

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Program
Foreign Service Spouse Series

HAZEL SOKOLOVE

*Interviewed By: Morris Weisz (also present are Henri Sokolove and Yetta Weisz)
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Q: I have just completed an interview with Mr. Henri Sokolove, and now at the request of the Foreign Service Spouse Oral History project, I'm interviewing Mrs. Henri (Hazel) Sokolove.

Hazel, I'm to post a number of questions and ask you to "take off" from those questions in any direction you wish. My first question relates to your family background. You've already said you were born in Pennsylvania.

SOKOLOVE: My father was a businessman, a furniture salesman primarily. He traveled around Pennsylvania a lot, and to Chicago, buying and selling furniture. My childhood wasn't outstanding. All the things that I wanted to do and dreamed of doing my family never approved of. (laughter)

Q: Tell us about your education.

SOKOLOVE: I graduated from high school and went to a very interesting Poor Richard Club, which was actually a private school, where I studied advertising. I did some work in the field, I was very young, and I married young. I don't think there's anything outstanding about my background.

Q: Was your husband already in the Service when you met?

SOKOLOVE: He was definitely in the Government, just starting out with the NRA [National Recovery Act] and we moved to Washington from Philadelphia. Then I became involved in some things that always interested me, like working with the blind, working with dyslexic children, which I did for a long while as a volunteer. I became a civil servant and held a job for quite a few years, working for "the old curmudgeon," Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes; doing personnel work, from 1934 to 1942.

Q: Your children began coming when?

SOKOLOVE: Alice wasn't born until '42. At that point reluctantly I stopped working, but of course the War had started and Henri, who was in the War Production Board, thought it best that I continue to work because he was then already sort of pointed in the direction of China. He went there in 1945. I continued working until it became impossible

to get someone to take care of my baby girl.

Q: The next question that I think especially relevant is the nature of the discussion between you, if any, as to whether you agreed, disagreed, or were neutral on the question of going abroad.

HENRI SOKOLOVE: That was never an issue.

SOKOLOVE: Oh, I was always agreeable, it was never an issue.

HENRI SOKOLOVE: You thought it was all part of the United States.

Q: Well, with us it wasn't an issue because Yetta gave in to my wishes. But was it something affirmatively you wanted to do, or ... ?

SOKOLOVE: Let's put it this way: Henri and I read a great many travel books and magazines.

HENRI SOKOLOVE: That's what seduced us.

SOKOLOVE: And we said that we became the world's greatest armchair travelers. Then, when he began to think in terms of going abroad and living abroad, it met on both sides with great approval. What's so interesting is that from the time I met him -- we've known each other much longer than the 57 years we've been married -- he talked of China. That was his great interest. His first post was with UNRRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration], right after the War, before he entered the Foreign Service. Culturally, he was so involved in learning about the Chinese that when his friends in UNRRA, people that we knew, said "We can't find ..." he thought that by joining some branch of the Government he ought to be able to find a way to China. I can't recall the names of all those in UNRRA who were very interested in his coming to that agency, but they pointed out, "very few people we can contact have the knowledge of China that you have." That's when it began to evolve and he found himself on his way to China.

Q: Does your knowledge of China, Henri, involve not only the culture, etc. but some language also? Did you know any of the Chinese languages?

SOKOLOVE: Oh, I have to tell you his famous quote. He is the greatest living advocate of the Chinese language, being "the greatest expert of Lesson One." (laughter) Because every time he joined the class -- and he joined it constantly -- the students would disappear and the teacher would say, "Well, class is over, we've only got you in the class." And when he formed another class, Henri was there. (laughing) I don't think he went beyond Lesson One.

Q: Then, I gather, you entered into service abroad with great enthusiasm.

SOKOLOVE: With great enthusiasm.

Q: So to the query, about whether you set off for your first post with anticipation or apprehension, your response is, “with anticipation.” Although you did have small children. We’re talking now about your first post abroad, with UNRRA, before the Foreign Service.

SOKOLOVE: But I was not with him with UNRRA because women weren’t permitted to go to China in those days. And when I was all ready to go, he came home.

Q: I see. So your first posting abroad was to India, in 1948?

SOKOLOVE: Absolutely, and I was all geared for China when they sent somebody else to China. And that’s when Henri said, “Okay, I’ll go to India.” The fact that (she laughs) I knew nothing about India, he said, “After all, if they think I can do the job, I’ll do it.”

Q: And there you did have some apprehension?

SOKOLOVE: Oh yes, I had lots of apprehension. And yet it was the kind one has to go to a strange place. It could have been in America and going far away from home. It soon evaporated.

Q: How old were the children?

SOKOLOVE: Alice was six years old. I taught her first grade on the boat, taking all the books and everything, so that when she arrived in India and went up to Mussoorie, to the 100-year-old missionary school there, she was ready for second grade -- already reading and ...

Q: I like what you say about going out by ship, because of course later on we went out by plane. You must have had a nice trip out.

SOKOLOVE: Oh it was fascinating. We were on the U.S. steel fabricator, with a psychotic captain. Oh, he was dreadful. We almost lost D, because he suffered a strangulated hernia and was taken off the ship in Jeddah. That’s why we called him a “hajji” ever since.

Q: But it didn’t discourage you from continuing your trip to India.

SOKOLOVE: Well, there was very little I could do about it.

HENRI SOKOLOVE: It just turned us off steel fabricator ships from then on.

Q: Well then, what I’ll do now is go through a brief chronological tour of your posts, to find out whatever you’d like to say about things. Like what was life like there, how did

you engage in activities, what was your day-to-day life, et cetera. You arrived in India as a stranger to its culture and civilization, since you'd been boning up on China. Nevertheless I take it that you learned a little about India and enjoyed it.

SOKOLOVE: Oh, it was wonderful, really wonderful. The sad things and the difficult times we always just gloss over, I think, when we look back on something as great as an adventure, which India was. But it was during our stay there -- and right off I met many Indian women, women who were in the Government, who liked me and I liked them. One night at a cocktail party, a big soiree, one of the most beautiful women I've ever known, Prem Berry, [she spells last name] the wife of a doctor, with three children, married to a man who took his degree in dentistry at Temple University in Philadelphia, came to me -- I did not know her very well then, it was in the early days of our tour -- and said, "I would like to invite you to accompany me, if I can get Nehru to approve, to assist me in selecting Indian fabrics and artifacts for export to the United States." She was very knowledgeable about many things that were happening in the Government. Though she herself was not part of it, she knew many women who were. In a facet of the Government there is a women's section, whose name escapes me, and she said to me, "It would mean that you would accompany me all over India and say 'yes' or 'no' to a variety of products. Do you think that would be something you would ... "

Q: The 'yes' or 'no' would be on the basis of its attraction to American audiences and consumers?

SOKOLOVE: Right. Whether American women especially would be inclined to buy them, in other words their saleability. So I told her, "I don't have that kind of background." And she said, "From what I gather, you know more about textiles, learned in the first few months that you've lived here, than many Americans I've known.

Q: But also, you had an advertising background.

SOKOLOVE: Yes but this was a question of looking at a piece of fabric or some handcraft and saying, "Yes, I think American women would be willing to buy this" or "No, I can't see them purchasing this."

Q: My wife, who is here also, has just noted that Prem Berry began "cottage industries" and that's why Mrs. Weisz met her many years later.

SOKOLOVE: I replied, "It sounds interesting, but you understand that as the wife of a member of the American Embassy I couldn't say yea or nay, it's a question that has to be taken up with the Ambassador." This was Loy Henderson, a wonderful man. That night I told Henri what Prem had said and he said, "That sounds marvelous, that's just wonderful. I'll bring it up to the Ambassador tomorrow." And he did that. The Ambassador said, "I think that's quite an honor that you have been asked." So I said, "She hasn't yet taken it up with Nehru," who was the one who would pass judgment on this. Because Nehru was always saying, "You women are always asking for money" but

the women asking were saying, “You are the one that’s been crying that we need American dollars and this is a wonderful way to get American dollars.” So the word came back and I was accepted. And she and I both prepared to go. That was a fantastic trip. There were no hotels.

Q: Were you the guest of the Indian Government in doing this, or did the American Government pay for you to go around?

SOKOLOVE: The American Government never gave a cent to this project. What the Indians gave was that they paid for every expense on the trip but there was no salary. And that was what influenced the Ambassador; he felt that there were no strings of any kind attached and that’s why he accepted.

Q: And you were not accepting money from a foreign government, which might have been criticized. (Hazel agrees) So you went on this trip, I can imagine ...

SOKOLOVE: It was all in the south at that time. I’ve long since forgotten the names of the villages, because we went to many villages, because in India, as you know, each village has its own specialty -- different kinds of weaving, from the simplest cotton to the most elaborate brocades with gold and silver threads, just wonderful things. So we would go in -- for instance, we went to Bombay. We didn’t stay in a hotel because the first thing that Prem Berry said was, “We’ll stay with my family.” They must have been very wealthy people, they had a magnificent apartment of I don’t know how many rooms. The first night we arrived there was a tremendous party. I have to tell you this because it’s so funny. We came into the party, there were men and women, all Indians, I was the only Westerner there and I was introduced around. We came in rather late because of tardy transportation and were going to stay through that and the next night because Bombay has a wonderful center for cottage industries. I can’t recall the name of the woman who was “even more involved than Prem Berry,” a fabulous character. She came in, and Prem whispered to me before we got to our bedroom for the night, a very good friend of the family was there and he was high up in the Indian Government. We changed clothes in the bedroom and joined the party. They were drinking orange squash and things like that.

HENRI SOKOLOVE: Very miserable things, as all Indians drink!

Q: Unfortunately this tape can’t show the faces we’re making at the orange squash.

SOKOLOVE: Anyway, the next thing I knew I was alone, for the moment, because I saw Prem and this official go off to the porch, a balcony overlooking some fascinating, very crowded Bombay streets and the sea beyond. Of course I was taken around, introduced to so many people and had a really wonderful time because they really looked out for me. But when I saw Prem returning with -- I can’t recall his name, a very charming man -- she smiled broadly and made a little quirk of her head. As she passed me she said, “I’ll tell you later.” What she told me that really cracked me up was she said, “As soon as he got me out on the porch, he said, ‘Prem Berry, what are you doing? The world is falling apart,

the Russians are getting ready to do some terrible things and you're running around India with a Russian!" (laughter)

YETTA WEISZ: Sokolove! (more laughter)

SOKOLOVE: "So of course I enlightened him," she said, "and he took for granted what I said was true, that you are an American and you wouldn't be running around with me if you were a Communist." So, anyway, that was one of the funny things. After we had been in Bombay for several days, gone to the bazaars ...

Q: Did you feel comfortable in an Indian household? I think the people in this Oral History project would like to know how we adjusted to living with an Indian family. There are certain special things that ...

SOKOLOVE: Oh yes, there are lots of special things.

Q: (laughing) Toilet facilities, for instance.

SOKOLOVE: No, no, this was a modern building. I'm sure it was on the second or third floor, there were bathrooms. In fact, I experienced one of my first earthquakes in a bathroom in Bombay. (she laughs) I was standing at the sink and the next thing I knew, I was at the end of the room against the wall, and yet she laughed, because she (Prem) came right in to see me to see what I was doing and she said quickly, "It's an earthquake but it's not bad." And I said, "Did you see where I am? I was over there when it happened." But I didn't fall, and fortunately I didn't crash into the wall, I was just up against the wall.

Q: Well, this was a Europeanized family, you weren't living in a ...

SOKOLOVE: Oh, this was a pukka Indian family. Their dress, their food -- I always remember the breakfast, it was some kind of gruel I couldn't stand but oh, the spicy foods -- I just thought they were marvelous. I've often said, I still say it, if I could learn to cook vegetarian food the way they cooked it, with their spices, which I use a great deal of myself, I would never eat meat again. That's how excellent they are, those who are good cooks. However, we were not too long in Bombay. We went on to Madras, got some beautiful handicrafts ...

Q: That's where you really began eating spicy foods, wow!

SOKOLOVE: Yes. And she would warn me but I couldn't be warned, you know, I was young and I thought, "Oh, I love spicy things," but she had once said -- when she came in Madras we were not in a private home, we were in a sort of state guest house, something like that, and we then went out by horse and buggy to a restaurant. It was big, it looked cosmopolitan to me, I was surprised to see the kind of dining room this restaurant was. And she warned me, she said, "Now, I know you like the spicy foods and I've ordered

something for myself but remember, whatever it is do not eat any peppers off this table, because what they're going to bring is the hottest thing we have." I said, "All right." She had ordered a number of small dishes, you know how Indians serve, and when they came they were delicious. Quietly I reached over and took a pepper and put it in my mouth, the jalapeno pepper. Not only could I not talk, I couldn't breathe, it cut off my windpipe like that! The tears began to roll and I was gasping. The waiter came and they brought me lassi -- of course I didn't know what lassi was then but I realized how marvelous it is -- and water, and she said, "You're learning the hard way." (laughter) And I really was. I never touched them again, I can tell you. And I love hot spicy food, but not that way. It was there on the trip that I have to tell you this because I'll go back and tell you a little bit more about the things we bought and where they went. She'd taught me to eat (unable to recall the word, says it will come to her later) and that was something I wanted to carry home in my mind to Henri. We went to the outer circle of Konod, where the South Indian restaurant is and ate, and I said to him, "The first time you eat it, the perspiration will come all through your hair, down your face, but after that ..." and it was true, he loved it, and we always ...

HENRI SOKOLOVE: The only problem is, you didn't know what it was. (laughter)

Q: Well, we'll think of it.

SOKOLOVE: Anyway, when the entire trip was over and I had made the selections of the things I thought, and she approved -- as we went along and I'd say this and this and this and this, and when Prem Berry approved I was free to sort of mingle in other shops while she finished the purchase of the materials. And there were all kinds of things. There were saris, there was some jewelry; mostly it was cloth and things that could be utilized in American either bedrooms or bathrooms.

Q: Who was buying this -- the Government of India or a group of ... ?

SOKOLOVE: The Government of India was spending the money to buy it, yes.

Q: And who was selling it? The Government was selling it abroad or ..

SOKOLOVE: Everything went to the India Counselor of Embassy in Washington, because -- I can't remember the name of the Counselor or his wife -- it went to her, who had already contacted Woodward & Lothrop [major department store in Washington], they agreed to give them free advertising in the Washington Post and other papers, and space in the stores to sell it. Then, of course, they had "India Days" and all that sort of thing. Now, let's say the sale ran for three days, I don't know, maybe it went longer but there was an unsold residue, and already she had contacted Bloomingdale's in New York and they took it up. Of course it wasn't long before others among the wonderful stores -- some of which have disappeared including Macy's -- Macy's had a big India Day, Bloomingdale's was very interested, and continued to make contacts with India after that until today.

Q: Through the Counselor again, or ... ?

SOKOLOVE: Well, whoever it was there. But that's how it opened up.

Q: And profitable for them, and the fact that they sent it through Embassy channels meant they didn't have to worry about duties and such. Fascinating.

HENRI SOKOLOVE: And the United States is in [a] depression now ..

Q: Yes, I blame Hazel. (laughter) This went on all during your trip -- how long, approximately, did your trip with Prem Berry take?

SOKOLOVE: I think the first time we went out was about ten days. And then there was a long period when nothing happened so far as my going out and she didn't go out. She seemed to be very happy with the way things went, and of course we were very compatible.

Q: Did the Commercial Attaché have anything to do with this -- encouraged it, discouraged it?

SOKOLOVE: The answer is "No."

YETTA WEISZ: There was a [bazaar] at the British Embassy that I went to and there was a woman there who had furniture made of India teak, some wood, and I saw this magnificent furniture that were reproductions from Mogul miniature paintings. And I asked an Indian lady standing near the furniture whether there was a sale and she said, "Yes, if you are wanting to buy, I am wanting to sell." And I said, "I am wanting to buy" and I bought this furniture, which is now at my home in Washington. And this was the beginning because there was also a buyer from Bloomingdale's who was at this [bazaar] and ordered furniture for Bloomingdale's to sell if (she tries to recall name of "the wonderful lady who made the furniture") and she made the furniture just on the [inside] of her home -- chairs and tables and [other pieces], of heavy teak wood from south India.

Q: The finest.

YETTA WEISZ: And so much foreign exchange was coming in, that the Indian Government set this woman up in the industrial estate in a corporation, so that she could hire workmen to make more of these pieces of furniture. From just a little [cottage] all this industry developed. Because the fabrics that he probably found in north India, were incorporated in to the pillows on this furniture made of rush and ...

SOKOLOVE: And wonderful bamboo.

HENRI SOKOLOVE: Have you thought of interviewing?

Q: She supplied a lot of material but her interview hasn't been written up yet. Well, let's continue with you. This was one part of your work with Indians and the first one, I gather, that involved travel and purchase of materials or engaging in helping them purchase and sell materials. Did you have other involvements during the period of five or six years with private Indian businesses?

SOKOLOVE: None.

Q: Now, let me ask you to speak about a few other subjects. How did you feel about representational duties? Did you resent it, did you encourage it, did you enjoy it, did you have certain reactions to the representational duties there?

SOKOLOVE: You mean, in inviting people to my home?

Q: Yes.

SOKOLOVE: Oh, I had no reservations. I depended on Henri mostly, and then I would sort of embellish whatever it was -- for instance, if he wanted a certain number of men for dinner, then I might fill in by finding if these men had wives and were they willing to bring them.

Q: That's an interesting comment, whether they were "willing to bring them," because we know ...

SOKOLOVE: Yes: because I had learned to know what the Indian man tended to think, and even some of his behavior which was sometimes strange.

Q: Yes!

SOKOLOVE: But always Henri would lay the groundwork and then I'd find out whether they were vegetarians or non-vegetarians, and how many we could handle at a particular time; that sort of thing. And it was most enjoyable, because we had Indians from almost every walk of life come in. They were Communists, and non-Communists, and Conservatives, and we had the most fascinating men who we knew were well educated who told me stories about their travels and I only discovered, after talking with Henri, they had never been out of India! These were all figments of their imagination. That was something (laughing) I could never understand.

Q: What about the family reaction? Your children were young, of course. Any special health problems? Were they dealt with satisfactorily, or ... ?

SOKOLOVE: Well, there were a number of health problems. I became very ill a number of years after being in India with infectious hepatitis. I was up in the mountains in India. I was carried -- I don't think I was ever sick in any other country that I can think of. Gandhi

was assassinated in 1947, the year before we arrived. I have an interesting comment on that. We lived in a former army barracks. When we came in, there was no proper place for us. We learned soon after we began to go to the temple where Gandhi was assassinated, to see what it was like, only to discover that it was an American officer in the Embassy, a young male, either Second or Third Secretary, who was standing behind the assassin, saw the ribbon of smoke go up from his hand, not realizing when he looked over that there was the gun, reached out and held his hand so that no more shots were fired. He had never been called forward to testify or anything, because it was a too volatile, you know, everybody was afraid -- the Indian Government was afraid that a American being involved in any way would be bad.

YETTA WEISZ: How did you learn about this American officer?

SOKOLOVE: Oh, we knew him very well. He would come to our house.

YETTA WEISZ: He told you this, that he was standing there?

SOKOLOVE: Yes, yes. And it was well-known throughout the Embassy itself that he was the one. The police came immediately and they captured the man, there was no question ...

Q: Now, the next question I was asked to look into is did you feel any culture shock? I think you've answered this.

SOKOLOVE: Not really.

Q: Culturally you adapted yourself easily.

SOKOLOVE: Yes.

Q: There wasn't this rejection that you sometimes hear about.

SOKOLOVE: No. And we saw much of it in the Embassy. We had women who came in to New Delhi, young women like myself with small children, who were so upset that they locked themselves in their hotel rooms -- their husbands weren't assigned yet to a particular place to live -- and surrounded themselves with canned goods only and that's all they ate for a long while. One woman was so bad that they finally decided to send her home with her children and they did that.

Q: Our experience is closer to yours. Two nights after we came, we were invited to Rom Nehta's, we met so many people. But what about the children, what reactions did they have?

SOKOLOVE: Our daughter just loved every minute of it.

Q: Did your servant situation make that easier? Were they friendly with the kids or helpful to them?

SOKOLOVE: Well, I would 't say -- they weren't overly friendly, they acted as if they were part of the family and it was a very easy transition. Alice would play with their children, that sort of thing.

YETTA WEISZ: [One of ours] would come home from school and not come home to [our] house but go to the compound where the servants lived. (extended discussion of the locations of their respective houses)

SOKOLOVE: We had a marvelous place, let me tell you how we got it. We invited Ambassador Henderson to come to lunch the hottest day of the year. We were then living in "the Taj," as the Folgers had called it -- the army barracks. (laughter) The Ambassador was very happy to come, I don't think his wife had arrived yet. He came in, wearing tie, shirt, jacket, all dressed up ... *End Tape 1, Side A Begin Tape 1, Side B*

Q: This was not your home, it was where you were put originally, in the barracks ...

SOKOLOVE: Right. We had no idea of anything, because nothing was being offered ...

HENRI SOKOLOVE: The first he discovered where we were living was when we moved.

SOKOLOVE: And so it didn't happen until the lunch ended that Henri brought up the question, what are the possibilities of our getting a more commodious place to live? We loved him and I think he sensed that we enjoyed being with him. So he said, yes, he was going to look in to it, he didn't think it would be much longer but he would look in to it himself. That's the way he put it. And when he left we had greater hopes than we'd had before of finding something pleasanter to live in. Well, then we became friendly with the top military man -- what was his name, Henri?

HENRI SOKOLOVE: "Colonel "X" he shall be known as.

SOKOLOVE: Oh, he was just a grand fellow. It so happened that we met him at a party when his wife was out of town and he got very confidential. He asked us to come to his home for a little after-the-party drink because he lived down the road. We're sitting there talking when he said, "You know, I've just been offered a place down the street and I really would like to take it. How would you like to have my house?" This was a huge place, on about two acres of land. Henri said, "Well, if you don't mind I'd like to see ... " It had two living rooms, a magnificent porch all enclosed in plastic. So we went through the place. It had three bedrooms, two baths, and so forth; all one floor, a typical "Indian bungalow," as they called it. So Henri's reply was, "Oh, certainly, why should we object to something like this?" And the deal went through so fast, and the colonel moved to the area where this other house was, and we moved in from our "Taj" to this place. There was

no air-conditioning, so the colonel said, “Don’t you worry about that, we’ve got some old air-conditioners and I’m going to see that they combine them into two working air-conditioners and we’ll set it up for you.” And that’s exactly what he did, so we had one in our room and one in the room that would be Alice’s when she would be home from school -- at that time she was in New Delhi, hadn’t gone up to Mussoorie yet -- and we just loved it and that’s where we lived for the rest of the time we were in India.

Q: Do you remember where he moved to? Was it Number 17 ? (she says it sounds right) Yes, he got the big house.

SOKOLOVE: But what happened was, his wife was furious because she felt that he had given up a better house, she felt the house wasn’t large enough. We both liked her so much, she was a wonderful gal but she did make him uncomfortable.

Q: Let me ask you, leading into the last set of queries, did you ever resent, as it’s put in the questionnaire, “being the wife of” rather than a person in your own right?

SOKOLOVE: No. I was not part of the women’s movement at all.

Q: Because the next question is how you feel about the 1972 Directive. You retired before then but that’s the one that involves not exploiting the Officer’s wife, which has led to, my point of view an extreme in the other direction of the sort of instance I told you at lunch. But I gather in your day, during the entire period of your and Henri’s service abroad, from the very beginning in India until his retirement, there was no feeling that could have been described as the “precursor” of the women’s movement in the Foreign Service, where they said “hire us if we have any abilities and don’t ask us anything because we are ‘the wife of’ somebody.” Am I interpreting your position correctly, that you didn’t feel that way?

SOKOLOVE: No, I didn’t feel that way.

Q: Do you feel it was wrong to feel that way? That these women who feel they have their own careers and they don’t want to be an appendage to the career of their husband?

SOKOLOVE: Maybe I would have felt differently if I was a career woman; my own daughter might have rebelled at that sort of thing but, no ...

Q: I should tell you that there’s a long interview which I happen to have edited for this project of Esther Peterson, who as you know was the wife of a Labor attaché.

SOKOLOVE: Did she feel resentment?

Q: Not at all, she participated in so much. But it is true, and I’m saying this as the deputy to Esther when she was head of the Women’s Bureau, it is true that the women were used. Now, whether they should have been paid or not, whether they enjoyed it or not, the fact

is that the government was getting two for one in many cases.

SOKOLOVE: Especially in Esther's case. Right?

Q: Oh, especially. And Yetta would agree. (laughter) In fact, when I was being considered for the job in India, unfortunately Ambassador Bowles knew the Petersons; Oliver Peterson had been his Labor assistant when Bowles headed the Office of Price Administration. The way they sold me to Bowles was to say, "As in the case of Esther Peterson, you're going to get two-for-one." Which is really an unfair way to put it. But nowadays the feeling is very different.

HENRI SOKOLOVE: Who put forward this idea, that Bowles was getting two-for-one?

Q: I guess Willard Wirtz, who nominated me.

HENRI SOKOLOVE: I see. Well, I think that was very unintelligent on Willard's part, because in essence ...

Q: He was offering a scab!

HENRI SOKOLOVE: Yes but it was unintelligent of him to put it that way. My experience in the Foreign Service, which is after all fairly limited, was that they were generally getting two-for-one and nobody felt any pain of that.

Q: But in Esther's case, which is an appropriate one, they were getting two Labor people for one. That is, she was conducting educational programs, it wasn't the sort of ancillary ones as yours was, Hazel, and Yetta's was. Yetta didn't get involved in Labor programming, nor did you. Everything that you and she did was of a different sort, whereas Esther was actually working in the Labor program, it was more appropriate to say that.

SOKOLOVE: Oh, no question.

YETTA WEISZ: But I was doing a job that a USIS officer maybe should have been doing.

Q: Yes, that's right, but not a Labor Officer.

YETTA WEISZ: I was [organizing] schools and I was teaching teachers how to set up schools, and the hospital. Those were things that ...

Q: They were separate from the Labor Attaché job.

HENRI SOKOLOVE: Well, some people tend to be thin-skinned and others and that sort of person would fasten on this problem. But for most people who are not thin-skinned ...

Q: It's not a problem.

HENRI SOKOLOVE: That's right.

YETTA WEISZ: Nobody asked me to do this, I did it because it was something -- that's one of the important things, I think, where the women in the Foreign Service have a greater advantage over the men: the men had a one-track system. They got up in the morning, they went to the office, the office work was all laid out for them, they were pre-programmed. The women, all of us, had to make a special, exciting life for ourselves in every avenue of activity that interested us. And if you had wide interests, then you were involved in a (laughing) wide area of activities.

Q: Or block yourself off completely, like some of the people did.

SOKOLOVE: Yes; oh yes.

Q: This interview is turning out to be a four-way interview (laughter) between Mr. and Mrs. Sokolove and Mr. and Mrs. Weisz, but the Project will decide what ... Now let's go more rapidly through some of the other questions. Any special comments on the Washington period of the assignments? Anything you did especially -- did you go back to work, or ...

SOKOLOVE: I took up real estate. I studied by the book, then took the Maryland licensing exam and sold property until we went off to Japan, our last posting.

Q: I gather from what you've said so far that your answer would be "no" to the question "Did you ever feel lonely or homesick overseas?"

SOKOLOVE: In the beginning, yes.

Q: Your children had a positive reaction, you told me.

SOKOLOVE: Yes, Alice had a very positive reaction.

Q: Any resentment on having to attend or being required to attend social functions?

SOKOLOVE: No.

Q: Money: was that a problem?

HENRI SOKOLOVE: That's always a problem.

SOKOLOVE: (laughing) I was going to say ...

Q: Was it a special problem?

SOKOLOVE: No. I want to tell you one of the most famous remarks [Henri] has made. I was bitterly resentful when he said he was going to retire. He had thought he was asking me did I want to but he wasn't, he was telling me that he would retire as soon as we returned to the United States. I was very upset. I was upset because my father had died, my mother was having a hard time financially and Henri was her major support. I thought this was terrible, that he should be cutting his salary and his security and so forth. He replied, "I don't see why you're so upset. All these years I've been getting half my salary and now I'm just collecting the other half!" (laughter) And he was right.

Q: Did you have any feeling about moving every few years? Special difficulties or ...

SOKOLOVE: No. I was young enough to be very tolerant.

Q: So far we've concentrated on the experience both of us had in India, which was Henri's only Labor posting, but this interview is intended to cover your entire foreign experience. Were some of your postings at other places more or less rewarding, or more or less difficult, than the one in India that you've discussed so thoroughly?

SOKOLOVE: Well, I think that the Philippine experience was more demanding because the Filipinos are very clannish. While there were certain groups that showed me friendship and so on, unless you were the wife of a top-ranking American or Embassy person, they looked down on you. At least that's the way I read it.

Q: The last question relates to this woman's interest: How do you feel about salaries for spouses? And were you involved in or affected by the women's movement? Well, as to the latter question, the women's movement did not exist.

SOKOLOVE: It certainly did not.

Q: But what about salaries for spouses?

SOKOLOVE: Well, we never experienced any problem.

HENRI SOKOLOVE: She collected my pay! (hearty laughter)

Q: No! I'm talking about the feeling you had that you were being exploited and should have gotten the salary.

SOKOLOVE: Oh, that the things I worked for or did or whatever or participated in? No, (she laughs) I never had any thoughts that the government should pay me a salary.

Q: One more query: Would you like to talk about the spiritual side of your life? I don't know what is meant ...

SOKOLOVE: Who added that?

Q: Oh, the people who're involved in church work and things like that. But I take it you weren't, from what you say.

SOKOLOVE: No, I'm not a church ...

HENRI SOKOLOVE: We had a synagogue in Delhi ...

Q: I know!

HENRI SOKOLOVE: But of course we never went.

Q: Neither did we.

SOKOLOVE: The only synagogues I've ever entered were those when I was a child and they left no impression whatsoever on me, so as a result I just have no connection whatsoever with the religious side of life.

Q: Thank you very much. I'm certainly grateful to both of you, individually and together.

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: Henri Sokolove

Spouse's Position: Labor Attaché, Political Officer

Spouse Entered Service:	1948	Left Service:	1962
You Entered Service:	Same	Left Service:	

Status: Spouse of Retired FSO, FSR

Posts:

1948-1953	New Delhi, India
1953-1955	Washington, DC
1955-1957	Manila, Philippines
1957-1958	Kuala Lumpur, Malaya
1958-1961	Washington, DC
1961-1962	Tokyo, Japan
1962	Retired

Place/Date of birth: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; March 4, 1913

Maiden Name: Hazel Levick

End of interview