

# Gabrielle Radziwill: the story of Eastern European princess at the service of Intellectual Cooperation

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The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the participation of women and their involvement in the intellectual cooperation and administration of the League of Nations during the interwar period. To reach this goal, the case study of Lithuanian activist princess Gabrielle Radziwill is presented.

Women's participation and significance in the history of interwar diplomacy is sometimes still perceived only in the light of their participation in creating women's organizations or fighting for women's rights. These activities were very important for the development of the visibility of women at the Western societies, but it was also the main factor to start a new era of European politics. Right after the First World War, women scientists, writers, politicians and other intellectuals also gathered around the League of Nations and its supported organizations. Moreover, many organizations, which helped war refugees, veterans and orphans were primarily based on women's work and intellectual thinking.

This experience contributed a lot to the creation of the League of Nations and also brought hope to ensure the revival of post-war societies and prevention of future disastrous conflicts. The experiences of Western and Eastern fronts during the First World War could be seen as a common motivation for women joining Intellectual Cooperation and other organisations in London, Paris, and Geneva, which were created side by side with the League of Nations.

It is important to analyse the questions, what were the main factors of a successful woman's career in an international organization: was it a noble origin, an experience of volunteering during the war or the participation in the intellectual work? Was the ethnic factor also important? International organizations had to deal with many different languages, cultures, ways of communication and to have vast knowledge, which was essential in trying to build up a European, and moreover, global identity. That is why, the ideas of international peace and intellectual collaboration was at the centre.

Political integrity and stability as well as intellectual cooperation was very important for newly created states in Eastern Europe and helped to secure the recognition from the Western states. Politicians, diplomats, scientists and people from non-governmental organizations were actively making connections with intellectuals from different countries.

In the official staff registry of the Secretariat of the League of Nations three persons were listed as 'Lithuanians'. The first was Tatiana de Peganow, an assistant at the Economic and Financial section and later a senior assistant in Legal section from 1920 to 1929. The second was Joseph Georges Jassulaitis, who worked as a messenger and translator from Lithuanian language from 1925 to 1937. Nevertheless, the third, princess Gabrielle Radziwill was an exceptional case in the context of all woman in the administration of the League of Nations and nearby organizations. Not only that she was the first female Member of the Section, also, she worked for the League for very long time, i.e., eighteen years – from 1920 to 1938.

The main sources to reconstruct the works of Gabrielle Radziwill are preserved in the Archives of the United Nations of the period of the League of Nations (1919–1946). We can find basic information in the personal files of the Staff of the League as well as in the documents of different sections. Also, the Archives of the Committee of Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC) and the archives of the Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IIC) represent her works and tasks during the years. In addition, there is useful information in the Lithuanian Central State Archives and digitized collections from different Lithuanian archives. Lithuanian and Swiss press also helps to better understand the relations between international organizations and the society, to indicate public opinion on issues discussed at the League of Nations and involvement in

women's organizations. The official publications of the League and its fellow organizations are also useful as a source of public communication.

Princess Gabrielle Jeanne Anne Marie Radziwill (1877–1968) was born in Berlin into the noble Lithuanian family of Radziwill (Radvilos), who received the title of *Reichsfürst* from the Holy Roman Emperor in the middle of the sixteenth century. Her family belonged to the branch of Nesvizh, which still has living descendants. During and after the First World War, Gabrielle spent two years working as a nurse for the Russian Red Cross on the Russian-Persian front in charge of the local hospitals. After the Bolshevik Revolution she had to flee Russia because of the persecutions of her family. She asked for the citizenship from the newly established Lithuanian government and was granted, it gave her possibility to move to London and later to Geneva, where she joined the creation of the League of Nations. Being a refugee herself, she perfectly understood the importance of protecting women and children during the conflicts and the significance of empowering of woman through international societies.

Princess Radziwill began her career as a Senior Assistant in the Information Section of the League of Nations. From 1927 to 1931 she worked as a Member of the same section and was responsible for gathering information on the Baltic States and their neighbours. Due to her knowledge of Russian, German, French, English, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian languages she was able to submit huge amount of local press reviews, recommendations for the diplomats and members of the Secretariat who were dealing with those countries. Gabrielle Radziwill herself had made many trips to Lithuania in the 1920s and 1930s. Her afterwards reports were good source of information on political and everyday life of the country, where she was seen as an unbiased observer from the highest rank of administration of the League of Nations and her visits were estimated as the signs of appreciation.

From 1931 to 1934 Radziwill switched to the Social Questions and Opium Traffic Section in the League and later, officially joined Intellectual Cooperation and International Bureaux Section, where she worked until 1938. Here she continued the communication with different women organizations and participated in their events as a representative of the Secretariat and its Intellectual Cooperation branch. Reports of her supervisors and colleagues described princess as kind and generous person as well as thorough and efficient officer, these qualities no doubt were important for her successful and fruitful work in various directions of international organizations.