

## Interview with Françoise Schonfeld (L'Étang-la-Ville, 11 April 2003)

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[Étienne Deschamps] Perhaps we might talk a little about the Action Committee itself: where were the Committee's offices located, and how were they organised, how were they arranged?

[Françoise Schonfeld] Well, we were on the third floor at Avenue Foch. It was a house on the corner of Boulevard Flandrin; it was a very big house which belonged to Mr Monnet's brother-in-law, Mr de Bondini. Mr de Bondini had given Mr Monnet two offices, or rather two rooms, in this flat. There was Jean Monnet's office, which was very large. There was a big library with large, square tables, English tables from Maples. On his desk, there was a miner's lamp, there was the 'Europ' ingot, which came from the first steel cast by the Coal and Steel Community, there were family photos. On the bookshelf, there were photos of Chancellor Adenauer with Mr Monnet, of Willy Brandt and of leaders with whom he was in contact. There were also paintings by Mrs Monnet and, in particular, there was one of a little clown with a pointed hat, sitting down, legs apart, watching a little plan growing; this represented Monnet, watching his plan grow. There were also armchairs for visitors in this room, as there was actually only one room, and at the back of the office there was a large, square table, known as the Van Helmont table, where Mr Monnet's Principal Private Secretary worked with him. On the other side, there was the secretarial office, where there were Remington or Underwood mechanical typewriters and green metal filing cabinets where the files were stored. There was a large table at the far end of the room for all the mimeographed copies and the mimeos. For Committee resolutions running to 12 or 13 pages, we needed a large area to assemble all the pages. There were two of us working in this office. Then, as time went on, we began to build up more substantial archives. So we took over Mr de Bondini's guest room, we removed the beds, and we put up shelves where we started to store the Committee's files. But there were more than just the Committee's files, there were also some of the files from 1940 ...

[Étienne Deschamps] ... before the Committee?

[Françoise Schonfeld] Yes, and there were also huge numbers of documents in the cellar at Avenue Foch. But anyway, the Committee's files started to mount up, and we did not really have much space, so we took this second room. There were two of us who worked in that room as secretaries because, given that in 1958 I had a baby girl, and at all events because there was an enormous amount of work, with just the two of us it was not enough, even with outside help. So we hired a third, Christiane Mazerand, who really stayed with Mr Monnet right up to his death. She arrived — the date was very memorable, it was 13 May 1958, the date of the putsch in Algeria, a major event. So Christiane and I worked in this office. Next door, there was a bathroom; the bath had been removed, and the room was used for the accounting, and that was where Doris Zing worked.

[Étienne Deschamps] But at that time Alexandre de Bondini was still living in the flat?

[Françoise Schonfeld] Yes, he was still living there.

[Étienne Deschamps] So you all shared the flat, and you took it over little by little ...?

[Françoise Schonfeld] We gradually took it over. It seems — that is what we said when Mr Monnet was in Algiers, he also 'colonised' a house in the same way, bit by bit. We took over the dining room at all events, because all the people invited by Mr Monnet were received by him at the house as it was the place where they were able to talk in peace. From time to time, he did take visitors to restaurants, but, when he wanted to have proper conversations, he ate lunch at Avenue Foch every day with a guest. So Mr Bondini could also forget about using his dining room. That was how the offices in Avenue Foch were arranged. The former secretarial office — where we worked at the beginning, Miss Zing and I — that office was taken over by Jacques Van Helmont. Then François Duchêne worked there and, after that, Richard Mayne. So, basically, we had two rooms, and then we had three. In the entrance hall, we also set up a little reception room from time to time where we could receive guests, so we also had some of the entrance hall, as well as the bathroom and the dining room. There was not a lot left for Mr Bondini.