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# WORKING PAPER

**Forgotten Economic Thinkers: Women in the  
International Chamber of Commerce (1920s–  
1990s)**

Guilherme Sampaio and Pierre Eichenberger



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## **Abstract**

This working paper is part of a collaborative project, 'Business and International Order', between ECOINT and Pierre Eichenberger and Thomas David from the University of Lausanne. Women's contributions to business internationalism remain an understudied subject. This paper helps to address that gap by enquiring about the women that worked for the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) since its foundation in 1920. We argue that accounting for mid-level thinkers demonstrates the crucial, hidden importance of women to ICC policy work, especially after 1945.

The ICC was the first international business organisation to exist permanently and emulated the League of Nations (LON) by creating a professional secretariat. The first and second parts of the paper contextualise the employment of women in ICC headquarters against the example of the LON. We show that during the interwar years, women were mostly relegated to secretarial tasks. An epochal shift took place after World War Two, as covered in the third section, when women started being employed as economic and legal officers. They also participated in the all-important ICC congresses as external experts or businesswomen in their own right.

UN efforts to regulate international trade immediately attracted the ICC's attention. Through the biographies of four ICC officers (Marie-Constance Psimènos de Metz-Noblat; Edith Sansom; Roberta Lusardi; and Janette Buraas), we demonstrate how women represented the ICC in the United Nations' forums. We conclude by reflecting on how accounting for women as mid-level thinkers changes historical understandings of the ICC and opens new paths of research.

## **Keywords**

International Economic Thinking; Women economic thinkers; International Chamber of Commerce; Business Internationalism; United Nations.



## Introduction

Among the most welcome recent historiographical developments in international history is the integration of women political and economic thinkers into a reconstructed understanding of economic thinking: what it involves, who practices it, and where.<sup>1</sup> Historical narratives of twentieth-century internationalism are being radically reframed, taking into account the importance of gender norms and feminist motivations to international work on labour, world peace, and economic development.<sup>2</sup> The League of Nations and the United Nations have thereby been identified as centres for the crafting and dissemination of economic knowledge by mid-level actors who do not fit conventional historical representations of the 'economic expert': most commonly the male academic or politician with an economics, finance, or law background.<sup>3</sup> One development in this historiographic renewal is a novel attention to the headquarters of intergovernmental international organisations as spaces that offered professional outlets to women (especially those with a university diploma) who otherwise, through gender discrimination, were often unable to enter positions in academia, national public administration, or the private sector.<sup>4</sup> Accounting for mid-level women thinkers in international organisations thus promises to enrich historical narratives of women's contribution to economic thinking, as opposed to the traditional concern with women's contributions to theoretical economic thought.<sup>5</sup>

This working paper investigates the place of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), founded in 1920, in this same history. Founded less than one year after the League of Nations (LON) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the ICC—the first non-governmental, international business organisation to ever exist on a permanent basis—followed the example of those new intergovernmental bodies by constituting a permanent, professional secretariat headquartered in Paris. The ICC was a male-dominated environment—a club for elite businessmen. No woman has ever presided over the ICC, and its first female Secretary General, the Swiss Maria Livanos Cattai, was only appointed in 1996 after a two-decade stint at the World Economic Forum.

Nonetheless, our main hypothesis is that by accounting for mid-level 'thinkers', we find firstly that along with the LON and the UN, the ICC did steadily employ women, and, secondly, that the expertise it sought in women employees changed throughout the century. We argue that, before 1945, women either featured in ICC events as the wives of businessmen or were mostly employed as typists and secretaries. Even though after World War Two the ICC remained a male-oriented environment, an epochal shift took place after 1945 as women gradually started participating in ICC activities or joining the secretariat, even as economic experts, and from the 1980s onwards, as legal specialists. Their contributions only become visible if we classify these women as mid-level thinkers: signing reports circulated behind the

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<sup>1</sup> For key examples of how the canon of international relations authorship is being redefined by the reassessment of women thinkers in the history of international relations, see Hutchings and Owens, 'Women Thinkers'; Owens, Dunstan, Hutchings, and Rietzler, 'An Introduction', in Owens et alii, *Women's International Thought*; Owens and Rietzler (eds.), *Women's International Thought*. Regarding the problematic of retrieving women economic thinkers in international organisations, especially in the United Nations and its subsidiary agencies, see: Sluga, 'Twentieth-Century'; and comparably, Bettancourt and Espinel, 'The Invisible Ones'.

<sup>2</sup> Concerning how women shaped the agenda of interwar and post-war internationalisms, see: Sluga, 'Women, Feminisms'.

<sup>3</sup> Regarding the problematic of retrieving women economic thinkers in international organisations, especially in the United Nations and its subsidiary agencies, see: Sluga, 'Twentieth-Century'; and comparably, Bettancourt and Espinel, 'The Invisible Ones'.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 6–7.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. with Becchio, *A History*; Dimand et alii, *A Biographical*; and Madden et alii, *The Routledge Handbook*.

curtain, bringing to bear their own intellectual expertise and agenda, and navigating spheres of action delimited by the male industrialists, lawyers, and economists institutionally positioned above them.<sup>6</sup>

Representing a wide sphere of business actors, from multinationals to individual bankers, the ICC tackled major economic debates that continue to structure the globalised economy of today: cartels and free trade, currency convertibility and exchange controls, limits to intellectual property, and North-South imbalances. Due to its global reach and longevity, the ICC is an obvious vantage point from which to study the evolving roles assumed by women within business internationalism, while offering a novel angle to understand their contributions to the economic thinking developed in international organisations other than the United Nations and its ancillary agencies.<sup>7</sup> Yet the wider question of how women engaged with business internationalism during the twentieth century is particularly absent from the growing literature on the ICC and has drawn little historical attention beyond Catherine Bishop's study of the women-led International Federation of Business and Professional Women.<sup>8</sup> Aside from the presidents and the secretary-generals heading the secretariat,<sup>9</sup> the women and men working full-time as mid-level thinkers have been elided from existing surveys of the ICC.<sup>10</sup> Historical analyses of the ICC have so far focused on its institutional history, particularly on the activities of its various technical committees, which deal with matters as diverse as trade law, arbitration, and advertising. The ICC has been studied mainly as a means of understanding how neoliberal economists, businessmen, and multinationals engaged with international organisations to either promote trade liberalisation or push for the creation of international cartels (during the interwar period).<sup>11</sup> By contrast, we show that underneath presidential pronouncements, industrialists representing their national chambers of commerce, and renowned orthodox economists hired as external consultants, there were women (and mid-level men) who helped steer the ICC's policymaking efforts from behind the scenes and in the absence of businessmen.

Recent historical scholarship on the formation and staffing practices of the LON's secretariat and of the United Nations,<sup>12</sup> as well as the gendered discrimination limiting the employment of women in both institutions,<sup>13</sup> provides us with a crucial background for our study. We advance the existing conversation by identifying the women working for the ICC secretariat and participating in official ICC activities from the 1920s to the 1990s. Drawing on ICC publications and archival material from the ICC and the LON, we demonstrate that women were already at the ICC in the interwar period: in ill-considered but logistically vital positions

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<sup>6</sup> For a recent conceptualisation of 'mid-level' international economic thinkers, see: Sluga, 'Twentieth-Century', 7–10; cf. with the alternative and vaguer understanding of middle-level actors by Weiss and Wilkinson, 'The Missing Middle'.

<sup>7</sup> Historical interest in women's contributions to international economic thinking as developed within the UN is recent. Aside from ECOINT's research, a non-exhaustive bibliography would include: Boris et al., *Women's ILO*; Kott and Droux, *Globalizing*; Thébaud, 'Le genre de l'OIT' and *Une traversé*. On CEPAL, see Bettancourt and Espinel, 'The Invisible Ones'.

<sup>8</sup> Bishop, 'Better business'; see also Linda Perriton's study of the Federation of British Professional and Business Women: 'Forgotten Feminists'.

<sup>9</sup> Druelle-Korn, 'The Great War'; and David and Eichenberger, "A World Parliament of Business"?

<sup>10</sup> With the exception of Mirèze Philippe's survey of the ICC's female arbitrators, cited further ahead.

<sup>11</sup> For a representative sample of recent studies covering the ICC's activities, see Slobodian, *Globalists*; Bertilorenzi, 'The International Chamber of Commerce'; and Tomashot, 'Selling Peace'.

<sup>12</sup> On the LON secretariat, see Gram-Skjoldager and Ikonou, 'Making Sense of the League'; and by the same authors: 'The Construction of the League of Nations'. For the UN's, see Auberer, 'Digesting the League of Nations', 417–424; and Reinalda, *International Secretariats*, 55–91.

<sup>13</sup> Piguët, 'Employées à la Société des nations'; 'Gender Distribution in the League of Nations'; and Herren, 'Gender and International Relations'.



as typists and secretaries; or as wives of leading businessmen, exerting their informal diplomatic skills at ICC congresses.<sup>14</sup>

When, after 1945, and again on American initiatives, the ICC was reborn,<sup>15</sup> women began leaving a significant mark in ICC policymaking as economic and legal actors (classifications that often overlapped in their impact and significance for the history of commerce and trade). The greater access of women to universities during the Second World War and the foundation of the UN contributed to a larger influx into the ICC of academically trained women, both at its Paris headquarters and fledgling New York Office, the latter newly created to keep tabs on the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). 'Business wives' continued to feature at ICC congresses, and women still took on traditional secretarial roles or the direction of divisions in which they assumed 'feminine' tasks such as dictation. For most of the post-war period, women were in positions of relative numerical inferiority compared to their male colleagues, but they did take increasing responsibility for policy work and its diffusion through bi-yearly ICC congresses and expert commissions. As importantly, they worked as lobbyists for business interests within the UN system of international organisations. From the 1980s, they also started making inroads into the ICC's secretive Court of Arbitration as Arbitrators and Counsels.

To illustrate this history, we have structured our paper in three parts. Firstly, we compare the place of women in the interwar ICC secretariat to the place of women in the LON. The League established the first professional secretariat and there are significant similarities between both organisations' employment of women: from privileging local applicants to the prevalence of a gendered labour division, according to which women were mostly relegated to lower-ranking positions. Secondly, we examine in detail how that process took place by exploring the ICC's employment of women as typists and secretaries during the interwar period. Similarly, we scrutinise how the wives of businessmen practised 'informal diplomacy' during ICC congresses, the ICC's major form of social networking.

In the third section of the paper, we begin by analysing how, in the post-war period, women were admitted to the ICC and national business chambers not only as secretaries and typists but as 'businesswomen' and economic consultants. As legal experts, they were brought into the ICC Court of Arbitration secretariat too. We then survey the first women working permanently in the ICC secretariat as resident economic experts and present four representative portraits of ICC women officials. These women were responsible for guaranteeing the ICC's (growing) engagement with the UN's ECOSOC and other specialised economic agencies such as the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD):<sup>16</sup> Marie-Constance Psimènos de Metz-Noblat (1925–2015); Edith Sansom; Roberta Lusardi (1914–2000); and Janette Buraas (1920–2001). Psimènos, who started her work at ICC headquarters in 1949, became the first woman to be appointed First Director, a position she took up from 1973 to 1989. In this role, she was subordinate only to the ICC's President and its Secretary General. During that same timeframe, Sansom, Lusardi, and Buraas officially represented the ICC in UN New York and Geneva.

We conclude by reflecting on how the history of the personal and professional backgrounds of women collaborating with the ICC offers both a richer understanding of women's socio-professional status and influence inside the organisation and, more generally, of the ICC's economic programmes and relations with the UN overall.

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<sup>14</sup> In practice, businessmen's wives were the heirs of longstanding nineteenth-century traditions of informal diplomacy starring women from aristocratic and bourgeois circles. On the importance of women in post-1815 international diplomacy, see: Sluga, *The Invention*; and Mori, 'How Women'.

<sup>15</sup> David and Eichenberger, "A World Parliament", 6.

<sup>16</sup> On the usefulness of the biographical lens to uncover the wider problematics of international secretariats (from staffing and working practices to its members' networking, loyalty, and legitimacy vis-à-vis other organisations and national governments), see: Ikonomou, 'The Biography'.

## 1. The ICC and the advent of the professional secretariat in international organisations after 1919

The establishment and workings of the LON anticipated the operation of the United Nations and its subsidiary agencies—<sup>17</sup>from the ground-breaking macroeconomic and statistical research undertaken by its Economic and Financial Section,<sup>18</sup> to the pioneering creation of a professional secretariat. Founded in 1919, the LON was the first large-scale, intergovernmental organisation to form a permanent secretariat, until then a feature exclusive either to national governments or smaller international organisations with very specific technical aims such as the Public International Unions.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, from 1923 onwards, the ICC successfully lobbied to gain official access to LON conferences and committees on related economic and financial issues, thus anticipating its official NGO status at the UN's ECOSOC after 1945. Like the LON, the ICC was a body that balanced national and international representation.<sup>20</sup> Historians Karen Gram-Skjoldager and Haakon Ikononou have pinpointed how the League's secretariat strove to uphold an uneasy balance 'between national interests and autonomy' because it 'existed through the will of states; yet needed to exist autonomously of the same'.<sup>21</sup> The ICC similarly sprang from the will of its founding national chambers of commerce (particularly the US and France, followed by Britain, Belgium and Italy).<sup>22</sup> However, unlike the LON, the pro-business focus of the ICC demarcated its secretariat's functions and possibly contributed to an ideologically and intellectually more homogenous secretariat.

From 1920 to 1923, the ICC secretariat grew from 8 to 28 employees, reaching 45 within the first two decades of its existence.<sup>23</sup> Its size was analogous to that of the LON's Economic and Financial Section and so were its functions:<sup>24</sup> harvesting economic data and lobbying public opinion by publishing 'facts concerning business and economic conditions'; and researching and preparing the ICC's legislative propositions, from which reports (officially drafted by technical committees bringing together national chamber representatives) would thereafter be distributed to the ICC's members and other external organisations. Besides the Board of Directors and its subsidiary Administrative Commission (again, composed of members of each national chamber), the policy work conducted by the ICC secretariat was regularly evaluated in bi-yearly congresses, which it also organised.<sup>25</sup> Businessmen appointed to the ICC's Board and Administrative Commission did not expect to dedicate all of their time to the ICC, as Thomas David and Pierre Eichenberger have stressed. This meant that the secretariat held significant responsibility in driving the ICC's policymaking efforts.<sup>26</sup>

As discussed further below, the employment of women by the ICC (as in the LON) before 1945 was highly selective and restrained. After the intense lobbying of suffragist associations in 1919, the LON (and afterwards the ILO) promised to uphold the equal access

<sup>17</sup> For the clash between the LON's liberal internationalist agenda and its use of the mandate system, as well as its long-reaching influence into the UN, see Pedersen, *The Guardians*; and Mazower, *Governing*, 143–73, 211–13.

<sup>18</sup> Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*.

<sup>19</sup> On the founding years of the LON's secretariat, see: Ranshofen-Wertheimer, *The International*, 13–20; Gram-Skjoldager and Ikononou, 'The Construction', 260–268. Regarding the historical precedents to the LON's secretariat, see: Reinalda, *International Secretariats*, 17–72.

<sup>20</sup> Despite that, the ICC was not originally conceived as a lobbying body: see David and Eichenberger, "A World Parliament", 4; and Druelle-Korn, 'The Great War', 109–110.

<sup>21</sup> Skjoldager and Ikononou, 'The Construction', 258.

<sup>22</sup> Druelle-Korn, 'The Great War', 105–109.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 107 and 118.

<sup>24</sup> David and Eichenberger, "A World Parliament", 5.

<sup>25</sup> UNOG/R502/10A/430/430: The International Chamber of Commerce: Constitutions and Rules (ICC: Paris, 1920), 15–6.

<sup>26</sup> David and Eichenberger, "A World Parliament", 15–6.

of women and men to all of its functions and services.<sup>27</sup> In practice, as shown by Myriam Piguet and Françoise Thébaud, women were nonetheless directly and indirectly discriminated against in both Geneva organisations. They were mostly relegated to mechanised (deemed less prestigious) posts as typists and secretaries. Peripheral positions held by women that subsequently became prestigious due to their hard work or changing political priorities, once vacant, were promptly given to men.<sup>28</sup>

The ICC's founding principles did not refer, whatsoever, to gender equality. Instead, staffing provisions were declared the prerogative of the ICC's all-male Board of Directors.<sup>29</sup> Further, until 1939, the secretary-generals tasked with directing the ICC staff were French: Edouard Dolléans (1877–1954) and Pierre Vasseur (1893–1974). The gendered French and specifically Parisian conceptions of labour roles further impacted the employment pool to which the ICC had access.<sup>30</sup> Selected under American pressure for its proximity to Geneva and vitality as a business hub,<sup>31</sup> Paris was (and remains) the major French academic centre, and the Sorbonne was *the* French university for those wishing to study law (one of the vehicles through which the ICC elaborated its proposals and sought to implement them) and Economics.<sup>32</sup> Women were granted equal access to French universities, but few graduated in law or economics. From 1920 to 1939, women enrolled in law never accounted for more than 15% of all students. During that same period, only one woman finished a doctorate in economics.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, any business schools (usually funded and managed by local chambers of commerce) that opened their doors to young women, did so to train them for clerical jobs, as attested by the case of the Parisian *École de Haut enseignement commercial pour les jeunes filles*.<sup>34</sup>

## **2. Women in the interwar ICC: between clerical work and informal diplomacy**

Although the Great War prompted the heightened inclusion of women in French public administration throughout the interwar years, overwhelmingly, they remained restricted to lower-ranking clerical posts or to teaching in primary and secondary schools.<sup>35</sup> Judging from the secretariat lists and pictorial evidence retrieved from ICC publications, it does not come as a surprise that after its inaugural 1920 Paris Congress, the ICC mostly recruited French women as typists, secretaries, interpreters, and translators. In 1929, every secretary in the ICC was a woman.<sup>36</sup> If those secretarial tasks underpinned the success of routine work in any seriously multilingual international organisation,<sup>37</sup> they also left women with little chance of determining ICC policy. Until 1939, the ICC concentrated its efforts on minimising direct and indirect trade barriers: from successfully pushing for an international system of commercial arbitration to

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<sup>27</sup> Sluga, 'Women, Feminisms', 66–7; and Piguet, 'Employées', 52.

<sup>28</sup> Piguet, 'Employées', 56–70; and Thébaud, 'Le genre de l'OIT', 99–103; *Une traversée*, 186–206.

<sup>29</sup> The International Chamber of Commerce: Constitutions and Rules, 14.

<sup>30</sup> Concerning how hosting cities shape international organisations, see: Dairon and Badache, 'Understanding', 29–30; and Reinalda, *International Secretariats*, 65–7.

<sup>31</sup> Druelle-Korn, 'The Great War', 106.

<sup>32</sup> For the importance of law to business communities and the ICC: David and Eichenberger, "A World Parliament", 8. Only in 1968 did the teaching of economics in France become fully autonomous from that of law in French universities: Le Van-Lemesle, *Le Juste*, 500.

<sup>33</sup> Christen-Lécuyer, 'Les premières', 45–7; Edmée Charrier, *L'évolution intellectuelle féminine* (1931); and Dimand et alii, *A Biographical*, xxii, 41–4.

<sup>34</sup> See Thivend, 'Les filles', 129–45; and Delorme-Hoehstetter, 'Aux origines', 77–89.

<sup>35</sup> See Sharp, *The French*, 91–96; and Denéchère, 'La place', 92–4.

<sup>36</sup> UNOG/R2665/10A/11753: Cinquième congrès de la Chambre de commerce internationale, Amsterdam 1929, 129–31;

<sup>37</sup> Piguet, 'Employées', 57.

streamlining customs regulations.<sup>38</sup> At that time, no woman headed any of the secretariat's technical or administrative departments.<sup>39</sup> We could identify only two French women who were attachés to two of the main ICC's technical departments, at the time of the 1929 Amsterdam Congress: Henriette Pellerin in the Legal Department, and Marthe Salmon in the Industry and Trade Group.<sup>40</sup>

Pictorial evidence of the early bi-annual ICC congresses consistently attests to women's backstage presence as secretaries and translators, serving as the supporting cast of vast cohorts of ICC male delegates.<sup>41</sup> Most often, they were photographed without reference to their names or, in the case of businessmen's wives, captioned with their husbands' surnames.<sup>42</sup> This is not to say that the merits of the ICC secretaries went wholly publicly unrecognised by their hierarchical superiors. In 1951, Cécile Lebègue, a secretary from the ICC's Court of Arbitration (created in 1923 to arbitrate trade disputes), was honoured for her thirty-year career in the ICC.<sup>43</sup> In 1952, J.A. Detourbet was, for the same reason, awarded a 'Médaille du Travail' by the French Ministry of Labour. The Swedish industrialist and then-president of the ICC, Rolf von Heidenstam (1884–1958), recalled that 'Mrs. Detourbet had first taken up her duties at International Headquarters on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1921'. He then 'warmly thanked and congratulated her, amid unanimous applause, for these many years of devoted and efficient service.'<sup>44</sup>

Tellingly, the one woman who did (temporarily) work for the ICC in a bureaucratic role - and left personal papers allowing us to trace her motivations - was American, unmarried, and did not work as a typist. Lillian Schoedler (1891–1963) was a former personal assistant to the American businessman and philanthropist Edward Filene, a key figure in the early years of the ICC, whom Schoedler had accompanied in 1935 to an ICC Congress in Paris.<sup>45</sup> In 1944, she was offered the job of Associate Director of the International Business Conference, a meeting that effectively helped to relaunch the ICC after the war. It was thanks to a common acquaintance with Filene that Schoedler was given the opportunity, which she keenly accepted for the 'rich contacts [it promised] with business leaders from all over the world'. Aiming to work outside the US for an international agency like the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, Schoedler expected that helping to organise the International Business Conference would boost her profile.<sup>46</sup> She was poignantly aware of the bias against sending American women to work abroad for international agencies, other than as clerks, stenographers, and health workers.<sup>47</sup> The only woman in the directorate of the 1944

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<sup>38</sup> Druelle-Korn, 'The Great War', 114.

<sup>39</sup> UNOG/R4399/10A/22777/2822/Jacket2: *Resolutions adopted by the Ninth Congress of the International Chamber of Commerce. Berlin, June 28th–July 3rd, 1937* (ICC, 1937). At the time, the ICC encompassed five technical departments: Economic and Financial, Distribution, Legal Services and Arbitration, Communications, Transportation.

<sup>40</sup> Cinquième congrès de la Chambre, 130.

<sup>41</sup> Appendix 1: 'La 60e session du Conseil' (*L'Économie internationale*, 1939).

<sup>42</sup> Appendix 2: 'Un groupe de délégués chinois' (*L'Économie internationale*, 1939).

<sup>43</sup> 'Le président de la CCI remercie Mme Cécile Lebègue', *L'Économie internationale* (February 1951).

<sup>44</sup> Archives of the International Chamber of Commerce, Paris: ICC Executive Committee Minutes, 22 October 1952, 10.

<sup>45</sup> Schlesinger Library Archives: Lillian Schoedler Papers, 1890–1963: Travel letters, 1927–1954. MC 273, folders 89–92: Letter of Lillian Schoedler, undated, 1935: [https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:10409747\\$90i](https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:10409747$90i).

<sup>46</sup> Schlesinger Library Archives: Letter of Lillian Schoedler, 27 December 1943: [https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:10409747\\$174i](https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:10409747$174i). Cf. Eleanor Dulles's recollections of the hostility she received from her male colleagues when working for the State Department in Europe (Berlin or Vienna).

<sup>47</sup> Schlesinger Library Archives: Letter of Lillian Schoedler, September 1945. [https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:10409747\\$173i](https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:10409747$173i); and also [undated]: [https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:10409747\\$168i](https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:10409747$168i).

International Business Conference,<sup>48</sup> Schoedler subsequently worked as an assistant to James Shotwell at the United Nations Conference of San Francisco in 1945, as the executive secretary of the Committee of Atomic Energy of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.<sup>49</sup>

If Schoedler's ability to pick high-ranking jobs and rebuff more menial tasks was exceptional, her attention to the networking opportunities offered by the ICC, especially given the roles performed there by women, encourages further inquiry, since it was the bustling social life of its bi-yearly congresses that fuelled networking opportunities. Bringing together 500 to 1500 delegates, the congresses were an integral part of the functioning of the ICC as an international meeting place for business and political leaders, serving to reinforce social cohesion among ICC delegates and with local elites.<sup>50</sup>

Each congress convened across different European cities and featured a series of social events, copiously documented in contemporary ICC periodicals. One staple fixture was the 'Programme des dames', in which the wives of delegates, secretaries-general, and presidents visited attractions over the day, exercising their social skills in the evening banquets and balls.<sup>51</sup> The hosts were usually commerce ministers' wives, or spouses of prime ministers and presidents.<sup>52</sup> The congresses and their public events closely echoed the soirées and salons of the nineteenth-century, animated by the wives of aristocratic ambassadors and bourgeois bankers, and in which women were tasked with generating a convivial atmosphere where social intercourse could flourish.<sup>53</sup> These ICC events offered an opportunity to women who did not have an official position of their own to 'participate, lead, and excel in conversations that could sway opinions and smooth out disagreements'.<sup>54</sup> The 'Programme des dames' of the 1937 ICC Congress in Berlin was one such opportunity. Besides a night at the opera, it comprised a reception by the Mayor of Berlin, Julius Lippert, a dinner offered by the Berlin Chamber of Commerce, a reception by Reichsbank's President Hjalmar Schacht, a dinner by Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring and his wife in a castle in Charlottenburg, and a reception by Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels.<sup>55</sup> The wives of ICC delegates also undertook more clerical tasks. Eleanor Pierson described her trip to the ICC's 1955 Congress—which elected her husband and President of the ICC, Warren Lee Pierson (1896–1978), chairman of Trans World Airlines—as 'a mission', during which she 'sorted out the reams of invitations and tried to fit them onto the printed program of formal events'.<sup>56</sup>

The informal diplomacy practised by businessmen's wives is further exemplified by Ruth Randall Edström (1867–1944), the wife of Sigfrid Edström (1870–1964), the Swedish business leader of the General Swedish Electrical Limited Company (ASEA). Sigfrid Edström

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<sup>48</sup> Schlesinger Library Archives: Letter of Lillian Schoedler, 10 December 1945.

<sup>49</sup> Schlesinger Library Archives: Letter of Lillian Schoedler, 9 December 1945. [https://iif.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:10409747\\$177i](https://iif.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:10409747$177i); Letter of Lillian Schoedler, 10 December 1945. [https://iif.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:10409747\\$170i](https://iif.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:10409747$170i) and [https://iif.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:10409747\\$176i](https://iif.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:10409747$176i).

<sup>50</sup> David and Eichenberger, "A World Parliament", 14.

<sup>51</sup> See also Appendix 3: 'Program. Entertainment of ladies' (*L'Économie internationale*, 1931).

<sup>52</sup> UNOG/R2665/10A/11753: *Cinquième congrès de la Chambre de commerce internationale, Amsterdam 1929* (ICC, 1929), 6; and Appendix 3: 'Program. Entertainment of ladies' (*L'Économie internationale*, 1931).

<sup>53</sup> Glenda Sluga's recent book *The Invention* offers manifold examples of women's informal diplomacy in the nineteenth century: for instance, 21–4, 148–58, 160–2. In the same vein, see Mori, 'How women', 137–140, 145, 150.

<sup>54</sup> Sluga, *The Invention*, 23.

<sup>55</sup> 'Le Congrès de Berlin marque une étape dans la voie de la reconstruction économique', *L'Économie internationale* (July–August 1937), 6–9; and Appendix 4: 'Fête de nuit à l'Île des Paons' (*L'Économie internationale*, 1937).

<sup>56</sup> Eleanor Pierson, 'Journey to Tokyo', *Town & Country*, 110 (January 1956), 64. Quoted in David and Eichenberger, "A World Parliament", 14.

presided over the ICC during World War Two and had joined the organization in the early 1920s. An American by birth, Ruth Randall was a delegate to six congresses of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance from 1908 to 1920. The couple met on a transatlantic ship while they were pursuing internationalist agendas: Ruth her feminist internationalism, and Sigfrid his business internationalism.<sup>57</sup> Randall was particularly remembered for her ambassadorial role in ASEA's philanthropic events and social reach initiatives.<sup>58</sup>

### **3. Climbing the gender ladder after 1945: businesswomen, economists, lawyers and lobbyists at the ICC**

After 1945, women started regularly participating in ICC meetings and congresses as delegates from their national chambers of commerce (hence, as businesswomen) or as external consultants appointed by them, usually as economists or lawyers. The need for specialised academic expertise became more acute as ICC attempts to selectively abate trade barriers and protect multinationals faced a new challenge in the form of the UN, whose aims included full employment and economic development. In-depth knowledge of international trade, investment, and intellectual property law accordingly became ever more important to the ICC, as it sought to stave off or moderate various redistributing arrangements pushed by the UN in favour of the Global South: from modifying the intellectual property regulation of pharmaceuticals, to proposing primary commodity price stabilisation schemes.<sup>59</sup>

In short, the ICC's need for specialised skills, together with the increased access of women to academia after 1945, opened new opportunities for women at the ICC headquarters and adjacent organs. Especially from the 1980s onwards, the ICC Court of Arbitration became a site where female lawyers made inroads, including from the Global South. Founded in 1923, the Court of Arbitration was a means through which the ICC sought to facilitate international trade and curb unfair competition, by arbitrating trade disputes between businesses from different countries and settling them as efficiently as possible. The Court amounted to a private-sphere arbitration mechanism, parallel to the League's Arbitration Committee, which regulated transnational disputes.<sup>60</sup> Enjoying great prestige within the ICC, the Court has its own secretariat, independent of headquarters, and employs about one hundred persons.<sup>61</sup>

Right after the war, and within the headquarters of the permanent ICC secretariat, women increasingly accessed higher posts in policymaking and editorial functions. In stark contrast to the subordinate status of women in the ICC before 1945, the strategic responsibility of sustaining direct relations with the UN in New York and Geneva was generally held by women, as shown by the biographical portraits of Marie-Constance Psimènos, Edith Sansom, Roberta Lusardi, and Janette Buraas.

Judging from the available lists of attendees to ICC congresses before 1939, no woman had ever participated in an ICC meeting as an external technical specialist or as a business member of her ICC national committee (the national relay of the ICC in each country affiliated to the organization) until after the Second World War.<sup>62</sup> This changed in the late 1950s, as demonstrated by the case of Mary G. Roebling (1905–1994). After the death of her husband in 1936, Roebling inherited the Trenton Trust Company, becoming the first woman to preside

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<sup>57</sup> Edström, Randall Edström: cf. in particular p.193, on Randall's participation in feminist congresses.

<sup>58</sup> Svensson, Ruth Randall.

<sup>59</sup> On how, after 1945, the ICC lobbied for the safeguarding of foreign investors's property rights through international investment law: Slobodian, *Globalists*, 136–42.

<sup>60</sup> Tomashot, 'Selling Peace', 10, 101–4.

<sup>61</sup> Philippe, 'When Did the Doors', 17.

<sup>62</sup> UNOG/R2665/10A/11753: Cinquième congrès de la Chambre de commerce internationale, Amsterdam 1929. Liste des délégués (ICC, 1929), 3–133; and UNOG/R4398/10A/16584/2822/Jacket1: La Chambre de commerce internationale (ICC: Paris, 1935), 11–15.

over a major US commercial bank, which she saved from bankruptcy and successfully headed until retiring in 1984.<sup>63</sup> From that position, she became a Trustee of the United States Council of the ICC, and its successor body, the United States Council for International Business (the US branch of the ICC), from the 1960s to the 1990s. Roebing first attended an ICC Congress in 1955. She was the only woman in the US delegation and the only woman serving as a trustee of the US Council, where she was a member of the committee on commercial policy. Very close to Richard Nixon's family (to whose political ambitions she apparently financially contributed), Roebing participated in the New York meetings of the Women National Republican Club and was a stalwart of American participation in several ICC conferences and commissions. She was a US delegate to the 1969 and 1971 Congresses in Istanbul and Vienna, as well as a member of the US delegation to an ICC-USSR economic conference that took place in 1978 in Moscow.<sup>64</sup>

Nonetheless, Roebing's businesswoman status did not preclude her from willingly assuming more traditionally gendered roles, as part of her attempt to construct a dual image, on the one hand, of a successful businesswoman, and on the other, of a caring mother following social conventions. As her biographer Patricia Faulk underlined, Roebing 'held a unique position' in the ICC by virtue of her status as an independent businesswoman: 'she represented herself instead of her husband'. Roebing's 'gender distinguished her from the other [male] members and yet gave her a common bond with their wives.' Other than a need for adulation, Roebing's social acumen derived from her recognition of how party-giving and fundraising would support her business interests. Being the Vice Chairman of the United States Organising Committee, Roebing therefore 'understood the importance of courting the wives of the international members', a position in which she organised luncheons reserved for women that honoured the wives of ICC presidents.<sup>65</sup> As an example, Roebing was tasked in the 1959 ICC Congress in Washington with chairing the corresponding Ladies Committee, whose programme included:

a reception at the White House given by Mrs. Eisenhower for all the ICC ladies and a luncheon at the Pan-American Union followed by a fashion show presented by Garfinkel's of Washington. On the last evening of the Congress, the Under Secretary of State and the Secretary of commerce with their ladies gave a reception and dinner for the delegates. Later in the evening, there was a special showing at the National Gallery of Art.<sup>66</sup>

In the meantime, women began joining ICC meetings as secretaries and rapporteurs to its expert technical commissions, which until the 1970s, dealt with matters as diverse as economic and financial policy; production, distribution, and advertising; transport and communications; and law and commercial practice.<sup>67</sup> Dedicated commissions were established during the 1970s to handle international investment and intellectual property protection, as well as environmental questions. The ideas produced by those technical commissions informed Congress discussions and were enriched by female economic and legal experts coming from ICC national committees through their previous work in influential multinationals and legal firms.

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<sup>63</sup> Despite her pioneering role and complex persona, the only in-depth portrait of Roebing is Patricia Faulk's analysis of Roebing's struggle to lead a successful business life and conform to traditional gender roles (which only makes cursory reference to her ICC work): Faulk, *Gender*.

<sup>64</sup> Faulk, *Gender*, 99–106.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 109–110.

<sup>66</sup> Hagley Museum, Philip Reed Papers. Box 20: The Washington Congress of the International Chamber of Commerce (6 May 1959), 3.

<sup>67</sup> *The Europa Year Book 1968*. Vol. I (London: Europa Publications Limited, 1968), 231–2; *Annuaire—Chambre de commerce internationale (1985)* (Paris: ICC, 1985).



Charlotte Billard, Winifred Armstrong (1920–2019) and Tila Maria de Hancock (1936–2021) are three examples of female consultants collaborating with the ICC. Billard was the first woman working as an external rapporteur to an ICC technical commission, in the 1949 Congress in Quebec. A philosophy graduate, before the war Billard was strongly connected with French business reformists. She taught at the *École de l'Organisation sociale du travail*, which spread Taylorist methods among French industrialists. The *École* was linked to the *Comité national de l'organisation française*, where Billard was head of studies and an administrator.<sup>68</sup> It was thanks to her knowledge of commercial education and marketing that Billard wrote a brochure for the ICC entitled *Les tendances de l'enseignement du commerce dans différents pays*, which she discussed and was praised for at the 1949 ICC Congress in Quebec.<sup>69</sup>

Winifred Armstrong likewise had an economics background. Before collaborating with the ICC, she worked from 1959 to 1960 for the United States Foreign Relations Committee, in their Subcommittee on Africa, chaired by Senator John F. Kennedy. Armstrong was subsequently employed as an international economist from 1966 to 1975 by AMAX, Inc., an international mining corporation with headquarters in New York and extensive operations in East Africa. Her collaboration with the ICC resulted, in great part, from AMAX CEO Ian MacGregor's (1912–1998) patronage of ICC efforts to respond to the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, in the form of a 'Center for Industry and the Environment', founded in 1973.<sup>70</sup> Armstrong's personal archives attest to her involvement in ICC efforts to counter the impact of Stockholm's proposed environmental controls on worldwide trade, by producing and distributing the ICC's own environmental guidelines among US congressional members and their staff.<sup>71</sup>

One of the first women to hold significant power at the ICC Court of Arbitration was Tila Maria de Hancock. Her pioneering trajectory sheds light on how the ICC's demand for legal specialists offered an additional professional outlet, mainly from the 1980s onwards, to women with previous experience collaborating with national chambers of commerce. Born in Puerto Rico, de Hancock was a lawyer specialising in urban development. From 1974 to 1977, she worked as a consultant to law firms, the World Bank and the US Agency for International Development. De Hancock then joined the Carter Presidency in 1977 as an Assistant to the Secretary for International Affairs to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. In 1981 she crossed the Atlantic to ICC headquarters, where she was the first woman and Hispanic person appointed director of the secretariat of the Court of Arbitration, a position she held until returning to the US in 1985.<sup>72</sup> No woman had joined the ICC Court of Arbitration as a full member before the Portuguese Madalena Rosalis and the Finnish Ulla Gylling, who joined in 1980 and 1982 respectively.<sup>73</sup> Gylling's trajectory further attests to how, in at least some national chambers of commerce, female lawyers rose to institutionally prominent positions. Previously a secretary of the Finnish ICC national committee, in 1983 Gylling

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<sup>68</sup> The *Comité* was headed by the industrialist Jean Coutrot, a founder of X-Crise and an advocate of industrial rationalisation. See *Bulletin du Comité national de l'organisation française: Conférence de l'organisation française et Centre d'études administratives réunis*: (January 1936), 27–28, 216, 288; and (June 1937), x. A certain Marcel Billard, an industrialist, is also mentioned by the *Bulletin* as a member of the *Comité*, which included several other women members. As for Coutrot and his extensive involvement with the *École de l'Organisation sociale du travail* and the *Comité*, see: Olivier Dard, *Jean Coutrot, de l'ingénieur au prophète* (Besançon: Presses universitaires franc-comtoises, 1999).

<sup>69</sup> 'Les tendances de l'enseignement du commerce', *L'Économie internationale* (August 1949), 27.

<sup>70</sup> Bergquist and David, 'Beyond Limits', 12.

<sup>71</sup> For Armstrong's archival sources concerning the ICC: Bergquist and David, 'Beyond Limits', 10–14.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. de Hancock's obituary at: <https://www.ctcfuneralandcremation.com/obituary/Tila-Hancock> (retrieved on 14 October 2022); see also Susanna McBee, 'Another Mission to the Soviet Union canceled by the US', *Washington Post* (25 July 1978).

<sup>73</sup> Philippe, 'How Has Female', 16.



assumed its directorship, a position from which she retired in 1991 after three decades of service.<sup>74</sup>

Few women joined the Court as arbitrators until the late 1990s. Perhaps tellingly, during the 1980s they hailed ‘from countries not known as arbitration users or frequent arbitration users at that time’,<sup>75</sup> like Colombia, Madagascar,<sup>76</sup> Brazil<sup>77</sup> and Greece.<sup>78</sup> During those two decades, the number of court members ranged from 47 to 80, and there were never more than three female arbitrators at the same time. From 2000 until 2018, their number grew, eventually accounting for 23% of Court members, including 50% of the Court’s Vice-Presidency.<sup>79</sup> In 1995, the French Anne Cambournac became the first woman appointed Counsel in the ICC Court. Counsels lead ‘the teams in charge of administering arbitration cases’ and are supported by a Deputy Counsel and an Assistant. Until Cambournac’s breakthrough, women were only granted subaltern positions.<sup>80</sup>

Within ICC headquarters, immediately after World War Two, French, American, and British women began making inroads into higher-level intellectual and organizational work. We hypothesise that along with other international organisations such as the UN and the IMF, the ICC initially benefitted not only from changing social mores but from an influx of applicants that obtained their university education during World War Two, while men were being sent to war en masse.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, most of the women hired by the ICC after the war seemed to have shared several traits: from holding academic degrees to being proficient in English and French, to hailing from upper-class circles (aristocratic and bourgeois alike) and having close networks with ICC-associated businessmen. Proficiency in English became even more relevant as the ICC sought to keep track of and parry the economic regulation proposals drafted by the ever-expanding UN agencies. Social and professional connections also furthered women’s chances of joining the ICC secretariat, starting with the personal and working relations enabled by having husbands that worked for the ICC or influential national committees. One clear example was that of the American Simone Beetham (1924–1979?), who joined the ICC in 1970 after its delegate to the UN in New York, Roberta Lusardi, had moved to the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO). The late husband of Simone Beetham was Robert Beetham, who, in the 1950s, had attended ECOSOC meetings as an ICC delegate from the United States Council for International Business.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Annuaire–Chambre de commerce internationale (1974–75)* (Paris: ICC, 1974), 34; and ICC Suomi, *ICC Suomi, 1927–2007*, 15–17, 23. Another example was Eva Horvath, who in the 1990s presided the Arbitration Court attached to the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce: Philippe, ‘When Did the Doors’, 15.

<sup>75</sup> Philippe, ‘How Has Female’, 17. Philippe is the first to identify the women biographed in the footnotes below.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 17: Maria Clara Betancurt de Hielo and Yolaine Anta Rakotomanga. We have been unable so far to retrieve more information on these women.

<sup>77</sup> Sueli Avellar Fonseca: a Law graduate from the University of São Paulo, who joined the law firm Nehring & Associados as a trainee in 1969, then as a lawyer in 1976, eventually becoming responsible for contentious legal work and arbitration: <https://baptistaluz.com.br/en/profissional/sueli-avellar-fonseca/> (retrieved on 16 October 2022).

<sup>78</sup> Antonias Dimolitsa: a Greek lawyer currently heading a homonymous law firm. Member of the ICC Court of Arbitration from 1988 to 2000 and formerly vice-chair of the think-tank ICC Institute of World Business Law: <https://arbitrationlaw.com/profile/antonias-c-dimolitsa> (retrieved on 16 October 2022).

<sup>79</sup> Philippe, ‘How Has Female’, 17. The representation of women at the ICC Court of Arbitration has been studied by Mirèze Philippe, a French jurist who originally graduated in business studies and has worked in the ICC’s Court of Arbitration for over thirty years. Hired in 1983 by Tila Maria de Hancock as a juridical assistant, she eventually reached the post of Special Counsel. Philippe discusses her ICC career in Rigaud, ‘Entretien’.

<sup>80</sup> Philippe, ‘When Did the Doors’, 17–18.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. with ‘Margaret de Vries reflects on her pioneering role’, *Newsletter of the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession* (Fall 2003), 10.

<sup>82</sup> *L’Économie internationale* (September–October 1955), 3. On the history of the US Council, see Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl, ‘Becoming the Advocate for US-based Multinationals: The United States Council of the International Chamber of Commerce, 1945–1974’. *Business History*. DOI: [10.1080/00076791.2021.1877273](https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2021.1877273).

If women still comprised a great part of the lower-ranking secretariat, already since 1946 they also started to occupy higher-ranking posts. Several mainstays of the ICC headquarters up to the 1960s were women. Other than Marie-Constance Psimènos (more on her below), the secretariat encompassed Marie C. Wourgaft, a former resistance fighter that edited the ICC journal *World Trade* beside technical experts like Madeleine Juillard and Marcelle R. Kling.<sup>83</sup> Juillard headed the internal administration bureau in the ICC's Administrative Services from the 1950s to the 1960s.<sup>84</sup> For much of that period, Kling was head of group in the ICC's Transport and Communications technical commission, which aimed to foster the international circulation of people and goods. Kling's training was not in economics or law but in child psychology.<sup>85</sup> Along with Psimènos, she was the first woman to be appointed head of group in an ICC technical commission.<sup>86</sup>

Given the paucity of available archival material, the lives and contributions of these women have proven hard to reconstruct. Nevertheless, four figures stand out, for their responsibilities or the longevity of their ICC careers, as cases that would reward closer observation: Marie-Constance Psimènos, Edith Sansom, Roberta Lusardi, and Janette Buraas. Many of these women hailed either from the upper strata of French society or from respectable émigré circles and shared an Anglophone background. Psimènos was the first woman to lead an ICC division (along with Kling) and to be appointed First Director of the ICC. Edith Sansom and Roberta McKay Lusardi, who represented the ICC at the UN New York from 1948 to 1970, availed themselves of their English and American backgrounds. The British Janette Buraas, who represented the ICC at UN Geneva from 1981 to 1989, had married a renowned Norwegian political émigré and European Free Trade Association journalist. What Psimènos, Sansom, Lusardi and Buraas had additionally in common was that their ICC careers as mid-level economic actors were shaped by the organisation's need to engage and sustain close relations with the UN and its secretariat.

### 3.1. The éminence grise of ICC headquarters: Marie-Constance Psimènos de Metz-Noblat (1925–2015)

Born on 27 March 1925 in London, Psimènos hailed from an upper-class family of Greek émigrés.<sup>87</sup> According to the *Who's Who in France*, she was the daughter of Théodore Psimènos and Princess Jeanne Caratheodory (–1942).<sup>88</sup> Although there is no clear evidence of this, Psimènos was probably related to the famed Greek family Karatheodorís.<sup>89</sup> Best known today for the distinguished Greek mathematician Constantin Karatheodorís, this aristocratic family hailed from the Phanar (now Fener) quarter of Constantinople. The Karatheodorís were well integrated into the Sultan's court and among the few Greeks working in the Ottoman upper administration. Aléxandros Karatheodorís (1838–1906) was Prince of Samos from 1885 to

<sup>83</sup> *L'Économie internationale* (July–August 1951), 64.

<sup>84</sup> *ICC Biennial Report 1965/67*. See also: UNOG/UNECE: GX 18/12/1/59. Box 2448: Letter of Henri Cornil to Marcelle Kling, 29 September 1969.

<sup>85</sup> Marcelle R. Kling, 'L'éveil du sentiment social à la crèche', *Enfance*, 3:1 (1950), 134–153.

<sup>86</sup> Marcelle R. Kling: 'La Chambre de commerce internationale, foyer de coopération en matière de transports aériens', *International Associations Internationales*, 8:11 (November 1956), 708–14 ; 'The International Chamber of Commerce and the Development of International Tourism', *World Travel* (October 1965), 19–22; and *The Europa Year Book 1968*, 232.

<sup>87</sup> The next paragraphs are heavily reliant on the *Who's Who in France* entries for both Psimènos and her husband Philippe de Metz-Noblat: *Who's Who in France, 1975–1976* (Paris: Éditions Jacques Lafitte, 1975), 1179; and *Who's Who in France, 2000–2001* (Paris: Éditions Jacques Lafitte, 2000), 1256. Where other sources were consulted, they are referenced in the footnotes.

<sup>88</sup> 'Deuils', *Le Matin*, 30 June 1942, 2.

<sup>89</sup> Also spelled as variously as Karatheodory and Caratheodori. On the Caratheodori family, see Georgiadou, *Constantin*.

1895 and his brother Konstantinos (1841–1922) succeeded him from 1906 to 1907. It is possible that Jeanne, Psimènos's mother, was either related to one of them or was a daughter of Konstantinos, which would help explain her royal epithet.<sup>90</sup>

Psimènos seems to have moved to France relatively early in her life, and despite her Christian Orthodox origins, attended Saint-Honoré d'Eylau, a Catholic private college located in a wealthy Parisian *arrondissement*. She then obtained a Law Degree at the Sorbonne, probably in 1942.<sup>91</sup> By that time an orphan,<sup>92</sup> Psimènos took a firm step into the upper crust of French society by marrying the aristocrat Philippe de Metz Noblat on 21 April 1951. At the time, Philippe (1923–2009) was on the board of the Union des Mines bank, which was originally founded in 1923 to provide banking support to the coal producers of the Comité central des houillères de France—the main lobby group representing the coal industry, headed by Henri de Peyerimhoff.<sup>93</sup>

The Metz Noblat were an old French aristocratic family from the Lorraine region of France, with roots in Colmar and Nancy and closely linked to the local financial and banking circles. The family also had an intellectual penchant for economics.<sup>94</sup> Psimènos's husband, Philippe, was the grandson of Alexandre de Metz Noblat (1820–1871), a professor of political economy at Nancy's Faculty of Law and a disciple of Thomas Malthus. Psimènos's father-in-law, Henry (1884–1957), was an inspector and subsequently director of the bank Société nancéienne de crédit industriel et de dépôts, founded in 1881 to support local entrepreneurs.<sup>95</sup> After obtaining a degree at the École des hautes études commerciales, Philippe took up the family's corporate banking tradition by joining the Union des mines in 1947. In 1954, he began a long career at the Paris branch of the Ottoman Bank, which culminated with his assuming directorship until 1970. The following year, Philippe moved to the investment bank Banque Grindlay Ottomane, a Paris branch of the London-based Grindlays Bank.<sup>96</sup>

If Psimènos's Greek ancestry was certainly not a hindrance to Philippe's career, the same could surely be said of Metz Noblat's social ties. Psimènos seems to have joined the ICC's Paris headquarters in 1949, as that was the first year in which she officiated at an ICC congress (the 12<sup>th</sup> ICC Congress in Quebec, 13–17 June).<sup>97</sup> In the decades that followed, Psimènos was a steady presence at ICC congresses, working behind the scenes and taking notes in panels, but without ever taking the floor—a role only businessmen and economists fulfilled.<sup>98</sup> Regardless, she steadily and unwaveringly climbed her way up the ICC bureaucracy,

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<sup>90</sup> Aléxandros had four children, none of which had a name resembling Jeanne; Konstantinos had six children but I have so far been unable to retrieve their names: [https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Αλέξανδρος\\_Καραθεοδωρής](https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Αλέξανδρος_Καραθεοδωρής); and [https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Κωνσταντίνος\\_Σ.\\_Καραθεοδωρής](https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Κωνσταντίνος_Σ._Καραθεοδωρής) (retrieved on 23 July 2023).

<sup>91</sup> In 1942, around the same time of her mother's death, Psimènos finished her third-year oral exams: 'Liste des candidats admissibles aux épreuves orales', *L'Information universitaire* (27 June 1942), 1.

<sup>92</sup> 'Le Carnet du jour. Fiancialles', *Le Figaro* (17 November 1950), 2.

<sup>93</sup> Aurélie Philippe, 'Le comité', 275; and Alain Chatriot, 'Henri de Peyerimhoff, figure du syndicalisme patronal de l'industrie houillère', *Les Annales des Mines*. Available at <https://www.anales.org/archives/x/peyerimhoff.html> (retrieved on 19 October 2022).

<sup>94</sup> Cf. the family's archives: [https://archives.meurthe-et-moselle.fr/sites/default/files/Contenu/Fichier/052\\_J\\_ir.pdf](https://archives.meurthe-et-moselle.fr/sites/default/files/Contenu/Fichier/052_J_ir.pdf) (retrieved on 19 October 2022).

<sup>95</sup> 'Mariages', *Le Figaro* (11 March 1911), 3; and *Bulletin trimestriel de la Société industrielle de l'Est* (April–September 1934), 21. One of Henry's uncles, Victor de Metz Noblat (the step-brother of his grandfather Alexandre), had been the director of the Société nancéienne from 1889 to 1902: Nicolas Stoskopf, *Dictionnaire historique des banques du groupe CIC* (Paris: Éditions la Branche, 2009), 43. For the family's genealogical tree: <https://man8rove.com/fr/profile/ipagicjw-alexandre-de-metz> (retrieved on 19 October 2022).

<sup>96</sup> On the history of the Ottoman Bank: Manfred Pohl (ed.), *Handbook on the History of European Banks*, 231–234. See also *Jane's Major Companies of Europe* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1977), A59.

<sup>97</sup> 'Bilan de deux années, 1947–1949', *L'Économie internationale* (August 1949), 39.

<sup>98</sup> For instance: 'Chambers of Commerce at the Service of International Trade', *ICC News* (July–August 1959), 21. See also Appendix 5: 'Marie C. Psimènos' (*L'Économie internationale*, 1951)

all the while fostering business internationalism through her internal reports and diplomatic skills.

Psimènos initially worked as an officer in the ICC's Technical Service group for 'Production, Distribution and Advertising', where she remained until 1973, when she was appointed First Director of the ICC, a position subordinate only to the General Secretary. The 'Production' group was the ICC's response to the emergence of mass consumption in Western capitalist economies, which placed an onus on manufacturers' capability to produce and introduce to the market the right quantities of goods. Fears of overproduction promoted sensitivity to consumer demand and an understanding of marketing and advertising techniques. In a Europe still under reconstruction, the 'Production' division occupied an important position in the ICC, fuelling the creation of a 'Centre for Exchange of Information on Distribution', tasked with providing businessmen with crucial information via liaison with national chambers of commerce.<sup>99</sup>

The 'Production' division's duties were substantial and ranged from collecting trade statistics to recommending international marketing regulation. They covered a wide spectrum of economic activity, from manufacturing to wholesale and retail. Through her reports, Psimènos partook in the ICC's efforts to: promote consumer credit; universalise wholesale statistics (together with the UN Statistical Office) and consumer information on packaging to facilitate customs clearance; and improve advertising and marketing education by reforming academic curricula.<sup>100</sup>

By 1957, less than ten years after joining the ICC, Psimènos was appointed head of group in the 'Production' division. In that role, she worked as a secretary for several technical commissions. This allowed her to nurture more frequent contacts with the UN secretariat, including by representing the ICC as a delegate at UN meetings that concerned her area of work, like those related to the UN Commission on International Commodity Trade.<sup>101</sup> Meanwhile, her public reports for the official journal *ICC News* presented business-relevant UN discussions and resolutions.<sup>102</sup> In 1973, Psimènos made her final step up the ICC ladder, becoming the first woman appointed First Director. Carrying on with her previous functions, Psimènos also remained involved in consumer policy, for instance representing ICC headquarters in seminars bringing together the Swedish National Chamber and academic specialists.<sup>103</sup>

Equally as relevant, Psimènos maintained upper-level communications between the ICC and the UN secretariat, either by acting as an ICC emissary or by arranging meetings between the ICC's secretary-general and president with UN officials.<sup>104</sup> This included preparing the ICC, UN and GATT economic consultative committee meetings, under the co-chairmanship of Philippe de Seynes from ECOSOC, and ICC chairmen like the Swedish banker Marcus Wallenberg Jr, and Wilfrid Baumgartner, a former head of the French Treasury.<sup>105</sup> Psimènos actively lobbied to foster closer relations between the ICC and those UN agencies, like UNCTAD, whose agenda menaced the ICC's aims of freer trade and selective deregulation.<sup>106</sup> During the 1970s, she participated in and helped organise informal

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<sup>99</sup> 'Les travaux de la CCI, 1951–1953. Rapport du Secrétariat général (juillet 1951–mai 1953). Ce rapport a été préparé par Richard Barton, Frédéric Eisemann, Pierre Jonneret, Marcelle Kling et Marie C. Psimènos', *Supplément à L'Économie internationale* (June–July 1953), 9–13.

<sup>100</sup> 'The ICC at Work, 1955–1957. Report by International Headquarters', *ICC News* (June 1957), 9–12.

<sup>101</sup> Also referred to as CICT, it was an ECOSOC commission created in 1954 that can be seen as a predecessor of UNCTAD.

<sup>102</sup> 'World Affairs', *ICC News* (February–March 1957), 3.

<sup>103</sup> *Verksamhetsberättelse 1980* (Stockholm: ICC Sweden, 1980), 9.

<sup>104</sup> UNOG/UNCTAD: ARR40/1842. Box 178: Yves Berthelot to Psimènos, 17 March 1986.

<sup>105</sup> UNOG/UNCTAD: ARR40/1842. Box 178: V. A. Yulin to Stein Rossen, 17 November 1971.

<sup>106</sup> See David and Eichenberger, 'A World Parliament', 6 and 12.

meetings that brought together the ICC secretary-general Carl-Henrik Winqwist and other ICC delegates (like Jacques L'Huillier, more on whom below) with leading UNCTAD officials such as Bernard Chidzero and Paul Berthoud, respectively Director of Commodities and Director of the External Relations Unit.<sup>107</sup> Psimènos also represented the ICC in UNCTAD's Trade and Development Board meetings, together with the ICC's secretary-general and its liaison officer with UN Geneva during the 1970s, Jacques L'Huillier. She engaged directly with UNCTAD officials by meeting not only with the secretary-general Deshamanya Gamani Corea, but with the directors of UNCTAD's technical divisions in matters that were sensitive to the various ICC Commissions acting as a shadow bureaucracy to the UN.

Particularly worth noting is Psimènos's participation in official ICC missions to UNCTAD at the height of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) during the mid-1970s. These missions were aimed at dealing with issues like restrictive business practices (the abuse of a dominant market position by enterprises to restrict competition). Through these bilateral contacts, the ICC sought to mollify and modify UNCTAD resolutions by submitting alternative position papers and proposing ICC-endorsed experts. As an example, the ICC sat in UNCTAD's Expert Group on Restrictive Business Practices, where Psimènos's interlocutor was the Indian economist Rangaswami Krishnamurti (1917–2013), director of UNCTAD's Manufactures Division.<sup>108</sup> The ICC Group on Restrictive Business Practices thus shadowed the efforts of the Manufactures Division at 'drawing up guidelines for the control of restrictive business practices.' Unsurprisingly, Krishnamurti noted how the ICC position was generally 'very conservative': it was opposed in principle 'to any outright prohibition of particular practices' but stalled by admitting to the 'introduction of legislation in developing countries' and promising to submit its own counterproposals.<sup>109</sup> From the 1960s to the 1980s, Psimènos was also at the forefront of attempts to draw the attention of the UNECE to ICC efforts to further East-West Business Relations.<sup>110</sup>

Psimènos's exceptionally long career ended in 1989, when she moved sideways to the French national committee of the ICC, and in 1995, to the position of permanent delegate. Already during the 1950s and 60s, she had been the Executive Secretary of the World Chambers Federation: a vast network of chambers of industry and commerce. Despite her long and illustrious career, upon Psimènos's death in 2015, aged 90, the official bulletin of the ICC French Committee only very briefly mentioned her passing.<sup>111</sup> As a side note, her only son Melchior de Metz Noblat was, during the early 2000s, a project manager (chargé de mission) at ICC France.<sup>112</sup>

### **3.2. Lobbying at UN New York: Edith Sansom and Roberta McKay Lusardi (1914–2000)**

After the UN was established in 1945, the ICC took advantage of Article 71 of the UN Charter, which allowed its Economic and Social Council to consult with non-governmental organisations. Article 71, in practice, enabled the ICC to send representatives to ECOSOC

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<sup>107</sup> UNOG/UNCTAD: ARR40/1842. Box 178: Psimènos to Paul Berthoud, 24 July 1975; and Psimènos to Berthoud, 16 May 1977. Close to the Wallenberg family, Winqwist was the ICC's secretary-general from 1973 to 1982: Thomas and Eichenberger, 'A World', 16.

<sup>108</sup> UNOG/UNCTAD: ARR40/1842. Box 178: Pierre Jonneret [ICC] to Moses Adebajo, 02 August 1974. See also: Yves Berthelot to Psimènos, 17 March 1986.

<sup>109</sup> UNOG/UNCTAD: ARR40/1842. Box 178: Krishnamurti to Gamani Corea, 17 October 1974.

<sup>110</sup> UNOG/UNECE: GX 18/12/1/59. Box 2448: Letter of Rune Hellberg to Psimènos, 30 April 1969; and UNOG/UNECE: GX 10/2/2/19. Box 1923: Telegram of Janez Stanovnik to Psimènos, 5 February 1980; and Psimènos to Stanovnik, 21 December 1979.

<sup>111</sup> Gérard Worms, 'Editorial', *Échanges internationaux*. Magazine du Comité français de la Chambre de commerce internationale (July 2015), 2.

<sup>112</sup> UN Digital Archives: FCCC/CP/2001/INF.2: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (26 July 2001), 80.

meetings, submit position papers to the ECOSOC agenda, consult with the UN secretariat and obtain UN documentation. The first ICC permanent representative to the UN headquarters was the American John R. Minter, who left in October 1947 to join the UN secretariat. Minter was replaced by a British woman, Edith Elizabeth Mary Sansom, who had previously been a secretary in the British ICC national committee, until 1944. In 1947 Sansom was then a secretary of the ICC delegation to the First Session of the ECOSOC commission at Lake Success. From 1948 until 1951, Sansom represented the ICC at UN headquarters as the Executive Secretary of its New York Office.<sup>113</sup> Minutes from an ICC Council of November 1948 emphatically mention that:

Miss Edith SANSOM, [the ICC's] Executive Secretary [in New York], had maintained excellent relations with the Headquarters of the United Nations and the Economic and Social Council, [and] kept the International Headquarters in Paris supplied with all the documents it required for its work and informed it of everything that went on at Lake Success.<sup>114</sup>

Sansom resigned after marrying Sir Eric Carpenter, a British member of the ICC Council and President of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce.<sup>115</sup> Her successor was another woman, this time an American. As the ICC's permanent representative in New York from 1951 to 1971, Roberta McKay Lusardi was arguably the most important woman working at the ICC until Psimènos became its First Director in 1973. Lusardi's role involved liaising with the United Nations headquarters, at a time when the ICC strove for international legitimacy, and the UN was a fast-growing intergovernmental organisation whose defence of economic regulation promised to cause headaches across large national and multinational corporations alike. Lusardi was accordingly responsible for surveying UN work on matters connected with business interests, and then with selecting, processing and forwarding that information to the ICC's specialised technical committees on trade law, transportation, publicity, and marketing.

After graduating in August 1935 from the private liberal arts college Colorado College, Lusardi obtained a Teaching Fellowship in Economics at the University of Illinois. This was followed by a one-year stint at Columbia University, after which Lusardi made her foray into business associations by obtaining a job with the National Industrial Conference Board (a non-profit business and research organisation founded in 1916). Partly representing progressive business interests, the Board sought to improve public confidence in corporations and to lessen tensions between capital and labour, both by providing guidance on personnel management and by supplying entrepreneurs (and the public) with economic indicators to better understand business cycle fluctuations.<sup>116</sup> From the Board, Lusardi transitioned to a research job in the mass media corporation Time Inc., afterwards joining an unnamed shipping concern, where she ghost-wrote 'for her boss', 'a book on the history of the American Merchant Marine.'<sup>117</sup>

Lusardi's whereabouts during the war and the immediate post-war period are still unknown to us, but her experience working for business interests, together with her academic

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<sup>113</sup> UN Digital Archives: UN Fiscal Commission, *Report of the Fiscal Commission* (New York: Lake Success, 1947), 3; Check List of United Nations Documents. Part 6A: No. 1: Economic and Employment Commission 1947–1949 (New York: United Nations, 1952); and 'Compte-rendu officiel', *L'Économie internationale* (June–July 1953), 11.

<sup>114</sup> ICC Council: Meeting (18 November 1948), 18.

<sup>115</sup> ICC British National Committee: Meeting of the Executive (Thursday 26 July 1951), 7. For photographs of Sansom's wedding with Carpenter: <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp100398/edith-elizabeth-mary-nee-sansom-lady-carpenter> (retrieved on 19 October 2022).

<sup>116</sup> On the Board's origins: H.M. Gitelman, 'Management's Crisis of Confidence and the Origin of the National Industrial Conference Board, 1914–1916', *Business History Review* 58:2 (Summer 1984), 153–177. See also <https://www.conference-board.org/timeline> (retrieved on 19 October 2022).

<sup>117</sup> 'Class Notes', *The Colorado College Bulletin* (October 1988), 29.



background in economics, very likely helped her to join the ICC in April 1950 and in 1951 to become the Executive Secretary of its New York Office. Like Edith Sansom, Lusardi was tasked with following every UN session dealing with economic issues of interest to the ICC.<sup>118</sup> Lusardi also assisted in revising the first scholarly historical account of the ICC, *Merchants of Peace*, originally published in 1938 and authored by Columbia Professor and IBM economic adviser George Ridgeway. In the 1959 revised edition, Ridgeway acknowledged Lusardi for ‘her generous assistance’.<sup>119</sup>

Other than participating in every ICC congress, during the 1950s Lusardi was also notably visible in ICC publications—she was the only woman credited with authorship in the ICC journal *World Trade*. In her article, Lusardi dryly surveyed ICC efforts to collaborate with the UN in initiatives relating to the protection of private foreign capital and the reduction of trade barriers, as well as initiatives to nuance UN resolutions against international cartels (restrictive business practices).<sup>120</sup> Entrusted, for instance, with conveying ICC resolutions on double taxation to ECOSOC, Lusardi was ‘the ICC representative’ [who] ‘explained that the Chamber believed that income on capital invested abroad should be taxed only once and proposed a detailed scheme of unilateral action based on two alternatives—exemption or tax credits.’ Lusardi further ‘suggested that tax reform by both investing and developing countries [should] be given high priority among measures to encourage foreign investment in economic development.’<sup>121</sup>

Lusardi’s coverage of the myriad UN commissions’ and agencies’ meetings (ECOSOC, UNIDO, UNCTAD) was published regularly in short paragraphs by *World Trade*. Informally, she wrote lengthier and more critical reports that were circulated not only within the ICC and its national committees, but also with favoured members of the UN secretariat. Although the ICC sat at the opposite end of the UN’s interventionist agenda, Lusardi cultivated and maintained cordial, even friendly relations with UN officials such as UNCTAD’s Director of External Relations Paul Berthoud. Lusardi was keen for her reports of UN meetings (ECOSOC, UNIDO) to be circulated among influential UNCTAD personnel such as Krishnamurti, Evgeni Chossudovsky (secretary of the Trade and Development Board), and V. A. Yulin, (an External Relations officer).<sup>122</sup>

Hobnobbing with the UN secretariat seems to have helped the job profiles of international officers looking for a career change. This fact would not have been lost on Lusardi, who in November 1970, after two decades at the service of the ICC, joined the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO).<sup>123</sup> Founded in 1966, Lusardi had covered its beginnings in her ICC reports. Like UNCTAD, UNIDO came to life during the First UN Development Decade. It aimed at advancing industrial development in developing countries and hence reducing their growth gap against developed countries, towards a fairer international division of labour. During the 1970s, UNIDO was fully aligned with the New International Economic Order programme advanced by UNCTAD and contrary to the ICC’s

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<sup>118</sup> ‘Roberta McKay Lusardi, [class of [1935], holds important position with International Chamber of Commerce’, *Colorado College Alumni News* (February 1953), 13–14.

<sup>119</sup> George L. Ridgeway, *Merchants of Peace. The History of the International Chamber of Commerce* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1959), xiv.

<sup>120</sup> Roberta M. Lusardi, ‘Ten Years of ICC Activity with the United Nations’, *ICC News* (January 1957), 1–3.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>122</sup> UNOG/UNCTAD: ARR40/1842. Box 178: Roberta Lusardi to Paul Berthoud, 22 June 1968.

<sup>123</sup> ‘Representatives of non-governmental organisations’ in List of Participants: UNIDO Industrial Promotion Service. An International clearing house for action on Industrial projects and problems in developing countries held in Athens, Greece, 29 November -19 December 1967 concurrently with The United Nations International Symposium on Industrial Development (Vienna: UNIDO, 1968), 48.

ethos.<sup>124</sup> Lusardi's interest in economic development took a greener turn when she left UNIDO to join the fledgling United Nations Environment Program in Nairobi. Aged 74, she left Austria to return to St. Simons Island in the US, where she lived out her last days.<sup>125</sup>

To our knowledge, Lusardi was probably the only prominent ICC woman officer to switch allegiances to one of its UN rivals. Attesting for the importance of social networks, Lusardi was replaced by none other than Simone Beetham, who had previously worked at the ICC headquarters and whose late husband, Robert Beetham, had been a delegate for the US Council of the ICC.<sup>126</sup>

### 3.3. Lobbying at UN Geneva: Janette Margaret Watson Maxwell Buraas (1920–2001)

Whereas the ICC was initially represented in New York by women, in Geneva that task befell a man: the Swiss Jacques L'Huillier, a professor of political economy at the University of Geneva and secretary of the Geneva Chamber of Commerce.<sup>127</sup> As L'Huillier's busy agenda (and arguably, old age) prevented him from following 'on a full-time basis', 'all intergovernmental meetings of interest to the ICC', on 1 January 1981 he was replaced by Janette Buraas as the ICC's Permanent Representative to the intergovernmental organisations of the UN in Geneva. L'Huillier, at least temporarily (and perhaps nominally), remained in function as Buraas' assistant.<sup>128</sup>

Ongoing research on the women working in the UN secretariat has emphasised the role of translators and typists as the hidden, silent enablers of the policy work achieved through translated meetings and multi-language reports.<sup>129</sup> Most of Janette Buraas's pre-ICC career was spent in the information services of trade-related intergovernmental organisations. Whether by choice or necessity, she also worked as a translator of Norwegian. At the same time, and echoing Lusardi's flight to UNIDO, Janette Buraas' career exemplifies the revolving doors between the ICC and the UN, together with the importance of interwoven personal and business networks in opening those doors.

After the Nazi occupation of Norway, political refugees reached British shores, including a certain Anders von Tangen Buraas (1915–2010). Buraas was an experienced journalist working for the Norwegian Labour Party's official organ, the *Arbeiderbladet*, for which he would also go on to become its London correspondent. At a house party sometime during the 1940s, he met Janette Margaret Watson Maxwell and subsequently married her.<sup>130</sup> The couple did not stay in Britain much longer. We find references to Janette Buraas during the 1950s as a translator of official Norwegian tourism brochures.<sup>131</sup> By 1960, she was working at the International Technical Co-operation Section of The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Commerce

<sup>124</sup> For a recent (official) historical survey of UNIDO: UNIDO, *Building ideas from data and practice. The Intellectual History of UNIDO* (Vienna: UNIDO, 2016), 25ff.

<sup>125</sup> 'Class Notes', 29.

<sup>126</sup> 'ICC and UN Secretariat', *ICC News* (November 1970), 3.

<sup>127</sup> Jacques Benjamin, 'Review of Jacques L'Huillier, Les organisations internationales de coopération économique et le commerce extérieur des pays en voie développement. Genève, 1969', *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 4:1 (March 1971): 160–1.

<sup>128</sup> UNOG/UNCTAD: ARR40/1842, Box 178. TDO 450: Psiménos to Gamani Corea, 30 December 1980; and V. Perov to Psiménos, 5 January 1981.

<sup>129</sup> On this point, we are particularly indebted to Elizabeth Banks's ongoing ECOINT research on Marina Men'shikova, a Soviet agricultural economist forced to work as a translator at the UN in the 1970s.

<sup>130</sup> Regarding Anders's biography: Reidar Hirsti, 'Anders Buraas', in *Norsk Biografisk Leksikon*: [https://nbl.snl.no/Anders\\_Buraas](https://nbl.snl.no/Anders_Buraas) (retrieved on 19 August 2022). On the Buraas's marriage: Mark Frary, *Aiming High. The Life and Times of Ski Pioneer Erna Low* (Leicester: Matador, 2012), 88.

<sup>131</sup> In 1957, Janette translated a tourism pamphlet: Yngve Woxholth (ed.), *Look at Norway* (Oslo: Norsk Kunstforlag, 1957).



and Shipping.<sup>132</sup> In that same year, a fledging intergovernmental association seeking to establish a trade block among western European countries was founded: the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). In 1961, the Buraas' moved overseas as Anders took the post of journalist and information director of EFTA's Information Office in Washington. Janette Buraas followed suit by working in that same service.<sup>133</sup>

Arguably through her husband's experience and networks, Buraas started learning the ropes of public relations in trade-focused intergovernmental organisations with EFTA. Throughout the 1960s, she published brochures for the EFTA's Information Department in Geneva,<sup>134</sup> while also writing for the official *EFTA Bulletin*.<sup>135</sup> While in Washington, Buraas wrote for the Norwegian-American Chamber of Commerce's journal.<sup>136</sup> From 1966 to 1970, Anders assumed the same function of information director at the EFTA's Geneva headquarters. Janette then gained crucial experience of the UN environment by joining the editorial board, sometime in the 1970s, of the *International Trade Forum*, the official organ of the International Trade Centre (ITC). The latter is a subsidiary multilateral agency, also based in Geneva and founded co-jointly by the GATT and UNCTAD in 1967 to provide trade technical assistance.<sup>137</sup>

Not long before joining the ICC, Buraas moved from journalism and public relations to become the Senior Programme Development Adviser of the Division of Interregional Programmes within the ITC.<sup>138</sup> That experience proved appealing to the ICC, which on 1 January 1981 appointed Buraas as its Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva. Psimènos soon started mailing letters of introduction to UN agencies such as UNCTAD, in order to help Buraas set up interviews with UNCTAD's Directors and Chiefs of Programme. As part of her job, Buraas also received 'a pass to enable her to enter the Palais des Nations freely.'<sup>139</sup>

Throughout the 1980s, Buraas' accounts of UNCTAD and UNECE meetings were regularly published by official ICC periodicals.<sup>140</sup> Perhaps reflecting the demise of the NIEO and the growing support from the Global North for worldwide trade and economic deregulation, the ICC did not hide its pro-business lobbying at the UN. Buraas was among those interviewed in 1983 by the ICC's *Business World* to explain how business groups conducted their lobbying. At a time when the decision-making power of UN-related intergovernmental organisations was starting to ebb, the ICC drew a picture of a fast-expanding nebula of inscrutable IGOs that, using 'impenetrable jargon', unrelentingly submitted proposals to regulate trade and foreign investment, with far-reaching consequences for the activities of multinationals and smaller

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<sup>132</sup> Training Possibilities in Europe: Newsletter. Issue 1 (OECD, 1960), 213.

<sup>133</sup> Report of the Attorney General to the Congress of the United States on the Administration of the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938, as Amended for the Calendar Year 1960 (US Department of Justice, July 1961), 41, 129.

<sup>134</sup> In 1963, Janette wrote a three-page brochure, *Social Services in Norway*, published by the Information Department of EFTA Geneva: *News of Norway*, 20:40 (21 November 1963), 160.

<sup>135</sup> Janette Buraas, 'Vocational Training in the Nordic Countries', *EFTA Bulletin* (September–October 1964), 12–15.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. *Norwegian American Commerce, 1964–65* (New York: Norwegian Chamber of Commerce, 1965): <https://books.google.it/books?id=drsJAQAAMAAJ&q> and <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.319510013524529> (retrieved on 19 October 2022).

<sup>137</sup> *International Trade Forum*, Volume 13 (1977), 3.

<sup>138</sup> UNOG/UNCTAD: ARR40/1842, Box 178. TDO 450: J. Richard Foran [Or V. Perov?] to A. Buchs (7 January 1981).

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> For example: 'UNIDO IV: Like the Curate's Egg, Good Only in Parts?', *ICC Business World* 2:4 (October–December 1984), 42–43.

companies.<sup>141</sup> Moreover, the ICC contended that those IGOs were prey to a myriad of ‘special interests’ that were lobbying for influence and were by definition ‘hostile to business’: from organised labour and consumer groups, to environmentalists and feminists.

Asked about her *modus operandi*, Buraas recognised the need to identify well in advance those IGO proposals potentially damaging to business. She insisted that such an effort must be underpinned by ‘a good deal of doorstepping’. This meant not only surveying UN documentation but also cultivating social relations with the UN secretariat (namely its ‘movers and shakers’) as well as with the members of national missions. Buraas acknowledged that this allowed her to ‘operate an early warning system for ICC headquarters in Paris’, while giving her ‘time to pull in a business view on contentious issues’.<sup>142</sup> By 1983, Buraas considered UNCTAD as the most demanding IGO to survey: ‘the challenge is not a shortage of information, it is to sift the significant from the trivial and rhetorical in the torrents of words and paper.’<sup>143</sup>

Regardless of what he considered UNCTAD’s sneering at business interests, the ICC’s then secretary-general Hans König proudly pinpointed how business preferred to positively collaborate with the UN, if only to prevent its secretariat from pursuing ‘projects that may look good on paper, but would not work out in practice’. Indeed, the ICC’s lobbying at the UN aimed not a ‘final victory’. Rather, the ICC vouched to keep under permanent surveillance UN initiatives concerning the protection of pharmaceutical patents that were potentially damaging to business interests.<sup>144</sup>

Janette Buraas’ interview remains a rare example of an ICC woman being publicly recognised (and praised) for her professional fostering of business interests through organised business internationalism. She remained in function as the ICC’s permanent representative to UN Geneva until 15 November 1989, when she was succeeded by the Czech-born, British John Kraus (1925–?). After a short stint in UNECE, Kraus had spent most of his career at GATT, becoming Director of the Trades Policies Division and chiefly, Director of the External Relations Division, where he liaised with other IGOs and NGOs, including the ITC.<sup>145</sup>

## Conclusion

‘Add women and stir’ suggests the historian Glenda Sluga, as a means of recovering and reintegrating the ‘women *who were there* as political agents into the stories we tell of the international past, even when the historical questions seem, at first glance, to be male-dominated and non-gender-specific.’<sup>146</sup> Because gender-related issues are virtually absent from the historical literature on the ICC,<sup>147</sup> this working paper seeks to enlarge our knowledge of women’s participation in the ICC and their involvement in shaping the economic thinking of organised business internationalism. As suggested by Sluga, and currently developed in the ECOINT Project, accounting for women in the economic thinking and policymaking of international organisations allows us to frame how women helped to sustain the ICC’s international diplomacy and economic thinking.

The analytical and empirical bearing of that methodological insight resides in its recovery of women, from long-forgotten typists to higher-ranking figures like Psimènos, who

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<sup>141</sup> ‘IGOs in Your Life: How Business Puts Its View to the UN and Others—and Who Speaks’, *ICC Business World*, 1:3 (Summer 1983), 40–42. See also Appendix 6: ‘IGOs in Your Life’ (*Business World*, 1983).

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>145</sup> UNOG/UNCTAD: ARR40/1842, Box 178. Letter of J. Hugh Faulkner to Kenneth Dadzie, 16 November 1989 (including a ‘Biographical Note of John H. Kraus’).

<sup>146</sup> Sluga, ‘Add Women’, 66.

<sup>147</sup> Bar the already cited works by Mirèze Phillippe.

fall outside traditional scholarly canons linking economic thought with individual and publicly visible authorship. Women at the ICC were often forced to act in the spotlight and in positions surrogate to men. Studying them uncovers ignored facets of the ICC's institutional life, from 'salon diplomacy' to knowledge collection and informal lobbying. In a glaring case, it was by 'adding women' that we could identify the importance of Psimènos, Samson, Lusardi and Buraas in sustaining the ICC's ambitions to exert influence over UN initiatives by: dialoguing with its secretariat; reporting on UN meetings; or helping to draft counterproposals shielding business interests from UN projects and resolutions. Despite the stark historiographical silence on the lives and contributions of those women, their work behind the scenes was fundamental to the prospects of organised business internationalism throughout the twentieth century.

Although the ICC remains a male-dominated institution, one general conclusion of our paper is that the growing role of women in determining ICC policymaking evolved in sharply contrasted 'moments': World War Two marked the threshold at which women attained posts of higher prominence within the ICC. This supports Madeleine Herren's conclusion regarding the LON's above-average, but limited employment of women. She argues that during the interwar period, 'emancipation had enhanced women's *national* scope of action, while international politics [at an institutional level, we should add] remained a male-dominated field at least until 1945'.<sup>148</sup> Just as the wives of businessmen remained integral to the ICC's social dimension, so too did typists and secretaries ensure, from the shadows, the good health of bureaucratic life in the ICC, before and after 1945. Their careers are hardly traceable from the ICC's written and visual sources. Nonetheless, after 1945, women finally stepped into the upper-ranking secretariat: as experts, heads of technical divisions, and liaison officers to the UN in Geneva and New York. Since the 1980s, and echoing the rising importance of law as a means of realising liberal and neoliberal economics at the international level, women have made inroads into the ICC Court of Arbitration as Counsels and Arbitrators. In the interim, businesswomen started joining the ICC's bi-annual conferences as delegates from their national ICC committees.<sup>149</sup>

If all ICC presidents have so far been male, the slowly, tortuously ascendant trajectory of women in the ICC culminated when Maria Livanos Cattai became its first female Secretary General, a post she held from 1996 until 2005. Livanos Cattai's appointment should not be read, however, as a sign of the ICC's conversion to gender equality and rather as a reflection of the ICC's elitist environment, the neoliberal zeitgeist of the 1990s, and the increasing relevance of lawyers (practically and symbolically) to the organisation.<sup>150</sup> Born into the Livanos family, one of Greece's shipping magnates, Cattai took her husband's surname.<sup>151</sup> She joined the ICC after having worked for the World Economic Forum since 1977. There, Livanos Cattai organised the Forum's Annual Meetings at Davos—a venue for political and business elite confraternization, where neoliberal conceptions of the global economy were recurrently reaffirmed. She was responsible for managing relations with the Soviet Union and China, in practice overseeing attempts to open Soviet and Chinese markets to Western multinationals by organising informal meetings between businessmen and Communist political leaders.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Herren, 'Gender and International Relations', 196.

<sup>149</sup> As an example, see a recent historical survey of the ICC written by a former secretary of the ICC's German national committee: Susanne Sophia Spiliotis, *Die Zeit der Wirtschaft. Business Statesmanship und die Geschichte der Internationalen Handelskammer* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2019).

<sup>150</sup> See: <https://news.yorku.ca/2006/10/20/york-university-to-confer-two-honorary-degrees-at-fall-convocation/> (retrieved on 22 October 2022).

<sup>151</sup> Stéphane Cattai is a former French banker hailing from a politically influential Egyptian Jewish family.

<sup>152</sup> Concerning Livanos Cattai's social origins and her work for the World Economic Forum, see: Dewar, *Cloak*, 309–12; and [https://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/phlntrpy/docs/bios\\_2010.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/phlntrpy/docs/bios_2010.pdf) (retrieved on 22 October 2022). On the World Economic Forum and its promotion of 'women's empowerment' by conceptualising a 'rational economic woman': Juanita Elias, 'Davos Woman to the Rescue of Global Capitalism: Postfeminist Politics and

Interviewing her not long before she joined the ICC, the journalist Elaine Dewar remarked how 'Livanos Cattau kept using that word, *integration*, as if all sorts of isolated pieces were being knitted together into some global whole.'<sup>153</sup>

Away from the spotlights and backstages of Davos, there exist several other research avenues suggesting how 'adding women and stirring' will help us to examine anew, not only women's contributions to the ICC, but also the larger question of women's participation in business internationalism. One hypothesis that we want to develop further relates not so much to whether women's conceptions of the ICC's mission differed from those held by men, but rather how their assumption of particular duties (like liaising with the UN or working on commercial policy and marketing) reflected a gendered distribution of policy tasks inside the ICC. In these regards, examining the interactions of the ICC with the International Federation of Business and Professional Women, which was created and run by women, would prove rewarding. The reader will also note this paper's focus on women hailing from the Global North. It remains to be investigated when and how women from Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America, transitioned from joining national ICC committees to working at ICC headquarters. In addition to this, we plan to continue working on women's representation at the ICC Court of Arbitration, in line with the recognition of the rising status of legal specialists within the ICC.

Since the 2010s, growing societal recognition of gender inequality and labour discrimination has pushed the ICC to lift public awareness of its institutional efforts to reach gender parity.<sup>154</sup> A clear sign of the ICC's underperformance that helps to put this paper's findings into perspective, was the concomitant creation in 2012 of ICC World Business Women: 'a staff-driven initiative' aiming 'to promote gender diversity and better gender balance' within the ICC. Anchoring its origins within internal perceptions of women's role in the ICC since its foundation promises to be yet another fruitful subject of enquiry.<sup>155</sup>

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Competitiveness Promotion at the World Economic Forum', *International Political Sociology*. 7:2 (June 2013) 152–169.

<sup>153</sup> Dewar, *Cloak*, 311.

<sup>154</sup> See <https://iccwbo.org/news-publications/news/icc-world-business-women-launched-by-staff-on-international-womens-day-2> (retrieved on 18 May 2023). See also the ICC webpage on diversity, which according to Mirèze Philippe, was (only) created in 2017: <https://iccwbo.org/about-icc-2/diversity-and-inclusion/> (retrieved on 18 May 2023). See also Philippe, 'How Has Female', 23.

<sup>155</sup> Philippe, 'How Has Female', 22–3.



### Appendix 1: ‘La 60<sup>e</sup> du Conseil’ (*L’Économie internationale*, 1939)



LA 60<sup>e</sup> SESSION DU CONSEIL a eu lieu à Copenhague, la veille de l'ouverture du Congrès, sous la présidence de M. Thomas J. Watson, assisté de M. Holger Laage-Petersen; des présidents honoraires de la C.C.I., Sir Alan G. Anderson, G.B.E., M.P., M. Willis H. Booth, Dr. F. H. Fentener van Vlissingen, M. Abr. Frowein, Dott. Alberto Pirelli, M. Georges Theunis; des vice-présidents de la C.C.I., J. Sigfrid Edström — le nouveau président —, M. Walchand Hirachand, M. J. B. van der Houven van Oordt, Lord Riverdale, K.B.E., M. Henri Strasburger et M. Silas H. Strawn; de M. Erik Haguenin, trésorier adjoint de la C.C.I., et de M. Pierre Vasseur, secrétaire général. — On reconnaît dans l'assemblée

An ICC Council session in June 1939, ahead of the opening of the last ICC congress held before the war, in Copenhagen. Note the two secretaries sitting in the middle of the room: *L’Économie internationale* (August 1939), 8.

### Appendix 2: ‘Un groupe de délégués chinois’ (*L’Économie internationale*, 1939)

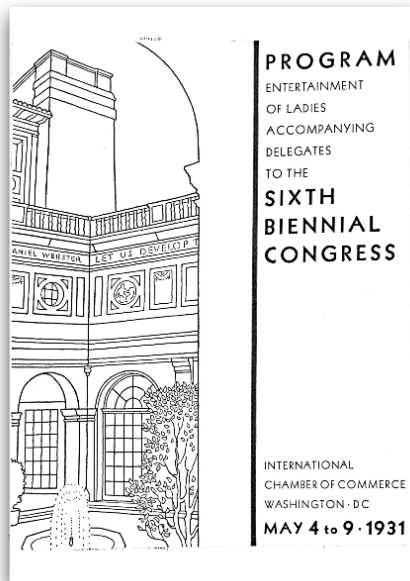


Nordisk Pressefoto

UN GROUPE DE DÉLÉGUÉS CHINOIS.  
Au milieu: le docteur Ping-Wen Kuo;  
à sa gauche: Mme Kuo.

‘Un groupe de délégués chinois’: Ruth Loo-tuh How (1901–2005)—the wife of the future Chinese delegate to Bretton Woods, Kuo Ping-Wen (1880–1969)—is pictured at the 1939 ICC Congress: *L’Économie internationale* (August 1939), 73.

**Appendix 3: 'Program. Entertainment of ladies' (*L'Économie internationale*, 1931)**



'Program. Entertainment of ladies accompanying delegates to the Sixth Biennial Congress': *L'Économie internationale* (1931).

**Appendix 4: 'Fête de nuit à l'Île des Paons' (*L'Économie internationale*, 1937)**



Photo Press - Illustration Hoffmann  
**FÊTE DE NUIT A ÎLE DES PAONS.** - Debout: Dr. J. Goebbels, Ministre de Propagande du Reich, Dr. F. H. Fentener van Flissingen. Assises: Mme Goebbels, Mrs. Thomas J. Watson.

'Fête de nuit à l'Île des Paons': the American Jeanette Kittredge (1884–1966), wife of the ICC sitting president Thomas Watson, confers with Magda Goebbels, whose husband Joseph is accompanied by the Dutch Frits Fentener van Flissingen (1882–1962), ICC president from 1933 to 1937: *L'Économie internationale* (July–August 1937), 8.



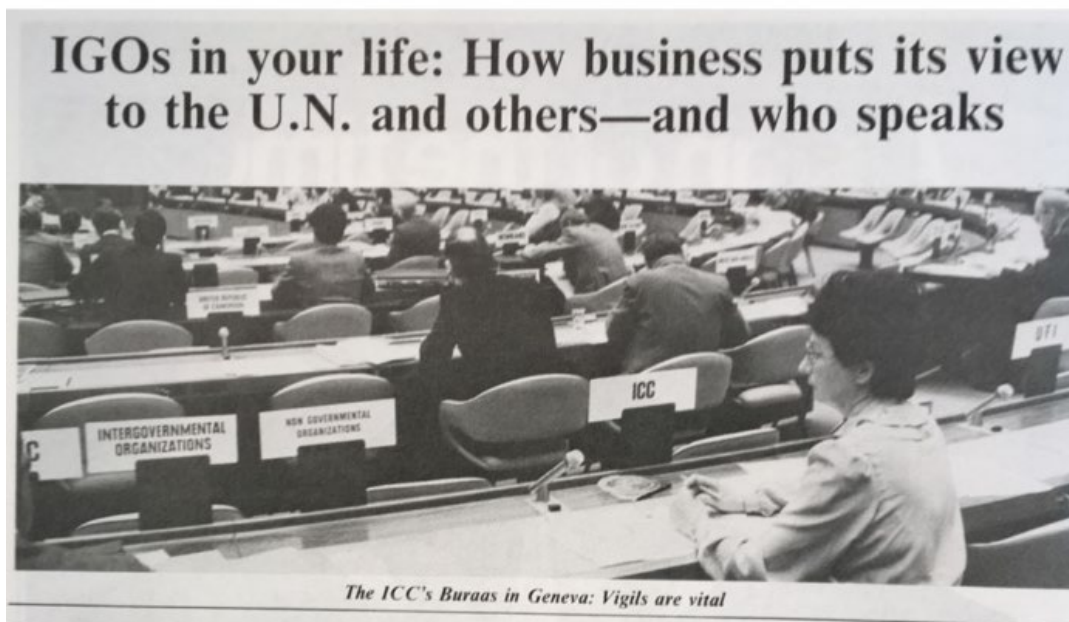
## Appendix 5: Portrait of Marie C. Psimènos (*L'Économie internationale*, 1951)



De gauche à droite : Sigurd S. LARMON, Sten HORWITZ (co-Président), Ivor COOPER (Président) Marie C. PSIMENOS (Secrétaire de la séance), et Francis ELVINGER.

Marie C. Psimènos, officiating in the 1951 ICC congress at Lisbon: *L'Économie internationale* (July–August, 1951), 49.

## Appendix 6: 'IGOs in your life' (*Business World*, 1983)



Janette Buraas attending an UN Geneva meeting, as published in *Business World* (Summer 1983), 40.

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