

## Transcript of interview with H el ene R enal (MS109/3.1)

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**Interview:** An interview with H el ene R enal by Margaret Collins Weitz, 7/08/1983

**Interview Participants:** Margaret Collins Weitz (interviewer) and H el ene R enal (interviewee)

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**Interview Summary:** This interview is part of a series of interviews conducted by Margaret Collins Weitz for her book, *Sisters in the Resistance: How Women Fought to Free France, 1940-1945* (1995). French *r esistante* and journalist H el ene R enal discusses her pre- and post-war life, focusing mainly on her participation in the French Resistance during WWII. The interview starts with what it was like to grow up in a bourgeois, Jewish background in 1930s Paris, France. Then R enal describes her involvement in the French Resistance in Savoie, including her early work distributing flyers and making false identity cards; the challenges of coding and decoding telegrams in the "Transmission-Action" information network; how her association with her husband, who was head of a Resistance network, resulted in her arrest; the story of her interrogation and her husband's interrogation by Klaus Barbie; her covert travels between Savoie and Paris by train as secretary to the head of the network; her imprisonment at Ravensbr uck, a concentration camp in Germany; her time immediately after the war in the occupied territory of Tyrol, Austria. She also discussed aspects of her post-war life including writing a book with a group of friends from Ravensbr uck; and how she became a journalist, working at *Elle* and *Marie-Claire*. She ends by reflecting on the path of her life and the certain people that influenced her and gave her opportunities, including Michel L evy who worked at the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies.

## Recording Transcript Begins

**H EL ENE R ENAL:** So, I am H el ene R enal. I am a journalist by profession, I no longer work a lot because I am tired and I am no longer motivated to work. I am 60 years old. I am more or less from a bourgeois background. I completed my secondary studies and I was a med student when I joined in the resistance, which completely stopped my future in medicine and I never became a doctor. I (must??) stop myself from time to time. All the same, ask me some questions.

**MARGARET COLLINS WEITZ:** So, how and why did you engage in the Resistance?

**R ENAL:** Despite the fact that I was very young, I already had quite clear ideas on politics, on what was going on in the world. In particular, my father took me to hear different conferences on what was happening in Germany. From 1933 --I remember one conference which horrified me because I was very young, where they were telling how the Germans were treating the Jews, how they would enter a children's nursery and they would throw the children through the window. That absolutely horrified me. Let's say that I was a little up to date [on the news] and I was very scared of the Germans. Something important, I am Jewish, still. This is something important that I must tell you. So, all these issues interested me, interested my family, most especially my father anyway. My mother, fearful, did not like very much that we spoke to her about all that. So, very quickly, very early, as soon as the Germans entered France, I looked ... I was very--I wanted to do something. Unfortunately, I did things very late. I did little things, let's say. Early on, I distributed, under doors, some photos of De Gaulle that one of my friends had received from London. We had to distribute the photos of De Gaulle under the doors. It was an act of resistance and that happened in Savoie where this friend was a socialist, was camouflaged, hidden, was ... it was funny ... he had an odd job ... he was tax inspector. He dealt with taxes, so this was not at all, at all in his field, but we had found this little hideout. So there, we did things like that ...

**MARGARET COLLINS WEITZ:** So, you were in Savoie?

[END OF PAGE 1]

**R ENAL:** During the summer, I found myself in Savoie. Otherwise, I stayed in Paris. No, I lived in Paris, I studied in Paris, I had always lived in Paris. **Good.** I am a true Parisian and **I care for it.** I really, really like Paris, I adore Paris, this does not prevent me from traveling around the world, but Paris is my life. And there I found myself in Savoie and I met this guy who after became well-known because he participated a lot in the Algerian War. Eventually he became an important politician, but my first act of resistance, that was that-- to distribute the photos of De Gaulle, walking in the streets on July 14th with a bouquet of blue, white, and red. And so, I had--this man--I was a writer, I really liked to copy handwriting, so I also made my first false identity card at Thonon-les-Bains. I enjoyed this a lot and I was making the fakes as they wanted me to. I dirtied them, I arranged them, they truly appeared to be authentic and I did a really good forgery of the signature of the Prefect at the time whose name I don't know anymore. Eventually, I perfectly imitated his signature. So, I made identity cards as they wanted

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and I found that I was doing things but in fact, this was not exactly what I wanted. And to truly say, I could have entered in the Resistance, this, that I truly call the Resistance --in a Resistance movement, only in '43 when I entered in a real network. I was with a boss of which I knew nothing but his name which was an assumed name anyway. At the time, I did not know that this man was a doctor, of Hungarian origin, that he left his wife and his children to join the Resistance. And that, that happened in Lyon. I met him in Paris and he asked me to come to Lyon. I went [to Lyon], I left everything, I left like that, and I became a network secretary which, when all said and done, was very important. This network was called "Transmission-Action." And in fact, it was like the largest post office of all the action networks; that is to say of all the terrorists, of all the--those that we called at the time terrorists of all the *maquis*, of all the people who fought, who truly fought. There were truly two very different movements : there was one part, the information, where only the people who gathered information and gave pieces of information on what was happening worked, and, on the other hand, there was the network of true terrorists who would blow up trains, who placed bombs, who killed Germans, who did what we call action work. Me, I worked in this network which was very very ... big. Anyway, I did not report at all when I was there, and our job consisted mostly of producing radios. There was also a radio school that we had set up in Savoie, with ... and we made [END OF PAGE 2] radios, because of the quantities that we needed and it was us who would make the radios for all the smaller networks, for all who needed a radio, it was us who they asked for it. **We would send a radio, a man who knew, well, somewhat well to received the messages than resend messages.** This was a big deal, I know it now, I knew it after, I knew it a little then, but I had a boss who was extremely prudent and who told me very little. **Even though I lived in the middle of a funny thing.** I was slowly ... In Lyon, I moved 32 times. That gives you an idea of some of the places where we had to go with prudence, with precaution, because there was danger, because of this, because of that. So, I was in 32 different places which I remember well and each time, I was surrounded by a box of arms, submachine guns, revolvers, of all that one can dream. I died of fright in the middle of all that.

**WEITZ:** You weren't very scared?

**R ENAL:**

My work consisted mostly of--yes, it is bizarre. My work consisted mostly of receiving telegrams for the head of my network. I was his personal secretary, one could say. I never in my life typed on a machine, but that did not mean anything. I typed on an English machine which was parachuted in, which was broken and I typed on one finger, with one finger, and like that, finally I could--funny--and what's more, on an English machine that did not have the same keys as the French keyboard. No matter, I typed on that. So, I had to--I received--someone brought me coded telegrams. Well, I learned to decode them and this was somewhat complicated. I had a personal code that only I had, and even my boss did not have it, there was only myself, who had it, and I also had a code to recode the telegrams that my boss wanted to resend. Well, the telegrams were not very interesting because these were the practical telegrams. That is: "We had received some document or some information or some ..." All that, always was more or less coded, so, this was not very fascinating but even so it was a very important job, I knew it afterwards and so, I quickly became aware of it all the same because--And so, we would ask many things, we would ask "Send us some devices like this, some devices like that." And we would receive very different equipment, radio sets of all types, of all categories, big, small, average, to send telegrams, to receive telegrams. [END

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OF PAGE 3] And so also--so, the thing that I often did because eventually I was the only one who could do it, that is that I would supply the radios themselves. I would go carry certain elements of the radio sets that must, ... so there were these little devices that we had called "sugar" because it was like a piece of sugar but these were the components which we put in the sets and that had to be given a certain wavelength. This was very, very settling like ... **technically, this was very to the point.** This was very, very well, yes. So, I would go to bring some things like that, often some supplies too because the unfortunate had nothing, some tobacco because they had nothing to smoke. So that, I was also tasked by my boss, because I was resourceful, to find on the black market, some chocolate, some things to sweeten up life for all these guys. So, I went around France a lot with baskets full of ... I would put vegetables and then, in the bottom, I had all my things hidden, sometimes documents, sometimes I would bring ... when there was a break from liaison agents, it was necessary to replace them, so I would replace them, I would bring things, I would report other things, and well, I would do--This was a very normal job in the network, but difficult.

**WEITZ:** Anyway, (This was not ??) normal. But were you arrested?

**R ENAL:** So we were. I was not arrested at all because of my network [involvement], but my husband was head ... I was married, let's say, to a guy who was head of an information network. Actually, he was a spy. The people in the intelligence networks, we were spies and the others, they were terrorists. And he was head of an important network, and by the greatest of chances, I was with him. ... I saw him very, very little, and I was with him, and it was him that would get me arrested and I was arrested at the same time as him, with him. **And fortunately, I could, at least, finally almost completely, let's say, not to say that I did.** And I played the complete fool, who did not know anything, who did not understand anything, who did not know what the Resistance was. It worked more or less. But what helped me a lot is that I spoke German, very fluently, I spoke and understood German. And during the interrogation which was very, very difficult, ... and I suffered a lot ... fourteen, not bad ... the Germans spoke amongst themselves, and by an extraordinary chance, when they asked me questions about my identity, they asked me if I spoke any foreign languages, I said : "Yes, English." But I did not say German, which helped me greatly because, during the interrogations, I understood everything that they [the officers/Germans] said amongst themselves and I could tailor [END PAGE 4] my responses a little bit to what they were saying amongst them. I do not absolutely know why I did not say : "German." But it was like that. There were things like that from Heaven which fell upon you. So, we were arrested, that was very serious because the entire network was completely dismantled.

**WEITZ:** When was this?

**R ENAL:** This was in May '44, at the end-- the 18th of May 1944. It was very sad to be arrested at this moment, we knew, we felt the end coming, it was horrible. But we had--there was in this network a double agent, who was the cousin of another guy, an Alsatian, who by conviction, truly believed in the German victory, fool! And who sold out all the network and the thirty-two of us were arrested. And my husband escaped [from] a hospital in Lyon where they had put him after having been horribly tortured, and another boy, a little Alsatian, returned and for me, this was all. From thirty-two, there you go.

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**WEITZ:** And the Hungarian doctor?

**R ENAL:** So, he had nothing since I said absolutely nothing, they did not know that I worked in this network. As a precaution --they knew quickly what had happened because eventually, we knew very well, we had the **contacts (or liaisons)** and they knew my husband very well, they knew what had happened very well, so, ... as a precaution, he was quickly sent to London, he did not stay there. The network continued to work very well. But me, anyway, I had little information on the network. I knew certain places, but which changed, so, that was no longer valuable. And anyway, I said nothing, I must not have talked at all, at all, at all. And they interrogated me on the network, on my husband, on if I truly knew nothing. So, they could have fought me, they could have made me what they wanted, I knew nothing. But moreover, what I would have said, that I knew nothing, that I knew nothing of the what was the Resistance, that I was completely an idiot, that I understood nothing and that I played well the fool and I believed, very, very long time that they were going to let me go because they promised me. And so, eventually, in the end, I was interrogated all the time by an assistant of Barbie, the infamous Barbie. My husband, he was tortured by Barbie, but me, I was not tortured. [END OF PAGE 5]

I was beaten, beaten, beaten, beaten, that, as long as they can but this was not the same thing, it was not very serious. No, no. I attended the torturing of others and I found that to have received hits, it is nothing, in comparison to the torture that they did to people. In any case, I was not seen by Barbie at all and I was only seen by his assistant who was called Sohler (??) and who is still living now. He has a prosperous carpet trade in Stuttgart. Because this was also an American agent. He was a double agent. There you go. So, he was completely freed and voila.

**WEITZ:** And during this time that you traveled to fix radios, you were never arrested or stopped some part ... (???) on your bicycle?

**R ENAL:** Yes, yes, yes. I was stopped one time on my way, on bicycle. So, this was a bit curious. I was very, very lucky because I had documents in a little [piece of] luggage that was on the rack, on which there really were, basically, on top, this that was imprudent, but I did not have the time, I took the time, I fixed a *maquis* and I came **back with the documents of this *maquis*, - there were basically ... I still did not see what was in my suitcase ... "radio Alger". I encountered a dumb German, a type from Wehrmacht, thanks Heaven it was not the Gestapo, who read that "Radio Alguerr (sic) ? What is that?" I said : "I do not know. Movie." I said. "Ahh! Good." He returned by suitcase and I left. I do not know how I could continue on bicycle rolling straight. I should not have ridden straight but truly, I was very lucky. I took myself like that. I was also stopped in a raid on a train. Also, an unheard of vein! I had ... so, to take the train, I had a very, very good thing. I had a kind of bag where I had opened the lining that I carefully put back together and at the bottom of the bag, I put all the documents and on top, I always put vegetables. As this was a time when there was not much to eat, everyone would walk around, looking for supplies throughout the countryside. And surrounding Lyon, there were some. So, I always had carrots, turnips, leeks, all that we want in a bag and I appeared to be a poor \_\_\_\_\_ (gourde??) who went to look for supplies. And so, I had also some very extraordinary things that I had received from London : gadgets, but marvelously made gadgets in which I could hide documents. For example, a block of soap, a piece of soap that was cut in two, but remarkably cut, where it opens and on the inside there was a little spot where I could put the documents. [END PAGE 6]**

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I also had an umbrella where the handle unscrewed and where I could hide some documents. I had--so, wonder of wonders, it was a tube of toothpaste, which you could open the tip and in which I could slide also some documents. I had--I refound that and I still have it today, something extraordinary and in fact it is there that I hid my codes. I had a little wallet, sent from London, a double back, and I put, ... I had all little codes, which were at the time a bit extraordinary because they were already ... ah! how do you call it? all little, miniature, like that...ah! there is a word for that ... excuse me ... (fibers?), the things that are reduced, in reduction, all little ... My codes, they were numbers. Well, I had row of numbers. It was on the mini- ... little cards ... my God! There is a word for that ... little importance. The little cards. And I had to ... It was the codes that only worked one time. Each time that I used a row, I needed to shred it and burn it. Cut it and burn it. So, I had my code in my little wallet and I refound by a miracle--my mother refound it in there where I had been arrested, the little wallet with my code inside.

**WEITZ:** She knew?

**RÉNAL:** No, not at all. She did not know. But she knew that I had been arrested and when she came to the place, she wanted to go see and she found there things that belonged to me ; a nightshirt and so this little wallet.

**WEITZ:** that you had left...

**RÉNAL:** And well, yes. I had a compromising paper that I had succeeded to eat, well, that was ... I asked to go to the toilets and I swallowed my paper. But that, my code was in my wallet and I died of fear that they found it. They did not find because it was very very well made.

**WEITZ:** That, that was when you were with your husband?

**RÉNAL:** Yes. This was the day where I was with my husband. I had my codes on me, this was normal. I had to always guard them with me, this was important and I had them on me. [END PAGE 7]

**WEITZ:** Effectively, that, that was--

**RÉNAL:** That was an extraordinary miracle.

**WEITZ:** But when were you arrested before, with the vegetables ... you went back to your activities? Each time?

**RÉNAL:** Ah well, yes. It was a shock. I had--I died of fear but good, I continued valiantly, cheerfully. You know, I must tell you something, we were very little in number. There were not many *résistantes*. I was searching on all sides. I went to recruit some friends. You know, people say: "Oh, me, I would, if I could, I know, etc." And we would say between us: "If everyone who did not have an elderly father, an elderly mother, kids, who were not sick who did not have this who did not have that, all of France would be in the Resistance." In fact, we did not have anyone and everyone who I had contacted [said], "Ah, yes, I would very much like to but my mother is sick, so I cannot do that." Well. "Ah yes, I would like to but I

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am too scared. "Ah yes, but my fianc e!" Ah yes, but..." And so, finally, we never found anyone. What happened on the inside, we could not loosen up because we knew that it was very, very serious, we were very little in number. You had to stay strong, you had to hold on, and so there were arrests. There were people who were arrested. And yes, all the time that happened. Suddenly, we learned that in a corner, there was a catastrophe. So, you had to replace, you had to refind, it had to be redone, it had to be reconstructed and my boss was an extraordinary guy the type who was quite good at bringing it back together. There were some quite remarkable people in the network, who are ... there were many who disappeared. My boss, himself, died many years ago, from cancer. But, he returned as a doctor. He was a doctor, He became a doctor in the country like he was before, wonderful enough, so ...

**WEITZ:** There were how many women?

**R ENAL:** There were not many. In my network, we were three. There was myself, there was me during Paris because the head of my network [END PAGE 8] was between the two zones ... and Paris ... and ... finally, that carried some numbers, R1, R2, R3 ... we were organized in a sort of small town, if you will, and he was between the two, and, there was a girl who died also some years ago, Andr ee. There was another girl who was liaison agent, and that's all. In all the network, we were three girls, that's all, that's all. So, the other is living, happily ... she is there, and then me.

**WEITZ:** Still, you were a secretary, that required patience--it was essential ...

**R ENAL:** No. I would say that I was secretary of the network. In fact, it was true because I was obliged to--I was busy carrying mail for the boss, well, when I was there. Sometimes, when he was in Paris, he asked me to come bring documents when he could not return quickly. So, I have some funny stories of that; of taking the sleeper car with a German officer. At the time, there were not many trains and not many sleeper cars. Well, we traveled in good condition for many reasons, first off precaution. In the sleeper car, in theory, it is good. Well, since it does not bother you too much. And it happened that I traveled from Paris to Lyon with a German officer below me, me above, and the telegram decoder that I received from my boss that I had to bring arriving to Paris. So, this was, this was ... I was there, like that ... one time this was awful. I had a lot of documents to bring to my boss. And I had them sewn into the shoulder pads of my jacket. So, it made the sound of paper, it was frightening. Each time that I touched the jacket, it was horrible, I had the impression that the entire train could hear me. But that went very well, I did not have a problem. I did a lot of little trips like this, kind of funny, not always in a sleeper car because that did not always happen. But, I transported some things. And so, in Paris, they willingly sent me there because I was Parisian, and I knew Paris very well and I had many secrets for the Metro. Because of all that, I knew very, very well how to get by, I knew to meet in easy places [and] not others. And so, one day, a very funny story happened. I had a meeting with my boss in the *Jardin des Plantes*, it is close to Place Jussieu, over there. So, I took the Metro and so, I saw on the platform ... I don't know anymore where I took the metro, but I must have changed two times. There was a guy, a young guy who I did not like very much. He made me terribly suspicious. I did not like him, this man. [END PAGE 9] So, well. I took the Metro. He got on, I got on. I scanned him from the corner of my eye. He got off at the same time as me. And that, I did not like that at all. So I needed to change. Finally, well, I thought of all of the horrible things that could happen. Finally, he left the metro at the same time at the same place as

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me. I was on the sidewalk and he was on the other. And he went in the same direction as me, and this was funny, it was that we both had a meeting with the boss, and he was a liaison agent as I was. I knew him very well after, this was Robert [last name inaudible]. Anyway, quickly my boss said to me : “Ah la la, my God, I forgot ..”, because I told him : “Careful, there is a man who...”, so, he looked at him, he burst out laughing, he said to me: “yes, yes, I see very well. Well, that’s ok, don’t be scared. This is nothing. Give me what you have, tell me what you have to say and then quickly scoot but this guy is on our side, don’t worry.” It was kind of comical, kind of funny.

**WEITZ:** Yes, indeed. Was it the fact, not only being Parisian but also being a young woman, that you were given easier travel?

**R ENAL:** Without doubt, without doubt. But one thing that did not make my life easy, that is that I died of fear. I had a terrible fear, I never had this fear in my life. I was constantly, constantly, constantly stressed, constantly convinced that I was going to be arrested, constantly, constantly, to such a point that, when I was arrested, I was relieved. I was finished. There were other things that were beginning but there was no longer this horrible gut-wrenching fear. And when people tell you that they were not scared, and well, good for them, because I swear that I was scared. It was horrible.

**WEITZ:** It was all the time?

**R ENAL:** From morning until night, from night until morning, I never had peace, I was scared all the time, all the time, all the time, all the time from fear. At first, I lived in the happy places and then, very often, I needed to type all night. So, I had to hide all of that. So, I put the piles of blankets on the table, I placed the machine, I put a pile of other things, I typed quite softly, [END PAGE 10] very softly so that they would not hear me, and I lived in some places where we were bursting with cold because we had nothing to heat us. Sometimes, the guys of the network would bring me a little coal and I made a little fire in the chimney, but I was cold! So, I had mittens, I made this type of glove that I had cut in two so I could type on the machine because I had to, of course, do ... to occupy myself with these telegrams but also to type the reports which I understood nothing at all but I had to type them and I was alone to do it. So, I must say that I would really like to see these documents again because that would be funny...

**WEITZ:** But to stay in such conditions, it is truly something extraordinary.

**R ENAL:** Well, yes and no. Yes, because it was surprising and it was miraculous each time. **It was a true miracle to succeed in passing stuff, of what happened in England, of all that worked, of what happened to have the liaisons, to this that some telegrams arrived, that other telegrams left, that we received some messages by radio ... all that was so miraculous, that worked and at the same time, that worked well, finally, this was well organized.** So, there were two things that were somewhat curious, that always made me wonder. I said to myself: “This is so fantastic, all the same, that works, we receive some things.” I received some papers, I could decipher well more or less but the people that picked up the telegrams by radio were very, very clever and it could not hurt to recreate (or rebuild) the documents. It was sometimes difficult and that was a job that I liked a lot, it was to rebuild the words which did not stick very well, but it happened all the same. That, that was a side enough ... from Heaven, like that, very, very



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miraculous. But, otherwise, I was eventually, personally protected enough, by my head of network and for all the guys of the network who guarded me like the apple of their eye because I was someone ... You had to pay very much attention. So, there were ... they were very, very careful, at first, they did not come where I was so much. There was a very, very small amount of people who knew the place where I was. Sometimes, they were obligated to come to look for arms or to look for objects that were stored there. But very, very few. They managed to come when I was not there. So, I was still protected.

**WEITZ:** But ... to be surrounded by arms and all that, it was still an enormous risk. [END PAGE 11]

**R ENAL:** And well, it was an enormous risk but I did not think of it, I would especially die of fear to touch the things there. Truly, I would look at them from far, far away and one day, something funny happened. It was in one of the apartments, with an assistant of my boss and someone rang. So, we said to ourselves: "What do we do?" the guy said to me: "I will go there," courageously. He took a revolver. He did not know how to shoot, he never fired a shot in his life. He took a revolver, he placed it behind his back and it was simply the man who came to turn up the gas, the gas meter. So, well, he turned up the gas meter and the other, he turned green, with his revolver hanging like that. So, I said to him: "You know how to shoot?" He said to me: "No." "Have you ever shot in your life?" "No, never." "So, how you would have done what?" "Oh, I don't know. I would have fired." We were really poor, innocent soldiers. We did not know how to serve us at all.

**WEITZ:** You were still soldiers who [inaudible]

**R ENAL:** That is true but--one time also, I had a horrible scare. I was also in one of these apartments--and so in addition, you must see the apartments that we found, because there were some things that we more or less lent ... we did not know who, I did not know--Finally, they were appalling places, throughout Lyon, which was a very dirty town. I was all the time--there were mice, I was shivering from the cold, there were [inaudible], it was horrifying. I always cleaned because I could not stand all of the filth. And one day, someone rang. So, I was scared to death, I was all alone and I ... I only had one place where I could see who rang, it was in the WC. I stood on the toilet. There was a little skylight and I could see on the landing who had rang, and I saw a cop. So, I said to myself: "That, that is it, truly, I am fucked, I am arrested, finally good." This was not the case at all. So, well, he rang. I did not respond, I did not move. I waited, he rang, rang, rang, then he left. And I was scared to death. And so my boss, someone from the network arrived. I said: "There you go, this is what happened to me." Ah, but don't worry. It is a man, it is a cop, this is his apartment, without doubt he comes to look for something for him." But really these are the things that you...that you...

**WEITZ:** So, after your return from Ravensbr uck, you began to write this book, these memories, right after? [END PAGE 12]

**R ENAL:** No, no, not at all. At first, this was not me to write ... I am incapable ... I began, maybe I will continue now ... at first, I stayed 15 years without saying anything, I absolutely did not want to speak of Ravensbr uck and I did not want to hear about it. All the same, I did not want to hear talk of clubs, associations, and all that, not of the deported, not of the deportation, and above all, I did not want to tell

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my family. That, that did not come out, there is no way. And so, all the same, they came looking for me. (*They said to me???*) “Listen, you must come, we did some things, finally, this is not possible that you stay here like this on the sidelines. You absolutely must come.” Well, so I accepted to discuss most notably the *Amicale de Ravensbr uck* (Ravensbruck Group), and so after, I was at the (???) , well, brought also by some friends who brought me there. And so, we had decided to write this book. So, I am responsible for a frightening thing that I have not been able to complete because it was too hard, we solicited testimonies. We wrote in our--we have our little newspapers that we distribute to our members and we have asked for testimonies, asking each one to write some memories of the Resistance or of deportations, finally what she would like. We received more than two thousand responses and I am tasked with sorting through these responses, and to classify them. So well, I received very little and so, one day, I could not continue because I fell sick. I had nightmares, finally this was horrifying, so I left the others to continue a bit, and after, we put together the book, each writing a chapter. And so, for more reliability, as guaranteed, when we wrote something, we passed it to all of the others so that they could correct, read and eventually say what goes and what does not, etc. So, each of us had a specific subject but we re-read all that we wrote. That is to say that it was done in a very, very scientific way with [inaudible] as director of editing and I believe that it is a very, very good document because there, you will find a lot, a lot of things. There are many testimonies.

**WEITZ:** That’s for sure but what I would like to say is this, that the book came shortly after the war ... to enter in a situation where you were ... ????

**R ENAL:** But not at all. I was there, I was sick, I was very, very-- I weighed 25 kilos [55lbs] when they weighed me for the first time, I was not in shape. At first, it was at first necessary to get back on my feet and so, I did something completely crazy, against the grain of everyone else. I said that I would like to go to an occupied state for revenge. Poor creature! [END PAGE 13] So, I went with this guy who knew my husband who was also head of a network, who went in the Occupied State of Tyrol, and I left with him and his wife and I became a part of a group of French soldiers who occupied Tyrol. Eventually, I did very good work there because I was with a quite extraordinary man which the job consisted ... he was a scientist ... his job consisted of research, camouflaged amongst the Nazis, some guys who had did interesting things in Germany. Like that, we had found some quite fantastic guys who participated in the production of V-1, V-2, and I was tasked with interrogating them. So, this was quite extraordinary, this was not too tiring and it was very, very interesting and it was not too terrifying. And so, we found something absolutely extraordinary, a wind tunnel that everyone ignored, thanks to a man that my boss found in Austria, who brought us to the place where this was. This was a wind tunnel that never worked, and a wind tunnel, this is a huge device, this is an enormous hangars in which we study the capacity of planes and notably their reliability depending on the wind, depending on ... So, this wind tunnel, which was quite modern, pattern, having been made in the underground caves in Tyrol, and it is us who found this thing, with a man who explained to me that he knew. He was more or less a technician. But so, I had much joy because it is me who went to bring the documents to France ... so my boss told me: “It is you who (will go?) and I had brought document to France to the Ministry of Air, where I brought all that, and immediately, there was a great sensation because they sent all the engineers, all the technicians saw this thing that was fantastic. Besides, it has been moved. This is in France, in (Aussoy???) and it continues to

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work, this wind tunnel. It was moved piece by piece and she works in France. So, that was ... a thing very--

**WEITZ:** (relax???)

**R ENAL:** Yes, it was really something which I held as a very very good memory.

**WEITZ:** And yet, it was not difficult for you to be with those Germans who treated you so badly?

**R ENAL:** At first in Tyrol, they were not Germans, they were worse but I did not know it. [END PAGE 14] I did not know that the Austrians notably, and the Tyrolians in particular, were the worst Nazis that were. I only knew that after. But already, it was ... the German language that continued to bother me ... even now, but the idea to go looking for some things and to go ... and we were also found some Nazis ... I was with a man whose job consisted of finding hidden Nazis. So, we found some people. So, it was a kind of chase and it was still the Resistance, if we can say that, it was still the job of a *resistant*, still. Well, I was at the time not very happy but I had the feeling to do something and to do something in memory of all the people who I had seen disappear. Finally, there was a type of (take over or redemption?), if you can say that. Finally, it was a little bit crazy. You know, before returning to a normal state, that is that I returned, after a lot of time had passed, we are in a completely different world. I had a lot of difficulty living in France, with "normal" people. I did not understand their language, I did not have the same interests as them at all. I had a lot of problems, mostly with my mother who could not bear to see me tired. I was horribly tired. For example, we went to the theatre to distract me and I was not saying much and I was falling asleep because I was tired. My mother pinch me to say: How, a girl of your age! Wake up!" She could not bear to see that I was not all the same as the others.

**WEITZ:** You did not (talk???)?

**R ENAL:** No, it was very difficult. It was not possible.

**WEITZ:** It is maybe because you never spoke ...

**R ENAL:** It is because I did not talk and because I did not tell anything and I said nothing, and I could not, eventually, that would not go, I could not, there was nothing to do ... and so, to recount that, to recount what I had lived ... I had lived such terrible things ... They found that I was at Ravensbr uck and that from Ravensbr uck, I was in a little unit .. we were only seven hundred, so directly in the Germans, with the Germans, in an ammunitions factory with very hard and terrible living conditions. And to recount that ... it is not possible, finally. Still now, there are some things that I never recounted ... I can not ... which I still do not want to think of because it is too hard. [END PAGE 15]

**WEITZ:** (Did it help you???) to write this book?

**R ENAL:** It helped me a lot, yes, enormously, it freed me of many things but what I really helped to free me was that I had a good psychoanalysis for seven and a half years and this above all cleared me of alot, a

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lot of things that I had to bear, well besides, because I returned, ... I was eventually, compared to others, overall well. At first, I looked good, which is quite extraordinary. I was very thin but, the last days, we had worked in the forest because the factories were no longer functioning, so we were brought to the forest to do silly things, along the tracks, pick up little pieces of wood that ... the trains worked very, very poorly, with very bad coal and the coal sent little ... some sparks and these small pieces of wood were at risk of catching fire and that made fires in the forest. So, we had to pick up all these little pieces of wood to avoid forest fires. Why not that than other things? For 12 hours, picking up little bits of wood in the forest like that, with the Germans, nothing seemed impossible. So, we were outside, there was sun, it was quite nice, it was April and I found a way ... I was a little tanned. And when I returned, my friends said to me: "Listen, hide yourself behind us, because we look like a squeezed lemon and you look good. So damn! They will think that we came back from winter sports, this is not possible."

**WEITZ:** and this journalism? ???

**R  NAL:** And well, this journalism, so there, this was completely crazy because I was a medical student and I thought upon returning: "I can never be a doctor, I don't have the strength. It is too hard." This was silly of me, oh well. And besides, I have not been helped by family who have entirely respected my wishes. They did not guide me at all. They must have been elsewhere. They had to shake me up and said to me: "Go, return to your studies and ..." Not at all. They (m'a???) ... Maybe that this is good, maybe that this is bad. I don't know anything. So, I had ... I wanted to work ... at first, it was because some serious things happened in my family. My parents were not arrested, this was by an incredible stroke of luck, but they were completely robbed. There was no longer anything, there wasn't even a penny in the family. [END PAGE 16] My father and my mother were no longer very young. Well, in my husband's family, there was also a lot of drama. His brother was arrested, and well, he did not have any more money. So, very quickly, I said: "I must work." So, already when I had left for the [occupied territory??], I was working there. I was paid, and that, that was one thing which I really wanted; it is that I was making money. Well, I always had this ... this desire to be independent and to make a living. It's a little silly, it was like that. and ... so ... journalism ... when I had ended my **occupation** period, I really had had enough, I returned, I no longer wanted to continue this career and so, the man who brought me committed some violent acts, he stole a pile of things, he misbehaved in Austria. Eventually, He was put under close arrest. Eventually, all that took a **nasty** turn and so, the real military who have truly come to occupy Austria, they really were not the people with whom I could ... with all the craziness of the resistance, it was still going, but with the true soldiers, that could not stick at all. So that what happened when I returned, I did not want to stay in Austria. There was above all a certain General (*Bedoit*???) who was obnoxious and who led all French troops in Austria, who was sort of a real soldier, real general, who had not screwed up during the war and who had come there to lead the good life with his car, chauffeur, and all the good life like us ... this was not it at all. So, I returned, I did not want ... I returned and so I wanted ... well, even so I wanted to continue my studies and I did not want to immediately return to work, so, I did chemistry. Why chemistry? I have absolutely know idea, but I was not very mad about chemistry, I did not like it much and so, all of a sudden, I said "No." And so, I want to work, I want to make money. So, I had a cousin who at the time was on of the managers of *France-Soir*. He brought me to the paper. What did I do at this paper? So that, that is the question that I continue to ask myself so many years later. And I stayed for 15 years at the paper where I was bored to death, to death, to do things

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that terribly bored me. A women's newspaper, I hated it. I hated dresses, well not hated but it bored me to spend my time concerned with little dresses and pots and things like that. Finally I did ... as I was very conscientious, I did my job very well. And I stayed there 15 years almost crying all the time saying to myself : "My God, what the hell am I doing here? But what am I doing in the middle of these fools for whom only dresses count, only things and whatsits?" And I was watched all this [d'un oeil vague], thinking of other things. And all my friends became doctors, while I , I was not. But, I took a very, very, very long time to come back to earth, actually. [END PAGE 17] I don't know if I had completely returned. Not completely. I believe so, yes, anyway, but it took me a very, very, very long time. And so after *Elle* that no longer stuck at all. So, I was arrested for a year and I gave myself a year sabbatical where I did things that I enjoyed. I did editing. So, I leared to make books. So, that made me wildly happy. I worked at Gallimard, I worked in the stacks of the publishing house, as an intern, and so, in the printers where I learned to print. I really, really enjoyed all that during the year and so, at the end of the year, I said to myself : "And so, you must work for something new, my darling." So this time I went to *Marie-Claire* which was still better than *Elle*. So, I was a specialist in women's journals. So, I went to *Marie-Claire* where there I stayed four years and so, at the end of four years, I really could no longer and so, I got so mad at my friends who said to me : "Listen, that's enough, stop being a fool. Do something intelligent and interesting." So, I became a journalist anyway, because I had experience in editing, I knew how to make books, and I knew how to do a lot of things that, in general, journalists did not know how to do. So, I went to l'(INSEE), l'Institut National d'Etudes Statitistiques. ??? There were reasons for that, that is first, I had two very good friends who worked there and also, that it was just across the street from me, rue de l'Universit . So, it was marvelous because I crossed the street and I went to work like that, it was quite relaxing and overall, I had an incredible boss with whom I was very, very well understood and we worked very, very well together, having a lot of fun, he was a charming man named Michel L vy. And the said Michel L vy, in the end I don't know how many years, was named (?????) where Jacqueline (Hect??) worked. And this is like that that ... so, he brought me with him, because he would not let me go. "So, come with me, we will make books there." So, I went with him to make books and that is how I met Jacqueline. But it was a completely different environment. I had a lot of fun there. I did a lot of very, very interesting things with passionate people. Eventually, I thought: "If I had been a doctor, I would not do all that. So, after all, well, and so, it is like that and so there you go." You must ..

**WEITZ:** [inaudible]

**R ENAL:** Yes. But should I continue?

**WEITZ:** Yes yes. [END PAGE 18]

[END OF TAPE A]