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60th Anniversary of the first Council Session

I joined CERN in April 1962 and – as usual – there were no staff posts left in Personnel Services (later Personnel Division, and now Human Resources). I got an auxiliary contract. At the end of the year, Council would generously agree to more posts, so all auxiliaries got a staff appointment on 1st January. These were the good old days, when Europe was advancing at high speed, money was no problem.

But the situation of the world at this time was quite different and not always easy for us. The Berlin Wall had just been erected a few months before I came to CERN, we were living the « Cold War ». There were still frontiers all over the place. People living in France had to cross the border twice or even four times a day with the usual question « anything to declare ? »

Scientists from the Eastern countries had difficulties to get visas to come to Switzerland and could not live in France, they had to be housed in Switzerland. Strange things happened sometimes. One day, a Polish Associate came to my office on his first day. I remembered his name as he had been at CERN before and greeted him. He absolutely panicked « how does it come you know my

name ? » I told him why and calmed him down, I suppose he thought I was somebody from the KGB.

There were other difficulties at the time. Everybody wanted figures. Council needed statistics twice a year ; we had to provide pink books, blue books, black books, white books and lots more - and had no computers !!! It was really fun and, of course, Personnel Division being an administrative service was the last to get « on-line ». We just had typewriters and – somewhere - a typing pool.

So the first textprocessing machine we got was a miracle. Eventually personnel files and personnel data were put on computers. The trouble was that the programmers doing this work had not got a clue of administrative work and lots of mistakes had to be corrected by the people using the programmes afterwards. But In the end everything turned out more or less alright.

Apart from administrative services there were not many women at CERN – specially not in high grades. With the changes in Regulations and Rules in 1968, women became second class people. Once married, we lost all advantages : non-residence allowance, home leave, we were not entitled to family allowances, no health insurance for our children, no school fees. I authorized the payment of millions of francs for school fees but when my daughter went to kindergarten, CERN did not participate in the costs as it did for my male colleagues

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We created a committee to defend women's rights, but it was difficult to get some understanding within the Organisation and also Council. It was only thanks to decisions taken in the European Organisations in Brussels, that the regulations of 1973 showed no difference anymore between men and women – at least on paper.

CERN was growing and expanding with projects like ISR, SPS, LEP etc. There was a lot of recruitment going on – at certain days, we had up to 200 candidates to be interviewed and looked after for travelling expenses etc.

CERN's social conditions were improved over the years, there were all sorts of committees. I was for over ten years an elected member of the Pension Fund Committee which then became Governing Board of the Pension Fund – which sounds so much better. But things changed over the last years. There is a new governance now with completely different ideas and decisions.

I understand that the situation in Europe and the world has completely changed, political decisions have to be taken. But I implore Council to always bear in mind that behind you political – and sometimes for me incomprehensible - decisions there are people, human beings who put all their confidence in the Organisation and its social benefits and coverage.

Let me finish by saying that CERN was and is a wonderful Organisation. I enjoyed every day of my nearly 36 years of employment.

I wish another successful 60 years for the Organisation so that staff members starting now or in future will also be able to profit from the CERN Pension Fund.

Thank you.