

**WOMEN IN DIPLOMACY**

**The FCO, 1782-1999**

**Historians**

**Records and Historical Services**

## CONTENTS

	<b>Foreword by Baroness Symons</b>	1
<b>I</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	2
<b>II</b>	<b>‘Necessary Women’, 1782-1999</b>	
	Housekeepers and housemaids	3
	From ‘Lady Typewriter’ to Personal Assistant: 1889-1999	3
	From temporary clerks to Executive Branch B: 1915-1946	5
<b>III</b>	<b>Women Diplomats: 1919-1999</b>	
	Interwar discussions	7
	The Schuster Committee considers the admission of women: 1933-34	7
	Foreign comparisons	8
	The Schuster Report and the continued exclusion of women	10
	Wartime and post-war developments	10
	The first British women diplomats	13
	The situation today	15
	Opportunity 2000	16
<b>IV</b>	<b>Diplomatic Wives</b>	
	Diplomatic households and entertainment	17
	Other contacts	18
	Recent developments	19
<b>V</b>	<b>Quotations</b>	21
<b>VI</b>	<b>Chronology</b>	24
<b>VII</b>	<b>Suggestions for further reading</b>	26
	<b>Appendix I</b>	29
	A selection of the views of HM Representatives abroad on whether women should be appointed to the Diplomatic and Consular Services (1933)	
	Current Women Heads of Mission	34

## FOREWORD

Women have been employed in the Foreign Office since its creation in 1782. But it was not until 1946 that women were given the opportunity to be employed as diplomats. Since then, in spite of this post-war breakthrough, women still remain an under-represented component of the FCO's work force. This second edition of *Women in Diplomacy* gives an updated background to some of the reasons for this as it follows the progressive opening of doors to women in the FCO from the early days to the present.

The opportunities for women to compete for jobs at all levels and in all areas of work in the FCO have risen by leaps and bounds in recent years. Nearly 40% of the annual operational recruits, and half of the annual policy recruits are now women. This reflects the FCO's commitment to equal opportunities. This was recognised last year when the FCO received the 1998 Opportunity 2000 award for Top Level Commitment. It also forms part of an overall strategy intended to achieve the aim stated by the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, in September 1997, of a 'Foreign Office that is representative of the whole of modern Britain, from all walks of life, both genders'.

Nevertheless, there are still too few women joining the FCO and staying to progress into senior grades. As part of the FCO's Action Plan on Gender I will be asking a selection of those who have left the Service why they resigned, and looking at other working environments with the aim of identifying new initiatives to ensure that we recruit and retain able women. We are already introducing flexible, family-friendly policies, and removing the distinction between Diplomatic Service and Home Civil Service jobs, measures which will indeed benefit all FCO staff, both men and women. With continued commitment to this approach I am confident that, by the time the third edition of *Women in Diplomacy* is printed, the past marginalisation of women in the FCO will have been consigned to the history books and female officers will be fully represented at all levels throughout our Service.

May 1999

Baroness Symons  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

## I INTRODUCTION

Spain appears to have pioneered the employment of women as diplomats in the modern period when, in 1507, Ferdinand of Aragon sent his widowed daughter Catherine formal credentials as his ambassador in England and instructions to negotiate with Henry VII about the delay in her proposed marriage to Prince Henry. France soon followed suit. The Treaty of Cambrai (1529) was popularly known as ‘The Ladies’ Peace’ because it had been negotiated and drafted by Louise of Savoy, mother of King Francis I, and Margaret of Austria, aunt of the Emperor Charles V, on behalf of their respective countries. Later that century Madame Delahaye-Vautelaye was appointed French Ambassador to Venice, while the Maréchale de Guébriant became the French Ambassador to Poland in the early years of the seventeenth century. The youngest daughter of Charles I, Henrietta Anne, Duchess of Orleans, acted as Louis XIV’s representative when negotiating the secret Anglo-French Treaty of Dover with her brother, Charles II, in 1670. France subsequently discontinued the practice. In the eighteenth century, we know of only two examples of a woman acting as her country’s representative.

One such woman was Mrs White, the widow of the British Consul at Tripoli. When her husband died in office in November 1763, Mrs White took on the management of consular affairs, sought and obtained audience of the Regent of Tripoli, looked after some English sailors who had been detained in Tripoli, and conducted official business with aplomb until her husband’s successor arrived in 1765. Mrs White’s initiative was unofficial, and was considered ‘strange and ridiculous’ by the Secretary of State, Lord Halifax. Nonetheless, her claim for official expenses of nearly £800 appears to have been honoured, at least in part. Around the same time, following her husband, Richard Wolters’s death in 1771, Mrs Marguerite Wolters carried on the British spy network in Rotterdam, at least until 1785. In addition, there were probably many cases like that of Mrs McNeill, wife of the British representative in Persia in the 1830s, who conducted her husband’s official correspondence while he was away on tour.

In the seventeenth century the Dutchman Wicquefort considered the question of women in the Diplomatic service under the titles “Si l’Ambassadeur se peut servir de l’entremise des femmes pour le progrez de ses affaires” and “Si les femmes peuvent estre Ambassatrices”. Wicquefort believed that women could assist in the running of diplomatic affairs although he did not consider that they could become ambassadors. It was not until three centuries later, well into the twentieth century, that the possibility of admitting women to the administrative grade of the Diplomatic Service was even considered in the UK. It is difficult to appreciate today, for instance, the degree of iconoclasm shown by Harold Nicolson in making the heroine of his novel *Public Faces* (1932) the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office. Yet although there were none in the administrative grade, women had worked in the Foreign Office since 1782.

## **II 'NECESSARY WOMEN': 1782-1999**

### **Housekeepers and housemaids**

The first reference to women in the newly established Foreign Office of 1782 was to Charles James Fox's 'necessary woman' or Housekeeper, Martha Southcott. Little is known of her other than that she had been taken over from the old Northern Department, and that she gave way the following year to Ann Cheese. Mrs Cheese left a written description in her own hand of her duties, from which we know that she employed, fed, housed and clothed one man and three maid servants, who helped her to keep the Cleveland Row premises clean. She provided the office with paper and other items, pumped water to the printing room and water closets, and disposed of old office pens and ends of tallow candles to augment her income. She was comparatively well paid, receiving a stipend of £48, which rose to £100 in 1795.

The opening in 1868 of the new Foreign Office building in Downing Street brought the Housekeeper the extra duty of providing luncheons for the staff, for which a further allowance of £25 was sanctioned. This does not seem to have been a successful development: the Chief Clerk in the 1890s received many complaints about the food, which ranged from comments such as 'the garbage of Mrs Roberts' to 'having this day sat down to a plateful of maggots'.

In the nineteenth century the Foreign Office was until noon 'the preserve of the housemaids', who did all their cleaning before the clerks came in to work. Little is known of them, however, except for 'the energetic little housemaid' who helped to save irreplaceable original treaties by bringing buckets of water to quench a fire which broke out in the Library in the old Foreign Office in 1839. In 1914 the maids were still housed in the Foreign Office building, their bedrooms on the top floor looking on to Downing Street.

By the twentieth century the posts of Housekeeper and Chief Office Keeper had been united, and were usually held by men. By the early 1990s the majority of Office Keepers, now renamed 'Accommodation Managers', were, once again, women. However, in August 1998, as a result of a Value For Money (VFM) exercise, an outside agent was appointed to manage the buildings: the FCO's 'necessary woman' has passed into history and been replaced by a Facilities Management Help Desk.

### **From 'Lady Typewriter' to Personal Assistant: 1889-1999**

In 1886 the Treasury accepted that the installation of typewriters represented significant savings in time and money as a skilful machinist could do the work of two copyists at a third of their wages. Miss Sophia Fulcher was the first typist appointed by the Foreign Office (in 1889) and she and her later colleagues were at first described as 'Lady Typewriters'. Originally used only for non-confidential copying work, by 1905 they were typing drafts and outgoing despatches. A Treasury minute of 17 March 1894 laid down that the service of women typists should cease as a matter of course upon marriage, and

made provision for the grant of a marriage gratuity. In February 1907, Miss Fulcher and her eight colleagues petitioned the Treasury for a rise in pay, pointing out that even the maximum salary was barely a living wage, and had probably been fixed on the assumption that most typists would leave the service to marry after a few years. The FO typists stated that most of them were obliged to work until they were physically unable to do so and the pension to which they were entitled after thirty to forty years' service 'would admit only of the barest existence'. Their request was endorsed by the Secretary of State, Sir Edward Grey, who wrote that he had 'pleasure in testifying to the excellent work which is performed by these Typists under the able guidance of their Superintendent. The work comprises the transcription of a considerable amount of French manuscript which is often difficult to decipher, as well as the reproduction of documents emanating from foreign countries and written by persons imperfectly acquainted with the English language ... [it] is very desirable to grant adequate remuneration to such persons for the valuable services which they are able to render.' A pay rise followed, so that by 1912 wages ranged from forty shillings (£2) for Chief Superintendents, to twenty to twenty-six shillings (£1-£1.30) a week for ordinary typists.

The Civil Service Commission had introduced regulations for the appointment of Shorthand Typists on 1 May 1908. Candidates between the ages of 18 and 30 had to pass examinations in writing, spelling, copying manuscript, arithmetic and typewriting. English composition was later added to this list. They were expected to take down shorthand at 70 to 100 words a minute, and to type at least 800 words an hour. Candidates nominated to the India Office were obliged to type at a speed of 1000 words an hour. By 1914 the Foreign Office typing pool comprised some 16 women who were kept at a distance from the male staff in a room partitioned by means of a curtain.

As a result of the First World War and the Peace Conferences, the 1922 FO employed 15 permanent and six temporary shorthand typists, with one superintendent. The demands on them were so intense that the Office requested Treasury permission to increase the permanent staff to 20 and to pay a special allowance to those with qualifications in French. Since there was 'a constant danger of losing the best members by resignation to take up private posts', the Treasury agreed and the award of the special allowance became dependent on passing formal examinations in French, and French shorthand and typing.

By 1930 there were 38 typists, 24 shorthand typists and six superintendents working in the Foreign Office. Some were allocated to senior officials or departments and a few served in posts abroad, but most worked in the Typing Pool which had been established in rooms on the newly built third floor of the Main Building. Conditions there were far from ideal. The ventilation was poor, one room had been painted a depressing grey so as not to show the dirt, and the predominantly pre-1914 typewriters were extremely noisy. Conditions improved following an efficiency study by the National Institute of Industrial Psychology in 1930, which recommended repainting the rooms in light colours, improving ventilation and access, and the replacement of antiquated typewriters. Throughout the interwar period, the standard of FO typists was acknowledged to be extremely high. Those with qualifications in French were often borrowed by other

departments to assist at conferences. When a Treasury delegate went to Paris in 1929 for talks on reparations, 'he asked for a Foreign Office shorthand writer as no Treasury shorthand writer had the necessary knowledge of French. And he was considerably surprised . . . [that she] could answer the telephone and deal with messages in French.' The National Association of Women Civil Servants submitted a pay claim in 1934 on behalf of typing staff, and the FO supported its preparation by providing a memorandum on the work of its own typists. The Office remained aware that good pay was essential to encourage well educated women to join the staff and to stay, and in this instance at least, succeeded in persuading the Treasury to sanction a moderate increase in pay.

As a result of the Second World War there was a nearly fourfold increase in the number of typists. In May 1946, for instance the Archives and Communications Departments had respectively 73 typists in six pools and 65 typists in four shifts, while the rest of the Office had another 87 shorthand typists. More importantly, the reforms of the Foreign Service announced by Anthony Eden in 1943 and implemented after the war by Ernest Bevin, led to the secretarial staff forming a new Branch C in 1947. Pay-scales and allowances were improved, and there were some opportunities for promotion to executive posts in Branch B of the Service. Nowadays cross-transfer to the executive band is open to all Diplomatic Service secretaries at a time when the FCO employs some 407 of them, two of whom are men.

### **From temporary clerks to Executive Branch B: 1915-1946**

The 1915 Report of the MacDonnell Commission on the Civil Service held that 'in connection with the employment of women . . . the object should be, not to provide employment for women as such, but to secure for the State the advantage of the services of women whenever those services will best promote its interests.' It also recommended that the Treasury should carry out a special enquiry to ascertain the clerical, inspectorial and administrative positions which should be filled by women, but action on the Report had to be suspended on account of the War.

Meanwhile, the greatly increased wartime departmental workload and the absence of civil servants on military duty resulted in the large-scale employment of temporary staff, many of whom were women. Sir John Tilley, as Chief Clerk, was responsible for recruiting women as clerks and assistants to the Foreign Office at that time, and his views on them were unenthusiastic. While 'many were naturally amateurs ... some had difficulty, according to their male colleagues, in acquiring habits of precision, and in the registries were said to be apt to think one number on a paper as good as another. Others were hard to persuade that, once engaged, they could not go off at once when their mothers and aunts and children were sick or otherwise in need of their help. Considerable difference of opinion existed in the Government offices and elsewhere as to the working power of women as compared with that of men . . . I think we should, diplomatically, have said four women to two men.' The temporary staff nevertheless included a number of highly educated and able women, such as Victoria Spenser Wilkinson, the daughter of the military historian, Spenser Wilkinson; and Dorothy Bigby, who had graduated from University College London before joining the Office on a temporary basis in June 1915.

She was subsequently attached to the Peace Delegation at Paris, 1918-19, where her talents and industry won her an MBE. Another woman to earn an MBE for her work in the Foreign Office during the war was Miss E Townsend, an Assistant Librarian. A newspaper report wrote that 'it is with the greatest regret that she is seen making way for a man who has the right to the work'.

In the immediate post-war period it was necessary both to reduce the numbers of temporary staff and to make good the shortage of established staff. It was decided to hold a number of competitions for higher-grade posts which would be open to ex-Service personnel, and to offer opportunities of obtaining clerical and related posts to persons of either sex who had already worked in temporary capacities. In the interim, however, wartime temporary staff were being sacked in favour of employing temporary ex-Service personnel. As a result, it was only from 1921 onwards that women were engaged as clerical and executive officers on a permanent basis in the Foreign Office. 48 clerical officers were appointed in 1921, and by 1939 this number had risen to 75 (four of whom were serving abroad) with another nine clerical assistants. The employment of women certainly produced a change in atmosphere: one diplomat, returning from abroad after many years' absence, said that one of the greatest changes to him was seeing 'the girls walking through the corridors of the Foreign Office carrying teapots.' Stephen Gaselee, the Foreign Office Librarian, observed in 1933 that women had become 'an important element in our modern organisation' and that they had 'added not only brightness but efficiency to our labours, chiefly in the direction of taking tasks from the shoulders of those who should have been engaged in responsible and executive work, but were formerly drowned in routine.' Nevertheless, only a handful of women appointed in the early 1920s had obtained promotion: Maude Victoria Moore had become a Higher Executive Officer in Establishment and Finance Department, while Dorothy Bigby was a Staff Officer, later Registrar, serving in the Librarian's Department. She eventually became Acting Librarian in 1945-6; having been elected a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

Between 1939 and 1945 the exigencies of war again proved paramount in widening the range of executive and clerical positions available to women in the Foreign Office, and these developments were confirmed with the formation of Branch B as part of the post-war Eden Reforms of the Foreign Service.

### **III WOMEN DIPLOMATS: 1919-1999**

#### **Interwar discussions**

The passing of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act in 1919 brought the technical possibility of admitting women to the administrative grade of the Diplomatic and Consular Service on to the horizon for the first time. Hopes were short-lived, however, for although the Act stated that 'a person shall not be disqualified by sex or marriage from the exercise of any public function, or from being appointed to or holding any civil or judicial office or post', this was qualified by provisions 'giving power to reserve to men any branch of or posts in the Civil Service in any of His Majesty's possessions overseas, or in any foreign country.' Regulations made in 1921 specifically restricted to men all posts in the Diplomatic and Consular Services, and certain other posts overseas.

The question was reopened in 1931, following a recommendation in the Report of the Tomlin Commission on the Civil Service, and a committee under the chairmanship of Sir Claud Schuster, Permanent Secretary to the Lord Chancellor, was convened. In 1933, as part of the FO response to investigations by the Committee, Charles Howard Smith, Chief Establishment Officer, suggested to the PUS that he should seek the views of all HM Representatives abroad on the proposed admission of women. If, as he believed, 'the vast majority take the view that women should not be employed, this would surely go some way to influence the Committee, because we shall have the views of the men on the spot.' Sir Robert Vansittart approved this suggestion, observing 'you will need some lucky horse-shoes in your gloves when you step into the ring.' A circular letter was accordingly sent, and replies were received from the Heads of every British Embassy and Legation abroad (a selection from which forms Appendix I). A few representatives were in favour of the admission of women, only one was violently opposed, and the remainder were unenthusiastic, chiefly on the grounds that local conditions would not allow such an innovation.

#### **The Schuster Committee considers the admission of women: 1933-34**

The Schuster committee met on 10 occasions, heard the evidence of 40 witnesses, and produced a report in 1934 summarising the arguments for and against the admission of women to the Service. Those in favour declared that the objections to the employment of women were based 'in part on prejudice, and in part on fear of the unknown', and that the difficulties peculiar to the Service would not be insuperable.

Arguments against included the view that there were many countries so different from the UK that 'it would be extremely difficult for a woman to make the contacts which form a large part of the work of diplomacy.' It was also alleged that the introduction of a woman officer into the intimate life of missions abroad would present difficulties, in that that she might have to live alone, which would excite 'undesirable comment' or that she might at some missions have to share Government owned accommodation with another junior officer, which would be embarrassing unless the other officer was also female. Some held

that 'the physical constitution of women is not such as to enable them to bear the strain of continuous overwork in hot and unhealthy climates'.

Those supporting the admission of women had declared that women were particularly fitted to contribute to the general work of a mission abroad in connection with social and philanthropic duties and the observance of women's movements. The opposition replied that such work 'was now adequately performed by wives and daughters of members of the Service without any cost to the State.' This was reiterated by the British Minister in Berne who noted that women already played a significant role in diplomacy as diplomatic wives, with the advantage that 'you have two diplomatists in your service for more or less the price of one.' On the other hand he did concede that there was one sphere connected with the Service in which women could be even more usefully employed than men: the Office of Works, especially the furnishing branch. 'I consider that a woman with taste and experience as an interior decorator would show more discrimination in selecting furniture and materials for Embassies and Legations ... than any man.'

As for the Consular Service, it was said that its work was not only performed in circumstances of greater loneliness and discomfort than the Diplomatic Service, but that it brought the officer into 'contact with commercial men of all classes and types ... and with seafaring men of every rank, race and colour ... The rough population of the dockside does not offer the most fruitful field for an experiment of this nature.' The representatives of women's emancipation who were part of the Committee were not impressed by this argument, and pointed out that 'for many years the Government, through the Colonial Office, has quietly and unobtrusively recruited women in considerable numbers, and has assigned them to posts in these areas where their services were needed.' Moreover, women who entered the Colonial Service 'live in tropical or semi-tropical areas from the beginning to the end of their official careers, whereas life in the Consular Service ... offers the almost certain relief of occasional or permanent transference to a more temperate climate.'

Another problem raised by the Committee was the question of marriage, as 'a woman could not be permitted to remain in the Service if she married a foreigner'. Resignation on marriage was recommended, 'for it is unthinkable that a woman should trail about from post to post a husband who would, owing to the nature of his wife's employment, be precluded from taking up almost any appointment in the place in which his wife was serving ... The alternative of laying it down that a married woman diplomat ... should not take her husband to any post ... is even more unthinkable. On the other hand, the task of a spinster endeavouring to discharge the duties, official and social, of a diplomatic or consular officer, would be still more difficult.'

### **Foreign comparisons**

Britain appeared to be lagging behind the rest of the world in its refusal to employ women as diplomats. Mrs Keynes of the National Council of Women of Great Britain stated that in 1933, 13 countries including Latin and Eastern states such as Nicaragua and Turkey had admitted women to their Diplomatic and Consular Services. Spain was cited

as one of the pioneers of women in diplomacy, with the appointment of Isabel de Zulueta as Chancelier of the Spanish Legation at Panama in 1933, while the Appointments Committee of Glasgow University made much of Chilean women consular officers. Olga de la Barra served as Vice-Consul for Chile at Glasgow from 1927 to 1930, and was then promoted to be a Consul-attaché in London. Ines Ortuzar was Chilean Consul at Hull from 1928 to 1930, when she was promoted Consul at Glasgow with responsibility for the whole of Scotland, and she echoed the views of Miss de la Barra in declaring that 'As yet I have never found it difficult to carry out my less pleasant duties of handling the undesirable cases of sailors, etc taking it just as part of my daily work.'

During the inter-war period, the United States and the Soviet Union were the most enterprising in the appointment of women as diplomats, even if the numbers involved were small. Mrs Ruth Bryan Owen served as American Ambassador to Copenhagen from 1933 to 1936 with considerable success, and the British representative in Finland admitted that he had known an American woman Secretary at Berne 'with whom one could talk as if she were a man.' However, he added, 'she had the option of transfer to Panama or getting married and chose the latter.' Another American representative had begun her career as Vice-Consul at Valparaiso, where 'she met with no special difficulties, so soon as her visitors appreciated that she was the vice-consul and not a woman clerk' and she was in turn promoted as a secretary to the American legation in Stockholm. She told Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, British Minister at Stockholm, that she was 'just as good as anyone else at the purely chancery work, but that her usefulness as a member of the legation, in such work as is done outside the chancery, is diminished by some 100% by the fact that she is not a man. Broadly speaking in official circles she receives the treatment she is entitled to expect, but she always has the uneasy feeling that the official from whom she is seeking information would talk with more expansion if she were a man.'

In this she diverged from the Soviet representative at Stockholm, Madame Alexandra Kollontai, whom Clark Kerr described as 'very feminine and quite remarkably intelligent.' Having entered the service at the top, with postings to Mexico and Norway before Sweden, she assured Clark Kerr 'that she has throughout been treated as a man and has never been conscious of any disability on account of her sex. Nevertheless, as regards that part of her work which is done tête-à-tête, she confesses that even now she prefers to ask the man with whom she has to talk to luncheon than to dinner.'

This evidence was nonetheless questioned and then dismissed by the Foreign Office and Consular Service representatives. Having referred the information to the Governments concerned, they now rejected most of it 'as inaccurate and misleading.' Of the 14 countries said to employ women in their diplomatic services, 'three have never in fact employed women; three have in the past admitted women or one woman, but do so no longer; three others admit women to their Foreign Offices but ... not ... abroad; and of the thirteen women stated to be or to have been employed in Diplomatic or quasi-Diplomatic posts by the remaining five countries, five resigned after short periods of service, and six do not furnish the slightest analogy with the system of admission by competitive examination in force in this country. There seems in fact to be a tendency on the part of

those countries which have attempted or considered the experiment now to reject it. We have been recommended to appear as pioneers, but ... we might be pioneering in a territory which had been already explored and abandoned.'

### **The Schuster Report and the continued exclusion of women**

Between such hotly contested views there was little middle ground, and the Schuster Committee was unable to make unanimous recommendations in its Report about either the Diplomatic or Consular Services. In regard to the Diplomatic Service, four members were against the admission of women, two in favour of it, and two more in favour of admission on an experimental basis for a period of seven years. As to the Consular Service, six were definitely opposed to the admission of women while two proposed that a limited number should be seconded to it from the Home Civil Service. The Report was considered by the Cabinet on 28 November 1934, and it was agreed that it should be published with a Government statement accepting the conclusions of the majority against the admission of women. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs was accordingly requested to draft the statement to accompany publication of the Report, but according to Howard Smith, Sir John Simon 'buried the question until he left office' and Sir Samuel Hoare 'would not touch it'. Anthony Eden brought the matter out into the open again by publishing the Report in the form of a White Paper on 28 April 1936. This duly recorded the Government's view that they 'do not consider that any injustice is being done to women by their continued exclusion from the Diplomatic Service', and that they were convinced 'that the time has not arrived when women could be employed either in the Consular Service or in the Diplomatic Service with advantage to the State or with profit to women.'

It was at this same period that the Foreign Office began to feel under strength at a time when the deteriorating international situation placed greater demands on it. There were arguments with the Civil Service Commission about changes in the examination for the Administrative Grade of the Civil Service, the question of amalgamation of the Diplomatic and Consular Services was raised without decision, and Treasury interference in political and administrative matters was stimulated by alleged Foreign Office inefficiency. Renewed criticism of the Foreign Office in the press and Parliament during the autumn of 1940 led to an internal decision by Eden, on his return to office, that it was essential 'to proceed as rapidly as possible with the enquiry into the needs of the Service and into the various proposals made by Mr Bevin and others for its improvement.' Under the impact of war, proposals for the admission of women to the administrative grade were revived.

### **Wartime and post-war developments**

When Anthony Eden's White Paper on the Reform of the Foreign Service was published in 1943, a main objective was that 'every member of our Foreign Service should be in the fullest sense representative of our whole nation, of every class and section of the community, and that he should be able to deal in the country in which he is accredited with the whole nation, irrespective of class or outlook.' In regard to the admission of

women, it stated, 'The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs has ... already announced his readiness to regard the report of the Committee which, in 1934, examined the question of the admission of women into the Foreign Service, as no longer necessarily being the last word on the subject, and to consider after the war, the appointment of a Committee, which will not be confined in its composition to members of the Civil Service, to review the question again in the light of the existing circumstances.'

In the early spring of 1945, the Cambridge University Women's Appointment Board wrote to Eden and pointed out that to delay the consideration of this question until after the war was over might debar women who had served during the war from competing in the first post-war examinations. Eden declared that he had an open mind on the general subject of the admission of women, and agreed that 'it would be a pity if women who had served in the war and whose characters had been tried out and formed by responsible war work, should be unable to compete in the reconstruction examinations.' He therefore proposed to the Cabinet that he should set up an impartial committee to look into the question, the conclusions of which would be generally accepted. The War Cabinet agreed to this on 19 March, and discussions began immediately on the composition of the committee.

The chairman of this committee, selected in June 1945, was Sir Ernest Gowers, an enemy of jargon and sloppy thinking, whose guides on the writing of good English are still essential reading for new FCO entrants today. He was assisted, among others, by Lady Limerick, the head of the wartime Red Cross organization, and the report of their investigations was completed in January 1946 and published the following May.

The new Committee heard evidence that by 1945, at least 108 women graduates were known to have been appointed to temporary administrative posts in the Foreign Service. Of these, 31 were currently serving as temporary Assistant Principals attached to departments of the Foreign Office, while 16 had served abroad as First, Second and Third Secretaries, as Vice Consuls and as Press Attachés. The latter included such notable figures as Freya Stark (in Iraq and Italy), Nancy (Ann) Lambton (Persia), and Elizabeth Wiskemann (Switzerland), and there were others who had served with great distinction in posts of a highly responsible and confidential nature at Bletchley and the Political Intelligence Department.

Most of the arguments against the admission of women were the same as those presented to the 1936 Committee, but some witnesses opened up fresh ground by suggesting that women were 'less objective than men, less capable of keeping secrets, less good at teamwork, more liable to allow authority to go to their heads and more prone to let enthusiasm run away with them.' Gowers observed that 'Parliament must . . . have disposed of such arguments as these once and for all by passing the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act.'

Little was heard of the arguments that women would not fit into the intimate life of an Embassy, or the lonely life of a Consulate, since the war had caused men and women to work closely together in so many fields of action, and 'if there was ever any doubt about

the capacity of women to show courage, resource and leadership in dangerous situations, it has been dispelled for good during the past five years.' The Air Ministry observed that the quality and ability of the women who had been employed in meeting and negotiating with foreign representatives had been generally 'so high that there could be no doubt of their competence to fill posts such as are ordinarily filled by diplomatic, commercial and consular officers', and that instead of showing hostility, 'Egyptians and Syrians frequently appeared to have considerable admiration for the British woman of affairs.' This was echoed by the evidence given by Freya Stark, who stated that in the Middle East, Italy, Greece and India, 'in none of these is a woman as such unacceptable. On the contrary . . . in countries where women are still, even if not veiled, inclined to be rather secluded, a man cannot possibly have as intimate a knowledge of the country as is open to a woman if she tries. This is not only because a woman can become familiar with the feminine side of Eastern life, but she can also meet men in their own family circles and therefore in a much more intimate way . . . I believe I was the second woman to be put on the Diplomatic list, in Bagdad, - and Nancy Lambton in Teheran was the first; and as far as I know it was received as a perfectly natural phenomenon by Arabs and Persians.'

Even the 'drunken sailor argument' was demolished by Gowers' reply 'neither every man nor every woman is equipped by nature to handle unruly fellow-creatures easily and successfully, and we ourselves agree with those witnesses who thought that among those who have the gift, women's sex [femininity] gives them an actual advantage.' Finally, three of the four vested interests which had previously opposed the employment of women consular officials (the Admiralty, the Merchant Navy Federation and the Chamber of Shipping) had now withdrawn their objections, and the Chamber of Shipping alluded in particular to 'the fundamental change ... particularly during the war in regard to the employment of women and the more general appreciation that brains and capacity are not the monopoly of either sex.'

The Committee therefore recommended that 'women should be equally eligible with men for admission to the Foreign Service', subject only to the provision that they should have to resign from the Service on marriage. It emphasised that as the admission of women would be part of a general experiment, it was necessary 'to lose no time in making the experiment real. It will not be real if women are posted as Third Secretaries only to those countries where they are known to be already fully acceptable and as Vice-Consuls only to pleasant and salubrious spots. The Foreign Office must show boldness in their diplomatic postings and harden their hearts in their consular. It seems to us specially important that the acceptability of women on the diplomatic side in countries classed as doubtful should be put to an early test. One witness reminded us that it is the business of the Foreign Office to cater for a client, not to impose British views abroad. But the art of catering for a client does not consist merely of giving him something that he already knows he likes; it also includes persuading him to like new things.'

Another significant recommendation by the committee was that in the newly unified Foreign Service which would consist of Branches A to E (Administrative, Executive/Clerical, Shorthand and Copy Typists, Foreign Service Messengers, and support staff respectively), a proposed scheme for promotion from Branch B to Branch A

would provide opportunities for women members as well as men. These recommendations (with the proviso that the recruitment of women to Branch A should be limited to 10% of the total intake in any one year) were accepted by Ernest Bevin on 20 February 1946 and by the Cabinet on 11 March, opening the way for the first women to enter the administrative grade of the new Foreign Service on a permanent basis. Even so, in common with the rest of the Civil Service, women were paid 20% less than men for the same work.

### **The first British women diplomats**

Between May 1946 and 1954, 18 women were recruited for the Administrative Grade of the Foreign Service. Monica Milne was evidently the first woman to be appointed, following wartime service in the United States, and her performance at interview was so impressive that she was posted back to Washington as a Second Secretary early in September 1946. The following year Cicely Ludlam, an Oxford modern languages graduate, was appointed at Grade 9 level on 1 January. She recalls that initially she was at the receiving end of countless jokes about being 'the only rose amongst the thorns', and that she had trouble initially convincing people in the Office and departments that she was not her own secretary. However all this was balanced by the support and encouragement received from her colleagues. When she expressed a preference for a post behind the Iron Curtain, she was duly posted to Belgrade. Caroline Petrie and Grace Rolleston joined the Foreign Service later in 1947. Grace was posted to Bucharest that same year. Joan Burbidge joined the Office on 8 March 1948. However it was not to be Joan's published detective stories, written under the name of Joan Cockin, which earned her the Press's attention: Joan made headlines around the world when, in July 1950, she became the first woman to conduct a Foreign Office press conference. By November 1959 there were fourteen women in the Administrative Grade: they formed 2% of the grade.

Promotions and postings followed, and Sir William Strang (PUS 1949-1953) observed in 1954 that some women could 'aspire to very high posts if they serve a full career.' Nevertheless, wastage through women having to resign on marriage was very heavy, and had caused Ernest Bevin to comment, 'We've turned the Foreign Office into a matrimonial bureau.' Seven of the original eighteen had left the Service by 1954, including Monica Milne, whose engagement had been known to the Appointments Board when interviewed. The problem had nevertheless been foreseen by Gowers, who pointed out in his 1946 Report that 'We have been informed that wastage is already exceptionally high in the Foreign Service: of all career consular officers serving in 1921 no fewer than 25% left before the normal retiring age. Excessive wastage is detrimental to a service in that it involves the loss of promising members, increases the difficulty of staffing Missions satisfactorily, and means that money spent on training is wasted. But it is not without some compensating advantages and . . . we do not think that its increase by the admission of women is likely to be more than comparatively trifling.'

The Gowers Report had surmised that in the early post-war period, women officials might be to some extent 'grit in the wheels of interchangeability' and in adding to the

difficulties of administration, might arouse occasional feelings of resentment amongst male colleagues. When, however, the Plowden Committee looked at the role of women in the diplomatic service in 1962, the recommendations of its subsequent Report were wholly positive: 'We endorse the view that women officers should be employed as widely as possible in the Diplomatic Service . . . we received no evidence which would suggest that women in the Foreign Service have proved "tender plants". We came upon not a few instances in which, to put it no higher, they had withstood disagreeable climatic, political or living conditions with fully as much resource and fortitude as their male colleagues.'

The Report recommended that the 10% limitation on the recruitment of women should be abolished, as it was 'a pointless irritant', and that there should be no artificial or unnecessary restrictions on their duties or postings. Although the Report concluded that there were valid reasons for the existence of the 'marriage bar', it was careful to add that none reflected in any way 'on the fitness or ability of the women themselves', and it suggested that the Foreign Secretary should have greater discretion to waive the 'marriage bar' in certain cases.

In that early period, women concentrated on proving their competence for the job, and the only meeting which gathered all the women officers serving in London above the rank of Second Secretary was one to consider whether there should be a Diplomatic Uniform for women. The conclusion, as recalled by Juliet Campbell, was that 'most of us wouldn't be seen dead in a Diplomatic Uniform but we wouldn't mind an ornamental badge, preferably with diamonds!' Meanwhile, those women who had remained in the service steadily climbed through the ranks. Barbara Salt, who had joined the Foreign Service in 1949, was by 1962 in line for appointment as Ambassador to Israel - before withdrawing owing to illness. Daphne Park had served in the Allied Commission for Austria for two years before joining the Office in 1948. Lady Park recalls that the only case of discrimination against her on the grounds of her sex occurred in Africa when she was waiting to receive a ceremonial present for being the bearer of good news from the Governor to a Paramount chief. Unbeknown to her the chief had decided that the usual ceremonial gift, a spear, was inappropriate. It took most of the day for them to make the appropriate gift which turned out to be a beautifully carved hoe. Lady Park kept the hoe in her drawing room at Somerville to remind her that she was 'but a woman'! She became Chargé d'affaires at Ulan Bator in 1972. The first woman Head of Mission in the British Diplomatic Service was Eleanor Emery who served as High Commissioner in Botswana from 1973-1977. Anne Warburton, who had joined in 1957, became Ambassador to Copenhagen in 1976. She was subsequently posted to Geneva, as UK Permanent Representative (with personal rank as Ambassador) to the UN and other international organisations.

Equal pay for women was conceded in 1955. The marriage bar was finally rescinded in 1972, but as late as 1985, all the women in the most senior diplomatic posts were unmarried. An exception was Mrs Beryl Chitty whose husband had died in 1958. She served as Deputy High Commissioner in Jamaica from 1971-1975, and retired in 1977. Veronica Sutherland was the first married woman ambassador: she was at Abidjan, from

1987-1990, accompanied by her husband who was the UK Executive Director of the African Development Bank there. She served in Dublin as Ambassador from 1995-1998. Juliet Campbell was the second, appointed Ambassador to Luxembourg in 1988. She acknowledged the existence of greater opportunities for women in the FCO in her valedictory despatch of October 1991, pointing out that she headed an Embassy '(surely the first) in which the majority of DS spouses are male.' Charlotte Rycroft, who as Head of West African Department, became the (non-resident) Ambassador to Chad in 1989, combined her diplomatic career with not only raising a family but also with being married to a fellow British Diplomat. Her example helped advance the FCO's policy on joint postings, enabling both partners to continue their careers while keeping the family together. She showed that such a combination could be successfully managed with benefit to the FCO as well as to the individuals concerned.

Certainly being a woman has not meant comfortable postings: women diplomats can be found all round the globe! During a posting to Jeddah Susan Broadribb Pughe needed an alternative form of transport as women were not allowed to drive cars within the town boundaries. She opted for a camel which she rode to work side-saddle and 'parked' outside the Embassy compound. In 1993 there was an all-female 'two man' mission, headed by Kaye Oliver, which covered Zaire and Rwanda. Being single, now no longer a requisite, can according to Janet Rogan, the deputy Ambassador in Sarajevo, make 'it easier to go to a place like Sarajevo'. Barbara Hay, Ambassador to Uzbekistan, once found herself cooking her Christmas turkey in chunks on a primus stove in a power cut, in sub-zero temperatures with no heating. In Beirut Maeve Fort had to live in a fortified compound behind barbed wire with 24 hour personal protection.

### **The situation today**

The FCO employs 5,500 staff of whom 64% are members of the Diplomatic Service and 36% are Home Civil Servants. Women form 35% of the Diplomatic Service and 37% of FCO Home Civil Servants but continue to be concentrated in the lower grades, and account for only 18% of DS5s, and 7% of the Senior Management Structure (SMS). In 1993 twice as many men as women applied for the policy stream, and of those finally appointed only 14% were women. Since then the success rate for female candidates has fluctuated but has not fallen below 27%. In the 1998 competition, for the first time, more women than men were successful. There are currently eleven female Heads of Mission and a number of women deputies in posts scattered throughout the world. The FCO target is to achieve 15% female representation in the SMS by 2003. This is a target, not a quota: the FCO is not in the business of positive discrimination. The real problems are less to do with recruitment than progression and retention.

The FCO has in place a series of policies aimed at helping to overcome these. They include career breaks of up to five years, the option to remain in the UK for up to ten years to meet domestic commitments, facilitation of joint postings and the promotion of flexible working. In addition the FCO offers a handful of subsidised nursery places and places on holiday playschemes. The system for FCO childcare support is currently being re-examined, and the Office is looking at the case for increased funding in this area. The

FCO is keen to provide flexible working opportunities at all levels, and at home and overseas: for example job sharing is now an accepted working pattern with jobshares at Assistant Director level in London and at First Secretary level overseas. It is important to ensure that following non-standard working patterns does not prejudice long-term career prospects.

Equal Opportunities policies are under constant review to ensure that they enable women to compete on even terms in every area of work on the basis of merit. In January 1999 the FCO Board of Management agreed an Action Plan on Gender aimed at making the most of the female talent available to the FCO. As part of this plan the PUS is establishing his own advisory group on gender issues. Key points in the plan cover flexible working practices, career progression, training, better understanding of the reasons why disproportionate numbers of women resign, greater flexibility on career breaks and a survey to identify those aspects of FCO culture which prevent staff reaching their full potential.

### **Opportunity 2000**

The FCO is an active member of the Opportunity 2000 campaign, launched in 1991 by the organisation Business in the Community. It aims to increase the representation of women at all levels in the workforce by the year 2000. The FCO won the Opportunity 2000 1998 Award for Top Level Commitment demonstrated by the first FCO Open Day in 1997 at which women were among the targeted groups of guests. Members of the Equal Opportunities team have addressed Opportunity 2000 meetings.

## **IV DIPLOMATIC WIVES**

From the earliest years to the mid-twentieth century, the most extensive contribution made by women to diplomacy was as the wives of diplomatic and consular officers. In this capacity they supported their husbands by running large diplomatic households, presiding as hostesses, making their own range of contacts to complement the official work of the embassy and in many instances, distinguishing themselves by local voluntary and community work.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the numbers involved were relatively small. Only the most senior diplomats could afford to take their wives abroad with them, and until the twentieth century, the appointment of full Ambassadors was restricted to a few major posts, such as Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Constantinople and St Petersburg. Nor was every Ambassador expected to be accompanied by his wife at that period: in Emily Eden's novel, *The Semi-Attached Couple* (written in 1830) the plot hinges on the heroine's refusal to accompany her husband on a special mission to Spain.

### **Diplomatic households and entertainment**

The Ambassadors was responsible not only for the welfare of servants ranging from charwomen to chefs but also for the junior diplomatic officers who were regarded as part of the Ambassador's intimate family. As most Ambassadors came from the same upper ranks of society as their husbands, they were used to large households, to managing staff, and to the principle of *noblesse oblige* - that their position in society imposed duties as well as privileges. Not the least of these duties was the provision of hospitality and entertainment on the grand scale, with a view to making and maintaining influential contacts. Besides balls, receptions and dinners for foreign diplomats and statesmen, the Ambassador had to be prepared for a constant stream of house guests ranging from personal family and friends to visiting dignitaries and even members of the Royal Family. The life of the 'grande dame' held no charms for Harriet Cavendish, subsequently Lady Granville, wife of the British Ambassador at Paris, but she put public duty above her own feelings to such good effect that she is remembered as one of the great hostesses of the nineteenth century.

Lady Diana Cooper was one of Lady Granville's most significant twentieth century successors, helping to restore the post-war British Embassy in Paris to something approaching its former glory. Her biographer Philip Ziegler recorded that 'the British Embassy was the place to be. There was a flavour of the unexpected about any occasion there ... Diana's capacity to get on with people and convince them that their meeting was a memorable occasion for her as well as for them, became a tool of real importance. To be with her gave pleasure to many people who it was important should be well-disposed to Britain and British interests ... she was a professional doing a good job of public relations for her husband's sake.'

## **Other contacts**

An important part of the work of diplomatic wives was that of venturing into the realms of foreign (particularly female) society where no Ambassador could ever be admitted. The activities of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the wife of the British Ambassador to Turkey in the early eighteenth century, provide a notable example of this. She added to the formidable classical education she had received from her brother's tutors by learning Italian, German and Turkish, and subsequently visiting the Sultan's harem and the ladies' bath house. She even disguised herself in local costume in order to explore the byways of Constantinople, and she described the local sights and customs in a series of vivid letters to family and friends at home. To her belongs the distinction of introducing to England the Turkish practice of inoculation against smallpox, the only protection against the disease until the coming of vaccination at the end of the century. Lady Sheil learned enough Persian when posted to Tehran in 1850 to enable her to converse with the wives of Persian ministers and officials. Since the wives managed their husbands' and sons' affairs, Lady Sheil obtained much information of use to her husband.

Community and voluntary work have always provided opportunities for diplomatic wives to extend contacts at many different levels. Such work not only aimed to benefit the local community but also was a natural outlet for the intelligence and energy of many women. In 1858, for instance, when Lord Stratford-Canning left Constantinople, he was presented with an address which paid tribute to his wife's hard work for the poor. Lady Rodd organised a team of Embassy wives who helped the victims of the Messina earthquake in 1908, and she was awarded a gold medal by the King of Italy for her nursing activities during the First World War. Lady Peake had a street named after her in recognition of her work after the earthquake in the Ionian Islands in the 1950s, while in the same period, Lady Bishop, wife of the Deputy High Commissioner in Calcutta, was a firm supporter of Mother Teresa.

In a period when it was usual for women to give up professional employment on marriage, many would have agreed with the view expressed in 1933 by Lord Tyrrell, British Ambassador at Paris. He was of the opinion that 'There is no career in the world in which a man's work is so much shared by a woman as is a married diplomat's by his wife. A woman with the right personal gifts who marries a diplomat or a consular officer and is conscientious about the performance of her duties is, as you know, invaluable to the public service and one can think of many Ambassadors and Ministers in the past, who have owed a great part of their personal success and of the success of their best work to their wives. There are far more opportunities for women who are in the diplomatic service in this sense, than there ever can be for those who might enter it alone.'

While it is true that there were few diplomatic wives like Vita Sackville-West, married to Harold Nicolson, she was not alone in declining to fit the accepted pattern of a diplomatic hostess. There was, for example, Lady Paget, the wife of the British Ambassador in Rome. She did not win 'golden opinions of the numerous fellow countrymen who yearly visit Italy', since she took 'no pains to disguise her indifference and antipathy to the

subjects of the Sovereign she represents'. Lady Clerk in Paris preferred to paint in a tree house in the Embassy garden rather than give receptions.

Then there was Lady Cumming Bruce, wife of the British High Commissioner to New Zealand, who often forgot about her diplomatic social life when engrossed in painting and 'could regularly be spotted crawling through the Residence shrubberies so as not to be seen arriving late at her own parties'.

### **Recent developments**

In 1964, the Plowden Report acknowledged the large contribution by diplomatic wives, 'to the work, welfare and way of life of an overseas Mission'. Its consequent recommendations were therefore to improve the conditions of service (more generous representation allowances, boarding school allowances etc) so that a wife could cope better with the special family problems inherent in a life of movement, as well as fulfilling her traditional role. These recommendations, although welcome, did not take account of the growing body of wives who wished to continue their own careers after marriage. Society was changing and there was less general acceptance of the idea that the wife of a diplomat, particularly those in the more junior ranks, would not be able to work when posted abroad. Moreover, following the post-war expansion of the Foreign Service, there were more diplomatic wives than ever before, but often correspondingly less for many of them to do, particularly at large posts. It became increasingly obvious to the Diplomatic Service Administration that these developments were affecting both morale and recruitment.

In this context, a significant part was played by the then Diplomatic Service Wives Association (DSWA). Formed in 1966 from the Foreign Service Wives Association and the Commonwealth Relations Office Wives (CROWS), its early efforts concentrated on providing information about being posted abroad, help with family problems and so on. By the 1980s, however, the DSWA was also acting as a pressure group on behalf of those wishing to change official attitudes. Having carried out several surveys which showed that most wives preferred to work at paid employment abroad whenever possible, the DSWA took up the issue with the Administration, and together, with the full support of the Permanent Under-Secretary and the Chief Clerk, explored ways of making this possible. Reciprocal agreements have been made with several countries.

In the early nineties as a response to the changing face of the Diplomatic Wife the association changed its name to the British Diplomatic Spouses Association (BDSA). This recognised the growing number of diplomatic husbands. In October 1998 to further reflect its aims and membership the association was renamed the Diplomatic Service Families Association (DSFA). Their remit is to continue to promote the interests and welfare of all their members. To this end the association encourages Inspectors to identify jobs at missions abroad which could be done by spouses. When husbands and wives are both career officers, efforts are made whenever possible to arrange a joint posting. Other helpful official measures introduced include the provision of language training for spouses, including English language training for foreign-born spouses and grants for

training in 'portable skills'. These portable skills cover a diverse range of subjects, among them: Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), IT, electronics, proof reading, physiotherapy, reflexology, accountancy, childcare, therapeutic massage, book keeping, life saving, interior design, Montessori, cabinet making, nursing, bookbinding, hairdressing and counselling. Other important agreements include the withdrawal of the requirement for spouses to seek permission to work overseas and the agreement to provide financial compensation for spouses for the loss of pension rights incurred when they go abroad.

Times have changed and there are many more wives nowadays who have chosen another pattern for their life as a diplomatic wife. Many women are now as well educated and qualified as their husbands, sometimes more so, and many have careers of their own. There are those who find employment at Post, paid or unpaid, for their professional qualifications, such as the physiotherapist, who was also an Ambassadors. Her work with handicapped children in Kuwait was recognised by the award of an MBE. One wife's interest in politics resulted in her being the first wife of a serving British Ambassador to stand for Parliament. She was made a life peer in 1994. Another Ambassador's wife divided her time between Rome (her husband's posting) and Brussels where she was working as an interpreter in six languages for various European Union institutions.

Nevertheless, (largely) unpaid contributions to the work of diplomatic missions still continue to be made by many wives (and the occasional husband). This is particularly so at Head of Mission level, where the majority find that if they are to support their spouse effectively there is little possibility of combining what is a full-time, usually unpaid, job with other employment. This is gradually changing with the creation of the position of Residence Manager at some posts. This at last gives some form of paid recognition for the time and effort that goes into the necessary refurbishment and running of ambassadorial accommodation. Hospitality continues to be offered to many hundreds of guests (probably far more official visitors than in previous centuries with the present ease of air travel and a more 'hands on' approach by Government). Many Residences have provided a useful "home base" for members of the Royal Family; while in Muslim areas wives still make a valuable contribution through their contacts with the women of the country.

As one wife pointed out in the BDSA Magazine for Spring 1985, 'We all react differently. Some women enjoy the role of diplomatic wife as if born to it, some achieve it by a gradual adjustment and acceptance, some, having had it thrust upon them by a husband's change of career or later entrance into the service, may reject it or may revel in it.' Here, as elsewhere in the Office, a flexible response combined with equal opportunities for female and male spouses is of the greatest benefit to the FCO.

## V QUOTATIONS

‘It seems that history is silent as to any justification for the exclusion of women from practical diplomacy, and to a large extent supports their claim to enter the profession. Linguistic abilities, tact, political flair and judgment, combined with great discretion, have never been the monopoly of one sex.’

**Helena Normanton, *The Daily Telegraph*, January 1934**

‘The time has not yet arrived when women could be employed either in the Diplomatic or Consular Services with advantage to the State or with profit to women.’

**Cmd 5166 of 1936**

‘Of course the great difficulty is staff, but surely when officers are being demobilised from the Intelligence Corps and so many young fellows are wanting to enter them Foreign Service, it ought not to be too difficult to get hold of a suitable body of men. Even women are possibilities.’

**R C Thomson, Foreign Office, August 1945**

‘Men may be dull at times, but they are safer.’

**Comment cited in the Report of the Gowers Committee, 1946**

‘We’ve turned the Foreign Office into a matrimonial bureau.’

**Ernest Bevin, circa 1949**

‘It is unlikely that women will ever enter, or stay in, the [Foreign] Service in such numbers as to change its character.’

**F T Ashton-Gwatkin, *The British Foreign Service*, 1950**

‘It would take a super-woman to run a Foreign Office job, a husband and a family, but I do think a woman diplomat should be allowed to decide for herself whether she wants to resign.’

**Cicely Ludlam (later Lady Mayhew, wife of a former FO Minister), 1952**

‘For the male officer, marriage presents no Service problem. Convention allows that his wife need have no profession of her own. Moreover, she probably should have none, seeing that in the higher grades of the Service she will have an important social role which is likely to keep her fully employed. Indeed, it is very nearly true that she can properly have none; since, quite apart from the question of social demands on her time, there are extremely few professions the following of which would not conflict in some degree with the interests of the Service.’

**Sir William Strang, *The Foreign Office*, 1954**

‘We endorse the view that women officers should be employed as widely as possible in the Diplomatic Service. No artificial or unnecessary restrictions should be placed on their duties or postings ... we received no evidence which would suggest that women in the Foreign Service have proved “tender plants”’.

**The Plowden Report, 1964**

‘Diplomacy is a partnership game par excellence. A good pair is worth considerably more than two good individuals, and of the pair the wife has just as arduous a job as the husband, with rather less of the excitement in not knowing all that goes on marked “confidential”. The partnership role of wives will continue, but there may be changes in how it is practised.’

**Lord Gore-Booth, *With Great Truth and Respect*, 1974**

‘Frankly, if a wife chooses to be involved in the embassy work, it’s an unpaid benefit for us.’

**FCO spokesman, *The Times*, 1986**

‘I naturally also appreciate the greater opportunities for women. I joined a Service in which women had not achieved equal pay, and my letter of appointment included a paragraph warning that “in the event of your marriage you would be required to resign this appointment”. Now I head an Embassy (surely the first) in which the majority of DS spouses are male.’

**Juliet Campbell, October 1991**

‘Men have nothing to fear.’

**Sir David Gillmore, PUS, on the Opportunity 2000 campaign, March 1993**

‘Commentators still like to portray the FCO as white, male, middle-class and Oxbridge. According to some of them we all still wear bowler hats. But this stereotype is false ... Our record for recruiting women continues to improve.’

**Sir John Coles, PUS, April 1996**

‘If you do a good job, somebody will look at you as the person doing a good job, rather than as a man or a woman.’

**Janet Rogan, Deputy Ambassador in Sarajevo, August 1997**

‘I need the brightest but I give you this assurance: that merit is the only bar to getting into the Foreign Office and getting promoted in the Foreign Office. I want to open our doors to all walks of life.’

**The Rt Hon Robin Cook, Foreign Secretary, September 1997**

‘If I’m going to represent Britain in the world outside, I need to have here a Foreign Office that is representative of the whole of modern Britain, from all walks of life, both genders – we need more women at the top in the Foreign Office – from all the different communities that make up a multi-ethnic Britain, and we are at the moment weak on that.’

**The Rt Hon Robin Cook, Foreign Secretary, September 1997**

‘... you know, being a woman has actually made it easier to connect with people and to break down barriers.’

**Barbara Hay, Ambassador in Tashkent, February 1998**

‘The FO establishment will also be told to adopt a more enlightened approach to any “outside experience” women diplomats gain when they are away because of children.’

**FCO spokesman, *The Guardian*, August 1998**

‘A good deal of progress has been made on ethnic minority and women issues, including recruitment. But we are not yet tapping the full range of talent in society as a whole. We have made it easier for women to stay in the Service while they have families. But we need to help more over childcare.’

**Rob Young, Chief Clerk, September 1998**

‘On 28 January the Board of Management discussed the issue of women in the FCO. It noted that the FCO does well on recruiting good female offices at all levels. But too many do not stay. We don’t make the most of our female talent. The FCO is less effective as a result. Accordingly, the Board agreed an Action Plan on Gender. It will help the FCO to offer women the opportunity to realise their potential and maximise their contribution. Much of this is about good management. It will benefit all staff.’

**Christopher Hum, Chief Clerk, February 1999**

## **VI CHRONOLOGY**

- 1782** The staff of the newly established Foreign Office includes the ‘Necessary Woman’.
- 1889** Appointment of the first ‘Lady Typewriter’, Sophia Fulcher.
- 1915** MacDonnell Commission Report considers the employment of women in the Civil Service. Women temporary clerks admitted to the Foreign Office.
- 1919** Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act passed, but with caveat on the admission of women at administrative level to the Diplomatic and Consular Services.
- 1921** Appointment of the first women clerical and executive officers (on a permanent basis) to the Foreign Office.
- 1931** Report of the Tomlin Commission on the Civil Service recommends that HMG should reconsider the admission of women to the Diplomatic and Consular Services.
- 1933-4** Schuster Committee examines the question of the admission of women to the Diplomatic and Consular Services and produces a Report.
- 1936** Publication of Schuster Committee Report by HMG, which concludes that women should still be excluded from the administrative grades of the Diplomatic and Consular Services.
- 1943** Eden Reforms: publication of White Paper stating that the admission of women to the administrative grades would be reconsidered.
- 1946** Report of the Gowers Committee recommends the admission of women to the administrative grades of the Diplomatic and Consular Services, following success of wartime temporary appointments.
- 1946-8** Appointment of the first women diplomats on a permanent basis.
- 1955-61** Equal pay for women granted and implemented.
- 1962** Barbara Salt, due to be appointed HM Ambassador to Israel, but never posted as such, owing to illness.
- 1972** Marriage bar rescinded.
- 1973** Eleanor Emery appointed High Commissioner to Botswana: the first woman to head a British Mission.

- 1976** Anne Warburton appointed HM Ambassador to Denmark.
- 1987** First married woman (Veronica Sutherland) appointed as HM Ambassador (to Abidjan).
- 1993** FCO publishes its objectives as part of the Opportunity 2000 campaign.
- 1998** Victoria Harrison, with her high scores on the recruitment course, became the first disabled person to be appointed to the fast stream.
- 1999** Action Plan on Gender agreed by the Board of Management: target of 15% for female representation in the SMS by 2003.

## VII SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

### Women diplomats

Primary source material is available in the archives of the Chief Clerk's department, preserved at the Public Record Office in class FO 366/ pieces 915-7, 928-30, 933, 954, 1497-1500, 1519-1522, 1588-1590, 1597. See also *Report of the Sub-Committee appointed to consider the position after the war of women holding temporary appointments in Government departments* (Cmd 199 of 1919); *Women in the Civil Service* (Cmd 1116 of 1921); *Report of the Royal Commission on the Civil Service 1929-31* (Cmd 3909 of 1931); *Documents relating to the admission of Women to the Diplomatic and Consular Services July 30, 1934-April 1936* (Cmd 5166 of 1936); *Proposals for the Reform of the Foreign Service* (Cmd 6420 of 1943); *Admission of Women to the Foreign Service. Report of a Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to re-examine the question* (XSI/A/2(11) of May 1946; *Marriage Bar in the Civil Service* (Cmd 6886 of August 1946); *Report of the Committee on Representational Services Overseas ... under the Chairmanship of Lord Plowden 1962-63* (Cmd 2276 of 1964).

Relevant secondary sources include: Sir E Hertslet, *Recollections of the Old Foreign Office* (London, 1901), Sir J Tilley and S Gaselee, *The Foreign Office* (London, 1933), Caroline Petrie's article entitled 'Women in Diplomacy' (*The University Women's Review*, May 1963), Simon Jenkins and Anne Sloman, *With Respect, Ambassador* (London, 1985), Peter Barber, *Diplomacy. The World of the Honest Spy* (The British Library, 1979) and Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain 1914-1959* (Basingstoke, 1992). For a study of the Ladies' Peace of 1529, see J G Russell, *Diplomats at Work: Three Renaissance Studies* (Gloucester, 1992) while Anne Sebba's *Battling for News* (London 1994) examines the admission of women to journalism over the last century and a half. For a more general view of current trends, see 'Women in Management. Why So Few at the Top?', published as *Point of View*, No 17 (Spencer Stuart, London, 1993) and Ruth Dudley Edwards, *True Brits* (BBC, 1994). Juliet Campbell's article 'The Perils of the She-Diplomatist' (*The Cambridge Review*, November 1994) looks at the evolving role of women in the FCO, For a view of women in other foreign services there is Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones' *Changing Differences: women and the shaping of American Foreign Policy 1917-1994* (Rutgers University Press, 1995), and *Envoys Extraordinary: women of the Canadian Foreign Service* by Margaret K Weiers (Dundurn Press, 1995). Celia L Jones' *Navy Mixture* recounts her experiences as the only senior woman working in the traditionally male environments of the Admiralty and the Ministry of Defence in post-World War II Britain (The Pentland Press, 1995). For a view of women managers in the British Civil Service there is Andrew Hede's article 'Women managers in the Civil Service: the long road towards equity in Britain' (*International Review of Administrative Sciences*, Vol 61, No 4 December 1995). Lee, Baker and Beard's article 'An Away Match' (*People Management* 14 May 1998) examines the recruitment process and its effect on the number of women applicants.

## Diplomatic Wives

For the early nineteenth century, *The Private Letters of Mary Nisbet of Dirleton, Countess of Elgin* arranged by Lt. Col. Nisbet Hamilton Grant (London, 1926) provide a lively introduction, covering her husband's time in Constantinople and Athens (1799-1805) with accounts of sumptuous diplomatic receptions given by the Sultan and the assembling of the Elgin Marbles. Lady Harriet Granville's *Letters 1810-1845* (2 vols, London, 1894) give an entertaining view of the life of an ambassadress in Paris, 1824-28, 1831-41, and are complemented by *The Private Letters of Princess Lieven to Prince Metternich 1820-1826* edited by Peter Quennell (London, 1937) in which the wife of the Austrian Ambassador to London gives sparkling pen-pictures of her contemporaries. See also Dennis Wright, 'Memsahibs in Persia' in *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 14, Part I, pp.5-14.

For the later nineteenth century, see Mrs Hugh Fraser, *A Diplomatist's Wife in Many Lands* (2 vols, London, 1911) for the lively reminiscences of the American wife of a British diplomat who served in Peking and Tokyo, as well as Europe. She wrote other works on the subject, including *A Diplomatist's Wife in Japan* (1899) of which a new edition has been edited by Hugh Cortazzi, (New York, 1982). Mary King Waddington was the American wife of the French Ambassador to Moscow and London, and her *Letters of a Diplomatic Wife* (London, 1903) show a keen observer of social detail.

For a conspectus of twentieth century attitudes and experiences, see the following autobiographies: A M Borrill, *Nomads Are We* (Ilfracombe, 1974); Ann Bridge, *Facts and Fictions* (London, 1968); Angela Caccia, *Beyond Lake Titicaca* (London, 1969); Esme Cromer, *From this Day Forward* (London, 1991); Viscountess D'Abernon, *Red Cross and Berlin Embassy* (London, 1946); Jane Ewart-Biggs, *Pay, Pack and Follow* (London, 1984); Marie Noele Kelly, *Dawn to Dusk* (London, 1960) and *Mirror to Russia* (London: Country Life, 1952); Maureen Tweedy, *A Label Round my Neck* (London, 1976); Masha Williams, *The Consul's Memsahib* (Lewes, Sussex, 1985); and *Exiled to America* (Lewes, Sussex, 1987). Betty Holman's *Memoirs of a Diplomat's Wife* (Wilton 65, 1998) cover Lady Holman's postings between 1940 and 1954. In Baghdad the Holmans were caught up in the Rashid Ali rebellion, while in Tehran Lady Holman helped to organise the 1943 Tehran Conference. Then they were posted to Paris with the Duff Coopers. After Paris they went to Romania, where they experienced life behind the 'iron curtain' before their final posting to Cuba. Beryl Smedley's *Partners in Diplomacy* (The Harley Press, 11A Beehive Lane, Ferring, West Sussex, BN12 5NN, 1990) examines the changes over the generations in backgrounds and attitudes illustrated by a wealth of contemporary anecdotes, and considers whether opportunities since the 1970s for women to have their own careers has diminished their sense of dedication to their husbands' profession. It also contains a comprehensive bibliography. Section IV of this Note draws very heavily on Lady Smedley's invaluable survey. See also an interesting analysis by Annabel Black in 'The Changing Culture of Diplomatic spouses: Some Fieldnotes from Brussels', in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 6, March 1995. For a pioneering investigation of the social pressures on servicemen and women and their families, which has some interesting parallels with the diplomatic service, see Ruth Jolly, *Military Man, Family Man, Crown Property* (London, 1987), also Annie Jones's

*Gumboots & Pearls* (Owl Press, Kingston-Upon-Thames, 1990). Katie Hickman, a diplomat's daughter (who is also married to a diplomat), has just published a study of the realities of diplomatic life and the women who lead it in her book *Daughters of Britannia* (HarperCollins, 1999).

## **APPENDIX I**

### **A selection of the views of H M Representatives Abroad in 1933 on whether women should be appointed to the Diplomatic and Consular Services**

‘There is no career in the world in which a man’s work is so much shared by a woman as is a married diplomat’s by his wife. A woman with the right personal gifts who marries a diplomat or a consular officer and is conscientious about the performance of her duties is, as you know, invaluable to the public service and one can think of many Ambassadors and Ministers in the past, who have owed a great part of their personal success and of the success of their best work to their wives. There are far more opportunities for women who are in the diplomatic service in this sense, than there ever can be for those who might enter it alone.’

**Lord Tyrrell, Paris**

‘I dare say that the intellectual type of woman, which would presumably be the type to enter the Service, would be as useful as an man in a purely intellectual occupation such as that of junior clerk in the Foreign Office ... [However] the value of a diplomatist still largely depends on his success in making “contacts” with other people. In this regard, the intellectual type of English woman would ... be at a disadvantage when dealing with foreigners ... For, to put it bluntly, the clever woman would not be liked and the attractive woman would not be taken seriously.’

**Sir H W Kennard, Berne**

‘Constant walking on the shifting sands of foreign politics and administrations calls for a balanced and equable temperament. Without it a nervous breakdown is inevitable. It is no secret that women abroad face similar difficulties in the domestic sphere well enough, but that is because the ultimate responsibility lies on their husbands. Take away this sheet anchor and the result would be deplorable. Add to the anxieties of diplomatic and consular work, final responsibility and the enervating effects of so many climates, and the result would be at least doubly deplorable.’

**H E Slaymaker, Santo Domingo**

‘So far as Sweden is concerned a woman, whether diplomatist or consul, would certainly be treated with all respect and consideration. At the same time, she could not escape being the subject of some unpleasant speculation and perhaps also of some bawdy jokes. Much of course would depend on the woman herself. But however suitable she were, she would be greatly handicapped by not being able, as it were, to start at scratch and by having constantly to live down her sex in tête-à-tête dealings with officials and still more with businessmen.’

**Sir A Clark Kerr, Stockholm**

‘I have an instinctive prejudice in favour of change, which I associate with improvement and reform ... I do not see why a woman should not cohabit at her post with her husband [particularly if he were] a man of letters or a craftsman of any sort ... We live in a changing world, and no-one can say how mankind will regard anything in 1959. Who

would have foreseen in 1894 that in twenty-five years women would be made eligible for the House of Commons, almost nem-con?’

**Sir Claud Russell, Lisbon**

‘In the case of consular work it would be difficult for a woman to deal with mutinous crews or hectoring shipmasters, and it would be distinctly unpleasant for her to look after syphilitic seamen. Most shipmasters would find it very distasteful to discuss such complaints with a female consul.’

**Christopher Paus, Oslo**

‘In foreign society the British girl will stand as stiffly and awkwardly in her lonely corner as any of her boyish compatriots: such contacts as she would make would be either null or undesirable. Moreover, with advancing years, the British male diplomat will generally speaking remedy this fault, while the British woman ... often seems to become stiffer and more “British” with age. Socially speaking too, in the storm and stress of diplomatic life, the she-diplomatist will actually be a disadvantage to the Service in that ... she will react most dangerously to one of the great diplomatic vices, that of Jealousy with its inevitable and disastrous concomitant of Prejudice, from which men themselves are not immune.’

**Sir William Seeds, Rio de Janeiro**

‘Speaking empirically I would say that just as I know many men who are entirely unfit for the diplomatic or consular career (some of them I fear already in the services) so too I know of women who would be perfectly suitable for diplomatic or consular employment; but those women are all of a certain age and only suitable for employment in the higher ranks . . . I cannot recall to mind any young woman of 25 or so whom I should be anxious to have as a junior member of my staff.’

**Sir Ronald Lindsay, Washington**

‘Women are not admitted to this [local] club; nor, if they were, would they be welcome at the table where the bachelor secretaries mess, the habitués of which interlard politics and shop with salacious tales and ribald reminiscences ... It is unthinkable that a diplomatic or consular officer should produce babies and at the same time do her work properly. It may be said that she might practise contraception. But even so the position of an official married woman with an unofficial husband, and still more with an official one, would be untenable. Nothing in this letter should be read as contesting the wisdom of appointing distinguished spinsters or widows as heads of diplomatic missions. Whenever it is thought desirable to go outside the service for a high diplomatic appointment, the selection should, in my opinion, be made irrespective of sex.’

**Sydney Waterlow, Sofia**

‘I am against female suffrage, female MPs and female magistrates. I think that all that has done and will continue to do my country immense harm.’

**Joseph Addison, Prague**

‘There can be little doubt that the German authorities and in fact German public opinion as a whole would not appreciate the employment of lady officials in any senior

diplomatic or consular capacity by foreign countries in Germany. On the one hand they would feel that their own attitude was not being taken into proper account and that such appointments implied a lack of respect for German views; on the other hand they would be inclined, and especially so under the present régime, to regard these appointments as a sign of liberalist decadence, or at least eccentricity, on the part of the foreign state which made them. For both these reasons a lady diplomatic or consular representative would be much less respected, carry far less weight, and be generally under a great handicap in the discharge of her duties as compared with a man.'

**Sir Eric Phipps, Berlin**

'Diplomatists have to deal with angry business men who have been placed on the black-list, they may have to carry important documents from place to place, including cyphers, and they may have to deal with spies and other blackguards, who may call at one's private house in the suburbs at late hours of the night ... it would be disquieting to feel that a girl secretary had to return in the dark to some lonely part of the outskirts of Oslo at moments when agents of a foreign Power or even the local inhabitants might be inclined to assault or rob her.'

**Sir C Wingfield, Oslo**

'I put forward this suggestion, namely, that as you are dealing with unknown quantities, you appoint temporarily a lady Secretary or a lady Vice-Consul and, then if the experiment succeeds, you could offer the lady permanent employment. The lady would have to be unmarried, as a married Secretary could hardly bring her husband into diplomatic circles without causing annoying complications. Furthermore, she would require a very handsome dress allowance as this is a matter to which the Cubans attach great importance.'

**H A Grant Watson, Havana**

'Once you postulate that Woman is admissible to HM personnel of Embassy, it is obvious that, taking it by and large, a good girl is going to be a more valuable member of the staff than a bad boy. In fact, the more I think about it, the plainer it becomes that the truth of the whole matter lies in this.'

**Sir Nevile Bland, Brussels**

'It is unusual for any Secretary under the position of Head of the Chancery to have a room to himself and in many ways to have to share an office with a woman would be "gênant". Physically I suppose a woman could on the whole stand the strain pretty well, but she is bound to have her off days and the natural chivalry of the male (which I suppose does exist) would probably result in his taking on her job and consequently she might easily not pull her weight.'

**P M Broadmead, Addis Ababa**

‘At best it may with more confidence be suggested that the appointment [of women] would occasion a certain amount of derision and ridicule (in the East that most devastating of all re-agents) at the expense of His Majesty’s Government.’

**A S Calvert, Jedda**

‘I make no doubt that women could carry out the normal duties of press-reading, translation, summarising, note and despatch writing and so on. As regards their social duties, that would naturally depend on the type of individual selected for any particular post. The hard bitten Englishwoman nurtured in the London School of Economics, with a Marx and Engels outlook and a passionate devotion to Professor Tawney; the product of Girton or Somerville, interested chiefly in the ancient Greek theatre, but wielding from time to time a forceful hockey stick; ...the “shires” girl who breakfasts off an ether cocktail and who will abandon the Chancery entirely for the polo field - none of these would be suitable representatives ... and it is, I imagine from these types, which have their masculine equivalents in the diplomatic and consular services, that candidates would largely be chosen.’

**J Greenway, Bucharest**

‘A woman Secretary of this Embassy would be received at the Commissariat for the conduct of official business on the same footing as a man. The influence of this equality of status extends beyond the official Soviet sphere and has its effects upon the social habits of the foreign colony in Moscow. I can hardly think that any of our foreign colleagues here would find it disagreeable if a woman were appointed as Secretary of this Embassy, though they might sometimes be exercised as to where to place her at table ... The British Subjects in Russia Relief Association have for over two years past employed a woman worker in Leningrad whose functions are probably more arduous and exacting than those of most consuls.’

**William Strang, Moscow**

‘I see no reason to suppose that the office work in this Embassy could not be as satisfactorily performed by intelligent women as by the present members of my staff. Women could, no doubt, write despatches and memoranda and could form considered and useful judgments on political problems. But directly a woman secretary or counsellor emerged from the Embassy building, she would be placed I should say, at a very considerable disadvantage with her male competitor.’

**Sir Ronald Graham, Rome**

‘Some of the candidates who are most successful at examinations lack the virility which is essential to the best type of Consular and Diplomatic official. In other words, in my opinion, the interests of the public service would be better served by endeavouring to secure a more virile type of official than by embarking on the experiment of admitting women.’

**Sir Patrick Ramsay, Athens**

## **Correspondence between Sir Claud Schuster and J W Nicholls (Foreign Office) on the views expressed by HM Representatives abroad**

'I sat down this afternoon and read the whole bundle of correspondence straight through. As one might naturally expect, reading it has a much more powerful effect than merely reading the abstract. Therefore, from the point of view of the Foreign Office, it would be a good thing if those members of the Committee, who might be expected to take a view which the Foreign Office dislike, were to read a great part of it. There are some parts of it which I should not like them to read, eg the letter from Addison. And there are some arguments employed by the most experienced writers which seem to me untenable and, therefore, damaging to the case which they represent. For example, when Tyrrell says that women cannot go about the streets of Paris in the small hours of the morning unchaperoned, I think the answer is that women who accept these posts can look after themselves. When he says that men would dislike being met by women on railway stations and having their luggage looked after by them, he seems to me to talk from the depths of the Middle Ages. These seem to me to be exactly the duties which women can discharge with tact and efficiency.

Also, I am afraid that we cannot accept arguments based on the disturbance of the emotional balance of the Chancery. I imagine that the emotional balance of many Government Departments has been on occasions disturbed since 1920, but it seems to recover its equilibrium without any material damage to the Public Service. We have to face the fact that men and women who are thrown together will on occasion make love to one another, and if they do it in any great number they will on occasion make love successfully. But this is not peculiar to the Diplomatic Service.

But the main purpose of this letter, which is intended to be seen only by Howard Smith and yourself, is to suggest that you and he should think over the question how far we could make the great mass of the information and opinion more accessible to the other members of the Committee. I should particularly like everyone to read Russell's and Waterlow's letters; and the general effect of all the letters from the Latin countries seems to me very strong. It would be still stronger if the suggestion did not seem to be implicit that you had to keep the women out for their own protection. I believe this argument to be wholly fallacious. But there is another aspect of it. A near relative of my own, with whom I was discussing the question, said that a member of the Diplomatic Service of another country accredited here, who happened to be staying with her in a Swiss hotel, seemed to suppose that he was at liberty to offer her considerable and, on occasion, violent approaches. I said, "I do not see why that mattered to you. You could always give him a clip on the ear". "Yes", she replied, "but supposing that I had given him a black eye, which I felt very much inclined to do, when I happened to be Third Secretary in a British mission. I suppose that an international incident would be the result and anyhow it would have been very difficult for me to remain at my post".

You might think it over from this point of view. I return the papers.'

**Claud Schuster, 19 January 1934**

'Many thanks for your letter of January 19th and for returning the letters from Heads of Missions. I have discussed your letter with Howard-Smith, who entirely agrees with your suggestions and conclusions, and especially with your observation that many of the letters contain untenable arguments which would only weaken the Foreign Office case.

We are of course prepared to let members of the Committee see any of the correspondence that they may ask to see, but there would, we agree, be very little advantage in actually encouraging them to read Addison's letter, for instance. Consequently, if we are to circulate any of the letters to the Committee, a selection will have to be made; and if the Foreign Office makes the selection there is perhaps a risk that we shall be suspected of choosing the letters most favourable to our own thesis.

With some diffidence we therefore suggest that I should circulate the texts of the letters from Berlin, Stockholm, Moscow, Sofia (Waterlow), Lisbon (Russell), Rio de Janeiro and Tokyo, with an introductory paragraph to the effect that, as was to be anticipated, the usefulness of the letters varies considerably, some being merely flippant, some superficial and some clearly biased: that the Chairman has read through all the correspondence and that he recommends that the letters mentioned above should be circulated to the committee in extenso as being useful, typical and geographically representative - which indeed they are.

We put forward this suggestion in a very tentative way: you may perhaps feel that the letters are part of the Foreign Office case and that as Chairman it is not for you to recommend how that case should be presented. But where the writers of the letters (with the exception of Strang at Moscow) all reach the same conclusion you could hardly be accused of bias if you recommended the circulation of those letters which base their conclusions on reasoned arguments, as those suggested do.

As regards your concluding anecdote, we suspect that your friend, had she been Third Secretary at a British Mission, and had she given the persistent diplomat a well-merited black eye, would thereby have obtained the admiration of the Corps Diplomatique in a way that months of conscientious Chancery work could never do!

**J W Nicholls, 23 January 1934**

**Current Women Heads of Mission**

Maeve Fort	High Commissioner	Pretoria
Rosemary Spencer	Ambassador	The Hague
Caroline Elmes	Ambassador	Luanda
Glynne Evans	Ambassador	Santiago
Monica Harper	Consul-General	Lille
Barbara Hay	Ambassador	Tashkent
Kaye Oliver	High Commissioner	Maseru
Jessica Pearce	Ambassador	Minsk
Debra Goldthorpe	HM Consul	Durban
Mary Maxwell	Resident High Commissioner	St John's
Violet O'Hara	HM Consul	Dallas

(As at February 1999)