

“PROFOUNDLY COSMOPOLITAN OF HEART AND SPIRIT”?

Germans in the League of Nations Information Section



The League’s Berlin office was located at Hedemannstraße 21. Source: League of Nations Archive, Geneva, “Item OB22 - No Index Card”.

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ABSTRACT: Germany was a member of the League of Nations from 1926 to 1933. During that time, there were Germans employed at the Secretariat, and its Information Section, which had the greatest German presence, opened a small office to represent the League in Berlin. The League was founded on liberal internationalist ideals and its Covenant included a revolutionary article that opened all positions up to men and women equally. A biographical study of three German individuals associated with the Section and office reveals that ideological commitment to the League was not a given among all German

employees, and gives insight into the interplay of gender, class and national – or international – identity. It also shows how the realities of who was employed in the Secretariat, and why, often hinged – despite the League’s ideological basis and the Covenant’s promise – on pragmatic and political considerations.

KEYWORDS: League of Nations, Information Section, Berlin office, biography, gender, history from below



Introduction

If an event like Germany’s entry into the League could only reach maturity after so long a period of germination, that is perhaps a special guarantee of its permanence and fruitful results. [New York Times, 1926]

These were the words of Gustav Stresemann, German minister of foreign affairs and main force behind Weimar’s turn towards reconciliation, when Germany joined the League of Nations on September 10, 1926. His hopeful words would not hold true – despite the spirit of Locarno that was in the air and the hopes it engendered, Germany would leave the League under Hitler just seven years later, one of the lights of internationalism failing and flickering off. And the relationship between the Weimar Republic and the League was consistently ambivalent, marked by the long shadow cast by the Versailles treaty, which the Germans hoped to revise by virtue of their membership (Steiner 2007: 458, 635-636; Pedersen 2007: 1092-1094).

Nonetheless, during those seven years of membership, there were Germans working for and with the League at all levels. This article takes a closer look at three of these people, using their biography as a prism to learn about a time that historian Zara Steiner has termed the “hinge years”, during which a succession of crises determined the fate of the following decade (Steiner 2007: 635). What were their personal convictions and reasons for seeking work with the organisation, and what do those tell us about League-Weimar relations? What do we learn about the realities of work inside the League Secretariat?

A closer look at Germans in the League shows the greatest presence within the Information Section, which was tasked with informing the public about the League's work – a section that also opened a satellite office in Berlin. The main methodological tool of this article is biography. I will first investigate the biographies of two employees of the Berlin office: Jost Terhaar, who ran it from 1928 to 1933, and Charlotte Cunitz, his clerical assistant who started alongside him and stayed until 1934 to close up shop. They are especially germane to focus on given that they lived and worked on the intersection between national and international interests. The third biographical case that will be discussed is Paulette Weber, a cosmopolitan inhabitant of Geneva who worked only for the League during two temporary appointments but saw herself as destined to be part of the organisation.

The League's employment policy was revolutionary in its explicit standard of parity: Article 7 of the League Covenant states that "all positions under or in connection with the League, including the Secretariat, shall be open equally to men and women" (United Nations Office). This, however, didn't translate into reality. By taking a closer look at two of the many women who worked as lower-level clerks and stenographers for the League, I take an approach "from below" that enables new insights into the constraints of gender and class (Piguet 2019: 19, 52; Caine 2010: 70).

Comparing our three protagonists reveals that despite the League's foundation in liberal internationalism, neither Terhaar nor Cunitz were documented to have had a particular ideological commitment to the League. Moreover, both Cunitz and Weber represent a heightened mobility of women but were still limited in their career advancement. Their difference in identity and class (Cunitz was the daughter of a secretary, while Weber came from a highly mobile and well-connected family), however, leads to a contrast in how they approached their own marginalisation.

The main source base of the article consists of the Secretariat's personnel files. I also include minutes of the appointment and sub-appointment committee, as well as files on the Berlin office, all kept in the League of Nation Archive in Geneva (LONA). I likewise use the online digital research tool "Visualizing the League" which can be found at <https://visualeague-researchtool.com> (Ikonomou et.al. 2023).

Methodology and theory

Biography constitutes the central method of this paper. It uses the individual as a prism to reveal the structures in which a person lived and how they could or couldn't influence those structures (Tuchman 1979: 134; Eriksen 1996: 163). A German working for the League was necessarily part of its political sphere and social world, but also embedded in cultural, political, social, religious, and familial contexts in Germany (Nasaw 2009: 574). German members of the Information Section were by the very nature of their work – keeping contacts with the German press and knowledge elites and tasked with informing “the public” about the League – placed at the intersection of Geneva and Weimar (Seidenfaden 2019: 227). They were part of a public in which the topic of the League was fiercely and continuously debated (Wintzer 2006: 120). Using more than one person as “litmus tests”, moreover, of the historical world in which they lived enables me to see parallels, synchronicities and contrasts between them that would otherwise stay hidden (Caine 2010: 47). Biographical method offers, too, many alternatives to the “cradle-to-grave” study of grand actors (Almagor et. al. 2022: 2, 4). Paying attention rather to lower-rank employees, actors constrained by their class position and gender, gives valuable new insights about the concrete ways those categories shape a life (Caine 2010: 122-123).

I will make use of the “Visualizing the League of Nations” online digital research tool that illustrates the League Secretariat across several categories, based on prosopographical data (Ikonomidou et. al. 2023). The prosopographical method – tracing a group of people via standardised biographical data points – reveals, regarding the League Secretariat, patterns, networks and changes of the institution, and its interplay with the outside world.

Situating the Berlin office

An inquiry into German individuals involved with the Information Section and the Berlin office calls for contextualization across different fronts. The following will thus provide an overview on the League's ideology, Germany-League relations, Germans working in the Secretariat, as well as about its female employees, and, lastly, the institutional framework of the Information Section.

First of all, it is important to take a look at how the liberal internationalist ideology that shaped the ideas of Woodrow Wilson, intellectual father of the League, translated into reality within the institutional world of the League Secretariat. Historians Karen Gram-Skjoldager and Haakon Ikonomou have discussed whether the Secretariat could be understood as an autonomous liberal internationalist actor in itself (Gram-Skjoldager and Ikonomou 2021: 32). They show, via three case studies of the Secretary-General, the Disarmament Section, and the Health section, that the Secretariat painted a much more ideologically diverse picture and had room for conservative and technocratic internationalisms (Ibid.: 40, 44, 48, 50). Despite the League's founding values and the various liberal internationalist actors using it as a platform, it is also important to remember that the League's dependency on member state support shaped the inside of the League apparatus and various sections' scope of action to their core. This can also be seen in the way state interests shaped staffing decisions and how, while staff were expected to hold loyalty to the League only, "every (higher) member of the Secretariat was considered a contact point of his/her respective government" (Gram-Skjoldager and Ikonomou 2019: 262, 273). The strategic inclusion of national interests in appointments meant that the Secretariat could gain legitimacy and thus diplomatic authority (Ibid.: 273).

The "game" of appointment also played a role in regards to Germany joining the League (Kahlert 2020: 60). In the words of German historian Michael Jonas, the attitude of Weimar Germany towards the League was "ambivalent, at worst hostile, at best pragmatic, and rarely visionary" (Jonas 2020: 164). In post-war Germany, the brand-new League was inextricably linked to a peace treaty most Germans perceived as a humiliation (Wintzer 2006: 210). With Germany excluded from membership, relations between the League and Weimar after the war were tense. Only Stresemann's reconciliatory politics led to the signing of the Locarno treaties in 1925 and German admission into the League the year after. A succession of crises and conflicts, compounded by Stresemann's death in 1929, led to a more confrontational German course towards the League, and the country withdrew under Hitler the year of his election (Kimmich 1976: 190). Jonas, who has investigated the biographies of a number of German nationals working for the League Secretariat and the German Foreign Office's (Auswärtiges Amt, henceforth AA) League personnel politics, comes to the

conclusion that while the relationship especially between the top-level diplomats dispatched to Geneva and the League was certainly uneasy, the German presence in the League was not driven by clear-cut hostility (Jonas 2020: 160). Lastly, organisations in support of the League and liberal internationalism could also be found in Germany (Wintzer 2006: 121f).

The Information Section was tasked with informing the public about, and legitimising, the League's work. As historian Emil Seidenfaden has shown, the Information Section's conceptualisation of the League always included nation states and their interests. Given the Secretariat's role as representing its member states, it adhered to a dogma of neutrality (Seidenfaden 2019: 228f, 253). His work shows, again, how the liberal internationalism that brought the League into being did not and could not translate into an openly liberal internationalist ideology permeating every level of the organization or indeed its official communications, as the political boundaries of the member states could not be overstepped (Ibid.: 126). Lastly, the public the section addressed was for the greatest part implicitly understood as educated elites that already harboured some sympathies towards the League (Ibid.: 86). This can also be seen in the Berlin office's work, which represented one of in all seven global offices that were tasked with disseminating information about the League and building and maintaining local contacts with Geneva (Ibid.: 227).

The Covenant's promise of employment equality, a result of feminist lobbying, was something altogether new (Kahlert 2020: 61). Women in the Secretariat were, still, employed in lower positions most of the time and in those sections whose purview was considered traditionally feminine, and were passed over for promotions or replaced by men when their positions grew in importance (Piguet 2021: 59f). Nevertheless, combined with the new professional avenues provided by shorthand-typing and stenography, Geneva was likewise a hotbed of professional opportunities for young, unmarried, and highly mobile women (Auberer 2022: 227f). Last, there were many ideological overlaps between feminism and internationalism, represented at the organisational level by, for example, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Sluga 2017: 64).

The German presence in the League Secretariat

In 1926-1934, 34 German 1st division employees could be found in the Leadership and Functional Sections¹. An investigation with the “Visualizing the League” tool into the German presence in the Secretariat across institutional entities and across the whole of the League’s existence shows that there were Germans working across a wide variety of sections, and that they were present just as much in the administrative departments where 2nd division staff worked, such as the duplicating and multigraph service and the pool of stenographers (almost all female German employees can be found here)².

Significant here is the prominence of the Information Section, which represents the strongest German presence across time by far, followed by the Berlin office. The Berlin office was a branch under the Information Section but does not overlap in the prosopographical dataset since the Berlin office and the Information Section are here treated as two separate institutional entities. These numbers include, however, temporary collaborators, which were members of national elites invited for the most part during the annual Assembly to observe the League’s workings (Seidenfaden 2019: 84f). Given the fact that this system “[underscores] the section’s character as ‘at the point of contact’ with the outside world”, they provide relevant insight into the Section’s work in Germany (Ibid.: 84). German temporary collaborators invited included such diverse people as Ermentrude Bäcker von Ranke, grandchild of Leopold von Ranke and the first female habilitated historian in Germany (in 1928; Kieler Gelehrtenverzeichnis, n.d.), and Giseler Wirsing, leader of the National Socialist “Tatkreis” (in 1932). His recruitment to go to Geneva was described by Jost Terhaar, head of the Berlin office, as a success and part of a larger “extraordinarily difficult”, but moderately fruitful, process of establishing ties with Nazi youth (LONA, file R5381-18A-6909-1743, 1932). Secretary-General Eric Drummond comments positively on Terhaar’s report: he has “noted with special interest the indications which this report contains on the value of the temporary collaborators system”, indicating the hopes in the League apparatus that, despite the fractures with both Germany

¹ The number was 55 for the UK, 48 for France, and 33 for Italy (Ikonomou et. al. 2023).

² See Piguet, 2021, p. 56, for a visualisation of the three-division system.

apparent at this point, the mechanism of the Information Section's publicity work leading to growing sympathy with its work had hope of fruition (LONA, file R5381-18A-6909-1743, note by Drummond, 1932). Both von Ranke and Wirsing illuminate different aspect of the strategies the Information Section employed towards "the public" (primarily conceptualised as intellectual elites and those already favourable towards the League, Seidenfaden 2019: 86). There were spaces specially reserved amongst the temporary collaborators for women, which might possibly have led to von Ranke's invitation (Ibid.: 86). The invitation of Wirsing, meanwhile, can be seen as an example of the Section inviting League sceptics in hopes of ameliorating their view on the League (Ibid.; more on this later).

The head of the Berlin office: Jost Terhaar³

Jost Terhaar, our first protagonist, commenced his appointment as Head of the Berlin office on the 15th of August 1928 following a discussion in the Appointments Committee in June; the committee's protocol contains a comment by German under-secretary Dufour on "the difficulties of finding the right man" (LONA, file S956-265-1). Among these difficulties seemed to be both the various requirements for such a post and a salary judged low considering the cost of living in Berlin. Terhaar was recommended to Max Beer, freshly appointed A member of the Information Section, by a, so Beer, "very renowned Catholic personality in Germany": priest Friedrich Muckermann, editor of a Catholic literary journal, who judged him to be "from what I could gain from correspondence with him, honestly enthused by the ideas with which he would have to work". Muckermann was himself a member of the League of Nations Union and added that the League was a "quite nice idea" that, however, needed "a stronger effort" put in to "survive against the adverse conditions and [...] become a common good of our people."

Beer recommended Terhaar to Drummond, mentioning that he himself had known Terhaar for a long time, valuing his "serious character and journalistic qualities", and that he possessed "what appears to me essential for the post in Berlin -, [sic] a quite great idealism and youthful belief in the League of Nations". Beer saw several advantages to choosing Terhaar: he had been a correspondent

³ Everything not otherwise cited is taken from Terhaar's personnel file, LONA, file S892-197-3455.

for several newspapers, some belonging to the Catholic Centre Party and industrial ones, in Geneva and was thus familiar with the League's work; his appointment would satisfy both journalists in Geneva and German political milieus; and they avoided what he saw with apprehension in some other candidates, namely "the temptation to want to play too personal a role, to take on too diplomatic a demeanour and to exaggerate the importance of his functions". Pierre Comert, director of the Information Section, recommended announcing the appointment before the new German Reichstag was constituted to pre-empt the strong parties of the new parliament calling for another candidate, given Terhaar's Centre Party affiliation. The appointment was approved by Drummond and the German Chancellor of the Republic. Terhaar was at the point of his appointment twenty-seven, the son of a merchant from Westphalia, and held a doctorate in Political Science. After working both at a sociological institute and as a lawyer at an industrial association, he had started working as a journalist in 1924.

In November 1933, Terhaar handed in his resignation to Drummond's successor Joseph Avenol with the wish to be let go as quickly as possible because he had been offered a position as Vice Director of the political-economical section of the IG Farbenindustrie in Frankfurt; he was granted this request. His personnel file contains documents dated 1947 after the League of Nations ceased to exist, when Terhaar wrote to Beer's successor in the Information Section, the Austrian Ranshofen-Wertheimer, who was now employed at the United Nations, asking for the copy of the letter he was sent by Avenol upon his resignation. Ranshofen-Wertheimer, significantly, adds a paragraph stressing that "no question of employment or application for employment is involved in this matter" and asks, confidentially, for information on Terhaar's whereabouts since his resignation, showing the delicacy of the postwar situation. The Geneva personnel office who answered could not supply any further information.

Sources on Terhaar after 1933 are indeed scant. His name does, however, appear in protocols of the IG Farben case, one of the Subsequent Nuremberg trials for war crimes held before US military courts in Germany, on several letters and documents (the company had, among other things, manufactured the gas used to murder those imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps; US printing office 1949: 12, 98, 106ff, 178ff, 224, 262f, 273, 310). A search in the Political Archive of the AA in Berlin (PA)

identifies him, furthermore, as a member of the SA, a paramilitary organisation of the NSDAP (PA, file R 9361-III/569646)⁴.

Terhaar's appointment was influenced, as shown, by a number of factors: he represented a candidate that appeared to possess the "formation 'genevoise'", as Beer called it, and was accepted and later appreciated by German political and journalistic circles. At the same time, his appointment was influenced firstly by the fact that he accepted a salary that otherwise, so Beer wrote, "only attracted insufficient candidates" (up until the point when he wrote to Comert in mid-1930, in the wake of the financial crisis, asking for a raise in urgent terms, having had to move in with his parents-in-law, which he was granted). Secondly, he was judged not to overstep the bounds of his position, important, too, because of the responsibilities he bore with only remote supervision from Geneva. Of Terhaar's work, we know that it was well-received in Geneva and the annual reports on him from 1930-1933 were positive. Comert, in 1931, emphasised his work establishing connections with economic organisations and the Office's "daily and growing contact with all branches of the political and technical press in Germany". Despite the increasingly volatile relationship between Germany and the League, the Office established a multiplicity of contacts. Even taking Terhaar's own judgement in his report that "[the Office] is doing a work for publicity in Germany which is described as necessary and indispensable by the German daily press, specialist organs, economic organisations and other branches of public life, and also Government offices" with a grain of salt, given a threat of reorganisation on the horizon, the large amount of communication with various individuals and organisations in the external fund sources does offer an indication that the Office managed to carve out a small spot for itself (LONA, file R5381-18A-6909-1743).

The clerical assistant of the Berlin office: Charlotte Cunitz⁵

Charlotte Cunitz was hired before Terhaar, in February 1928, and stayed on until the final liquidation of the Berlin Office in March 1934; between November 13th, 1928, and May 31th, 1930, she was transferred to Geneva. She was born in 1893 in Zoppot near Danzig, where her

⁴ Lack of access to the PA's physical files means that I am limited to gleaning information from the metadata available through the Federal Archive's online search engine.

⁵ Everything not otherwise cited is taken from Cunitz's personnel file, LONA, file S750-55-876.

father worked as secretary for the worker's compensation board and chamber of commerce, and after finishing school, she learned dactylography and stenography "in private circles". After working some time in her father's office, she was employed in different firms in Germany as secretary and steno-dactylographe before working, from 1918 to 1925, for the German embassy in Bern. Returning to Berlin, she became secretary for a chemical factory - "she is resigning an interesting position in order to accept our vacancy", Comert noted. Like Terhaar, she was recommended by Max Beer, who she temporarily assisted in Geneva in November 1928, which had met opposition from Howard Riggins Huston, Chief of Internal Services. He saw it as setting a dangerous precedent given Cunitz's limited knowledge of languages other than German and thus inability to work as a typist in English and French, which was otherwise demanded of shorthand typists. Comert wrote to Drummond that finding someone different was, "extremely difficult, despite appearances, Germans that know foreign languages have become very rare the last few years", which can possibly be understood as a comment on building tensions with Weimar. Cunitz did go to Geneva, but found "great difficulty in acclimatizing herself", so Comert noted in 1929, where he judged her to be "somewhat run down at the moment, owing largely to overwork". Cunitz's untiring work also in Berlin is well-documented; Comert in 1932 tried to effect a wage raise for her and Office assistant Manteuffel, due to the amount of overtime they put in, which was shot down by the Sub-Appointment committee with the argument that in the current economic situation, they were privileged to have a job at all (LONA, file S962-271-1). The nature of her secretarial work makes it harder to trace what her precise tasks in the Office were, but with only three employees working there at any one time, she was without a doubt indispensable to its function and work processes.

On the liquidation of the office, she contacted Comert's successor, Adrianus Pelt, inquiring into the possibility of leaving earlier in case she found a new position. Her letter bore hints of desperation that clearly reflect the economic difficulties and lack of opportunities in the wake of the Great Depression. Pelt mentioned Cunitz's worries to Jost Terhaar - "[...] it concerns me from a moral point of view." Terhaar seemed to have helped her; there is a personnel file under her name in the records of the IG Farbenindustrie, where she appears to have worked from 1934-1947 (PA, file R 8128/26258). Searching the PA also reveals her as a member of the NSDAP (PA, file R 9361-I/476).

Continued disappointment: the case of Paulette Weber⁶

Paulette Weber, who was engaged in the League on a temporary basis for three weeks as replacement secretary to Beer when Cunitz was ill, is chosen as a third case even though she wasn't involved directly with the Berlin office, and also worked in the Disarmament section for her second stint with the League. The reason for this is her singularly ideological motivation for seeking work with the League, which presents a contrast to Terhaar and Cunitz. Weber contacted the League for the first time in 1921, opening with "if it at first moment appears audacious of a young woman of German origin to address herself to the League of Nations and to offer it her services [...] I hope to overcome your antipathies and hesitations". She argued for her internationalism and cosmopolitanism, emphasised her political interest, and praised the League's efforts to establish peace after the horrors of war. Her father used to be a Protestant priest in Geneva, and she was educated partly there and partly in Berlin. She had travelled a lot in Europe, not only to learn languages but also to gain understanding of other peoples' "customs and characters [...] to make myself deeply cosmopolitan of heart and spirit". She recounted that during the war, her father was never duped by the "inept games" of the German government and defended his opinion against even his closest friends, leading the family to spend the war years in Geneva. She ended the letter by listing a whole paragraph of names, friends of her father's, that included a hotel director and a reverend. In early 1926, her next letter came with a recommendation from the head of the Belgian ambassador in Budapest to Drummond, and in late 1926, she wrote again to Drummond recounting her language skills and the university studies she had undertaken in the meanwhile. After failing to secure a post, she continued contacting the Secretariat, asking for vacancies, and is invited to an official test in stenography. At that point, however, she had surpassed the age limit of 35 and expressed her regrets, stating that the hotel work she was currently pursuing does not satisfy her intellectually or on a humanitarian level since she had grown up in an "erudite household" and spent the last year preparing for a position at the Secretariat. Later, after her two engagements at the Secretariat, she applied for a spot at the disarmament conference, again devoting some space to describing her international ideology, connecting it to Christian virtues. "I dreamed about a League of Nations", she wrote, "before it was created"; her exclusion from the Secretariat as a polyglot she

⁶ Everything not otherwise cited is taken from Weber's personnel file, LONA, file S904-209-3717.

described as “almost strange” considering the number of employees who speak less languages than her. She was, however, not employed by the League again, and I was unable to find sources on her later whereabouts.

Ideology, gender, class

In the following, I will discuss the different ideological approaches to the League that are revealed by our three protagonists, and in Terhaar’s case, the way this shaped his work in the Berlin office. Thereafter, I will use gender and class as parameters of comparison. Here the biographical approach reveals its strength, as the prism of the individual reflects certain structures in significantly different ways, interacting with the many unique aspects of the life in question.

To start with Terhaar, we know that his background spanned law, political science, industry, journalism, and academia, and that he was affiliated with the Centre Party. This indubitably shaped both which contacts he brought with him to the Berlin office, which connections he forged and the ease with which he established them. Both his outreach to the Nazi youth movement, actions during the war and lack of sources in which he personally speaks out on the Geneva spirit attributed to him attest to a political elasticity that must have helped him navigate the German political, organisational, economic, and public landscapes. The Information Section “dogma of neutrality” and the Branch Offices’ instruction to follow their own country’s foreign policy are visible in the office’s work and did not seem to constitute a problem for Terhaar or the office in general. Historian Tomoko Akami has convincingly shown that the Tokyo office of the League, which existed until 1939, was unable to reach the ordinary public due to, in the first place, its focus on technical and expert knowledge; the Berlin office had the same focus and can thus be suspected of having had the same problem (Akami 2018: 82ff). The extent of this, and the way it would compare with Tokyo, unfortunately, lies beyond the scope and source base of this article. In the second place, Akami argues, the broader public could not be reached because the conceptions of publicity that the League’s information work was based on were based on liberalism and thus unable to accommodate alternative discourses, such as communism (Ibid.: 77). What tensions would have revealed themselves had the Berlin office existed past the date of Germany leaving the League are pure speculation, but of course, Nazi ideology was just as incompatible with the liberal internationalism

the League was ultimately founded on, so that Terhaar's attempts, supported by Drummond at reaching out to its various movements the year before the election of Hitler and Germany's exit from the League, following the logic that knowledge about the League leads to support of it, can, looking back, only be categorised as a doomed endeavour. Still, his actions reflect the fact that an existential basis in liberal internationalism did not mean that alternative ideologies were shunned by the Secretariat's actors. This is most extremely represented by Drummond's successor Joseph Avenol, whose support for the Axis powers shaped his plans for the future of the League, placing him within a fascist internationalism (Morales 2018).

Taking a look at Cunitz paints a similar picture: her NDSAP membership likewise illustrates how working for the League, even for an office that had the goal of spreading sympathy for its project, did not mean a liberal and internationalist persuasion that would have kept her from joining a Nazi organ. It is very possible that, for her and Terhaar, it was simply a job that ensured their livelihood. Their trajectory also reflect the fragility of all League-Weimar understanding; the rise and victory of fascism made Germany's exit not only a foreign policy decision that had unfortunate consequences on a personal level, but a decisive break that led to them returning to a purely German context and quickly positioned them on the opposing side of their former colleagues.

A significant difference between Cunitz and Terhaar, however, is of course gender and class, and the limits these imposed on Cunitz. In general, she was a hard and skilled worker who frequently worked overtime; her references by past employers are exceptional, and the annual reports on her work note the vast number of tasks she took on, such as informing the press and developing the review copy service, and "her remarkable capability for work". She was responsible for the Berlin Office when Terhaar was away, where she showed, according to Comert, that she "can work independently and on her own initiative". The German ambassador in Bern found that her qualities "qualify her exceptionally to a leading position in her profession". One can read a note of surprise into some of these comments. Cunitz did not have a documented affiliation to women's organisations or even a documented internationalist persuasion, but her biography still reflects a heightened mobility of young unmarried women at the time that was still new; she travelled in Germany and left Danzig for Berlin, and Berlin again for Bern, in her twenties. The vast array of

tasks that she took on in previous positions, in Berlin and in Bern, and her apparent talents might have qualified her for a wide variety of work. Her position thus reflects a Secretariat where women were overrepresented in stenography and secretarial duties but not higher positions, and sometimes took on more tasks than they were officially being paid for (Ikonomou 2022). This reflects general society at the time; Cunitz was constrained by gender power relations that opened up certain careers, also as a tool for international mobility, and closed off others. These power structures applied to Weber as well; the great difference to Cunitz is that she expressed her awareness of them, locating the reason for her lack of education in structural discrimination faced by women and mentioned her father's opposition to female emancipation, which had kept her from gaining any academic titles. She also represents, compared to Cunitz and Terhaar, the ideological outlier who supports the League project wholeheartedly and with great eloquence.

Charlotte Cunitz was the daughter of a secretary and had certainly been afforded education, but class differences nonetheless become very apparent in comparing her to Weber. Weber's strategies of employing letters of recommendations and names of local elites known to her family are direct consequences of her class position and the life-long mobility it had led to, and her comment on the "strangeness of being excluded" from the League speaks to a sense of entitlement. She moreover openly addressed the fact that an application by a German citizen only three years after the war could be met with a negative reaction and utilised her father's lack of support for Germany during the War in her favour. Her education in both Berlin and Geneva, extensive travels, and residence outside Germany, then, enabled her to lay claim on an identity beyond the bounds of a national German one. She already saw herself as an cosmopolitan individual, something Cunitz first obtained via her employment and could lose in times of economic crisis. In Paula Weber, the interactions of class, internationalism, and mobility become visible. The fact that despite her ideological commitment, she was not employed by the League, shows again how the pragmatic aspects of staffing (such as an age limit) trumped the League's idealistic foundations.

Conclusion

The Information Section was without a doubt the section with the largest German presence, even taking the temporary collaborator system into consideration. Its task was to inform the public about the League's work. Working for its Berlin office was thus intimately connected to representing the League towards a German public; as the cases of Jost Terhaar and Charlotte Cunitz have shown, however, this did not mean a pronounced ideological commitment to it, and the latter did not secure Paulette Weber an employment by its own merit. Terhaar's appointment, moreover, which in contrast to those of Cunitz and Weber was of interest in German political circles, can be seen as a consequence of several factors, not least his political centrism and assumed lack of overreach. The three individuals thus illustrate how the pragmatic realities of who was employed by the League could be far from the lofty idealism it was founded on, both high positions debated on the Appointment Committee, like Terhaar's, as well as concerning lower positions. Similarly, the careers of Cunitz and Weber illustrate the structural constraints on female workers at the time that the nominal promise of employment equality at the Secretariat did not cancel out. Cunitz and Weber, both constrained by which careers were possible for women at the time, had both led a border-crossing life; the emphasis by Weber on her ideological commitment, meanwhile, and the lack of any such in Cunitz, are striking and can be explained by Weber's background in an intellectual, highly mobile family. The focus of the Berlin office's work on technical and press elites, finally, can be seen both in light of general trends in how the Information Section worked but bears also the imprint of Terhaar's own background and contacts.

The intimate study of the individual, it must be said, limits any ability to generalise on these results; using, with Eriksen, another person - another litmus test - might have revealed different things (Eriksen 1996: 117). Still, this biographical study contributes precisely with insights into what was possible for these individuals and what wasn't, where boundaries they faced lay and where they failed and succeeded in their efforts in the precarious context of the Hinge Years.



Archives

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