunate British wives who had married Czechs during and after the war, Free Czechs in England, and after the war they went back with their husbands to Czechoslovakia. In 1948 came the Communist revolution and many of them were simply deprived by the Czechs of their British nationality and were at the mercy of the Czech authorities. And that meant that they had to get an exit visa to leave the country, which was not granted. And you would have a case of an English, a young English woman married to a Czech, let us say he was a professor or librarian or something, and they would have two children and this unfortunate woman was not allowed to come to England to show her mother her two children. And I had to intercede for them. Of course, I could only do that for those women who really did still have British nationality. And that was a very depressing job.

**MMcB:** It must have been, yes. Were you able to succeed in some cases?

**RH:** Yes once or twice. And then also there were consular duties for other Commonwealth countries. I remember a Somali coming to me to have his passport extended, and it was quite clear that he'd forged it, either his name or the date or something, and I confiscated it and put it in my safe and wrote to the Foreign Office for instructions, and they said 'give it back at once, you're not allowed to confiscate a passport'.

**MMcB:** Yes, this is one of those things one learns.

**RH:** Yes, yes, that's right. And then I once had to ..shall I go on a little more? ...I had to administer the Oath of Allegiance to the Swedish wife of one of my colleagues who you may or may not have interviewed, David Ratford? No, he was a Russian expert really, and served in Moscow, I think he was number two, maybe Ambassador in Moscow. He met a Swedish girl in Prague, a secretary at the Swedish Embassy, and married her, and under regulations in those days, I don't know what it's

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like now, she had to become a British subject, and under Swedish law that meant giving up her Swedish nationality. She was rather tearful, which I could well understand.

**MMcB:** How about conditions in Czechoslovakia?

**RH:** Well, it was still Stalinist, although Stalin was long dead. The Czechs and the East Germans had stayed very loyal to Stalin and it was still very much a police state though, it had eased up a bit so far as foreigners were concerned. I was not followed about. The Military Attachés and their wives were followed everywhere, still, in 1960, '61, and of course we all had to be careful about bugs. I mean, we assumed they were there all the time. And life for the Czechs was very drab. I don't know if you have ever served in a communist country in those days, but it's very depressing. I mean the town is all absolutely grey and until then you don't realise how much importance you attach to shop signs and things. Instead of seeing, you know, a coloured facade with the name of a shop on it, they were all called state stationer no. 23, state greengrocer No. 4. Very depressing, very depressing, and that and my consular work together were not very encouraging.

**MMcB:** So where did you go after that?

**RH:** Oh, then I got engaged and left the Service.

**MMcB:** Oh, that's when you left. What year was that?

**RH:** That was 1961.

**MMcB:** And you had to leave?

**RH:** Yes.

**MMcB:** It does seem incredible, doesn't it?

**RH:** Well, nowadays, in the light of nowadays it seems incredible, but then

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it was simply taken for granted. It was natural. And, as I think I wrote in a letter to you, it was not because I married a foreigner.

**MMcB:** It was because you were married.

**RH:** Yes. If I'd married an English doctor, or even an English painter who could have come round the world with me, you know, as my consort, even then I had to retire, had to resign. You were allowed to apply for readmission which, if it were practicable, could be done.

**MMcB:** But you lost your pension rights?

**RH:** Pension rights? We didn't have any pension rights. No. What happened was that they gave instead of a pension (I had served for twelve years) a gratuity. Instead of a pension you got what they called a dowry, and that was I think one month's salary for every year served. Every year of service, something like that. But I had to pay for my own things to come from Prague to Bonn where....

**MMcB:** Because you resigned..

**RH:** Yes. But I know of one case where a woman diplomat did reapply after marriage and went in the Service. That was Caroline Petrie who married Maurice Bathurst, who had been Legal Adviser in Washington and Bonn, with the High Commission and then the Embassy in Bonn, and he, of course, was England-based, so she rejoined and went on in the same rank, I think Counsellor, but of course couldn't be posted abroad or, at any rate, if they wanted to post her abroad, she would have had to say no. So she resigned, again, after a few years I think. And, of course, there were very few women in those days.

**MMcB:** Indeed. So what did you do? Did you go to live in Germany?

**RH:** Yes, my husband was in Germany by then. He had been serving at the Germany Embassy in London at the same time that I was in Far Eastern Department, and he was posted back to Headquarters while I was in Prague, so we set up house in

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Bonn.

**MMcB:** By then, of course, things were getting better, easier, weren't they? In economic terms?

**RH:** Oh yes, I mean, it was doing rather better than England at that time I would say.

**MMcB:** Yes, even by 1960. Did you then serve overseas with your husband?

**RH:** As a wife. Yes, indeed. We were in Stockholm for four years, which we enjoyed for the country, and the snow and ski-ing, and that sort of thing. We found it rather difficult with the Swedes but by the time we left we had met quite a lot and had Swedish friends. And from there we were sent as a complete contrast to Islamabad which was familiar to me because I'd been born in India and spent time in Burma but it was a great cultural shock for my husband and our son, then aged 8. The smells and the dirt and all that coming from sterile Sweden.

**MMcB:** Oh, of course, you couldn't have a greater contrast. ... You could have gone to Calcutta.

**RH:** Yes, that would have been worse. Anyway, we enjoyed that, all of us, all three of us enjoyed that time in Pakistan very much. One could travel quite a lot and get up to the North-West Frontier, and Kabul. Is it still called Kabul [Kawbul] in English society?

**MMcB:** I think so, yes.

**RH:** Yes. Crazy really. Anyway Kabul then. We used to go occasionally for long weekends and so on. And that's a wonderful country, wonderful people..and the people look you straight in the eye. I don't know if I'd have liked to be posted there because it was a very long way from everywhere, but as a kind of tonic, to go for a long weekend, it was very pleasant. In fact it was quite amusing, diplomatic cars would meet more or less half way between Islamabad and Kabul, because we would

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be going there and they would be coming to Islamabad for a little more warmth...

**MMcB:** And contrast. And anywhere else?

**RH:** Yes, after Islamabad back to Bonn for four years and after that from Bonn to Madras, yes, another Indian posting. We were there from 1978 until '83. My husband was Consul General there. And after that we were posted to Oslo, another Scandinavian posting. So it was very unimaginative really. Two India sub-continents and two Scandinavian. But Norway is very pleasant and the people are charming. So that was a very nice post to end up in. After that my husband retired and we went to live in Munich.

**MMcB:** And have you kept up an interest in international, European affairs?

**RH:** Yes, we belong to The Society for Foreign Relations, I suppose you translate it, in Munich, which is quite active and has lecturers, speakers, from all over the world on everything, really. And, of course, we are....[end of tape]

**MMcB:** So, you retired to live in Munich and were members of the Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft. Do you take a view in that association of this country?

**RH:** Oh yes. One of the recurring themes that crops up in talks once every year or eighteen months or so is, of course, German/British relations. And there isn't always an awful lot to say about it that we don't already know but the last month's talk, funny enough, was an excellent one given by the German correspondent in London of one of the major newspapers, German newspapers, who talked about the image of Germany in the British press. And it was a very good talk. One of the interesting unexpected things about it was that among the factors which influence relations he considers that football plays a very big role. He thought that Jurgen Klinsmann, a German footballer, who I think played for Manchester United or something, for a year or so, and was very popular had done more for German/British relations than any politician in the last two years.

**MMcB:** It might have had some, it might have counterbalanced to some extent

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the British press.

**RH:** Yes, well now, you asked about the view in Germany of British policy. The view in Germany is, of course, influenced, if not created, by the German newspapers. And their articles derive from their correspondents in London. Correspondents in London, as all over the world, get most of their news through the local newspapers. So, people in Germany know exactly what is going on in Britain, because it's reported to them by the press, indirectly the British press. That Britain continues to drag its feet on Europe and the euro and that sort of thing, everybody knows. They're pretty well-informed.

**MMcB:** They may from the British press, but does the British press reflect the attitude of the British Government?

**RH:** Well, that's something else again. But at least the attitude of the British Government is mainly reported in the press, isn't it, whether it's applauded or criticised?

**MMcB:** Well, distorted in the press.

**RH:** Distorted, very often, yes.

**MMcB:** Especially by the Telegraph. Did you hear the.., or did you read of this case whereby the current British Ambassador in Berlin made some disobliging comments about the tone of the British Press in relation to Europe and the EU and so on? And was threatened with a libel action by the proprietor of the Daily Telegraph? And had to climb down.

**RH:** That was reported.

**MMcB:** It was? But what was the German press's attitude to that?

**RH:** Well, of course, they agreed with the Ambassador.

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**MMcB:** How could they not..

**RH:** Yes, yes.

**MMcB:** It leaves me speechless. I'm sorry to say that I think that .. you say something.

**RH:** I don't think I've anything more to say about that. The Germans, most Germans, believe that they are unfairly treated by the British press. That they have a bad press in England, they know. I don't think they know the story of German tourists rushing out at dawn to get the best places on the beach, which is I think very important in the British attitude. But they know that Huns and Heavy Teutonic and that sort of thing appear all the time in the British press and the thing about the Germans is that they want to be loved. And that's perhaps a point worth mentioning. German Embassies abroad are asked regularly to send in reports about the German image in that country because they care, they want to be liked. Whereas the British don't care two hoots whether they are liked or not. When has ever a British Embassy been asked to write a despatch on the image of Britain in the Thai press or whatever?

**MMcB:** Well, not in the Thai press, I don't think.

**RH:** In the American, perhaps?

**MMcB:** Yes, I'm sure that we pay close attention to our image in America. But it's a lost cause. I don't think people take it too seriously.

**RH:** No. Well, the Germans do. I mean, as a people, to the extent that you can generalise ever about a people, they want to be liked. You can contrast it again with the French. The French don't care two hoots.

**MMcB:** No. Absolutely not. In fact I think the French revel in being hated.  
[laughter]

**RH:** Well, I think it's perhaps like the British. They "know" they are

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superior.

**MMcB:** Have you followed this business of the BMW....?

**RH:** Oh yes, indeed. Indeed and I've brought with me, I thought it might be amusing, an article from a German newspaper. Ken Jackson, the Trade Union man, complained bitterly that James Bond was still driving a BMW, because James Bond is a symbol of England so he shouldn't drive a German car. This was reported in the German press and the writer here asks 'what else could he drive?' Earlier he used to have a Mercedes and before than an Aston Martin, whose present head is Wolfgang Reizler, previous manager of BMW. And it's not only a question of the car: if Bond wanted to be all-British he would have to throw away his Walther PPK pistol, made by a factory in Karlsruhe, and should he instead of seducing Carole Bouquet be seducing Cheryl Blair? Should he drink English wine? And so on.

**MMcB:** Well, I think that probably concludes. Thank you very much indeed.