

**HELLE CRISTINA
HABSBURG WINDSOR**

Obituary from The Daily Telegraph
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Helle Cristina Habsburg Windsor, a familiar figure in the Anglo-Portuguese world who died in Lisbon aged 100, was, even by the standards of pretenders, one of the more bizarre aspirants to the blood royal.

She claimed to have been born at the Court of Spain in May 1890 as a natural child of the future King George V of Great Britain and Queen Maria Cristina of Spain, widow of King Alfonso XII and daughter of Archduke Karl Ferdinand of Austria. "I was born on the steps of the throne," she used to say. "So awkward for her mother," observed one Lisbon wag.

By her own account, Helle Cristina was ferried as a baby to Malta, where an Englishwoman put her on a ship headed for the East. The "royal lovechild" was thus transported to Smyrna, where she was brought up by a certain Dr Salerio. After a two-year sojourn in a convent on the Greek island of Tinos, Helle Cristina, now in her late teens, boarded a ship for Marseilles, from where she followed the railway line to Bordeaux, and eventually crossed the border into Spain.

She spent some time working in music-halls before marrying Roberto Cunat, whom she described as the southern

“regent” of a large industrial firm. She was said to have had two sons by this marriage, although in later years she never revealed where they were.

Mrs Habsburg Windsor, as she styled herself, liked to recall meeting her mother in adult life: “She was with her son, King Alfonso XIII, and she looked so happy. I was glad for her because I could imagine the sorrow of being separated from her only daughter.” (Helle Cristina was apparently unaware that her mother had in fact two daughters by King Alfonso XII.)

“I never spoke about my father with my mother. We had no opportunity. Besides, I think we were both so transported that we never thought of speaking, just of being together. It was an occasion.”

She also remembered meeting her father – as well as her half-brother, the Duke of Windsor – on several occasions. He was willing, she said, to do anything for her. What he did is unclear.

Soon after the outbreak of the Second World War, Mrs Habsburg Windsor arrived as a refugee with neither papers nor passport, though her Cartão de Residência declared her to be British.

It was at this time that she divulged her origins. Nobody took any notice, but her conduct fast made her a thorn in the side of the British Embassy; she would appear uninvited at numerous official functions, claiming to be a representative of the British Government. She was also a regular worshipper at St George’s Church, and more than once occupied the British

Ambassador’s pew, declaring in a guttural German accent that she took precedence.

Mrs Habsburg Windsor, who spoke several languages and had journalistic experience in Egypt, was frequently taken for a spy – although nobody had any idea for whom she might be working. Ostensibly she made her living by teaching English. She was eventually banned from the premises of the British Hospital, where she was accustomed to sit for hours in the waiting room.

Taken from “The Daily Telegraph Book of Obituaries- A Celebration of Eccentric Lives”- Hugh Massingberd.