



Rachel Rimmer – Panel V

In 2009, Simone Veil, our president, was at the Terezin conference and I am very honoured to speak here about the French situation.

As you know, the terrible attacks at the Charlie Hebdo newspaper and at the Hyper cacher have highlighted a major increase in anti-Semitic attack and our context in France has changed dramatically. For everybody, but especially the survivors living in France, it has been a shock which has awakened great fear. Many Holocaust survivors say to us “ During World War 2, we were too young to escape and now we are too old to move”. But they also say “we spent most of our lives trying to be recognized as victims and now we are recognized, now the Holocaust is taught in every school in France, and our testimonies are public. Yet still, it did not help, everything we did is fragile; hatred and anti-Semitism still exist”.

This underlines one of the main points I wished to convey today, that welfare is not only about receiving money, being helped, and cared for, it has also to do with giving moral security to people, taking into account all those fears that were so acute in childhood and are still there, ready to show up at every corner.

In France, we have the highest population of Jews in Europe. Even though 7000 left last year for Israel, we still have over 500 000 Jews remaining in France and who feel French. And we have also one of the most significant populations of survivors in the world, because 75% of the Jews living in France during the war escaped deportation, especially children (the rate is 81% for children), many of whom went to school during all the war, and other were hidden in homes, in churches, in the countryside, everywhere. Lots of families were reunified after the war, that’s why many people did not consider themselves as survivors for long time, which was not the case when someone was missing; most families remained with their own ghosts, those who were still in Eastern Europe countries, and who were murdered.

Today, all those former hidden children have become old, and they are our main preoccupation, because there are high disparities between their situation and the welfare to which they have access.

Since 1999, all deportees, including those who were not French during the War, have access to veteran’s pensions, which allows them invalidity levels so that all their medical needs are taken care of, including the need for care at home. We estimate that most deportees are now protected from poverty.



It's much more complicated in the case of hidden children. We estimate that there are 30 000 to 40 000 former hidden children living in France today. Their situation is very diverse: some of them have been successful and are not in need; others are in a more difficult situation as they grow older, especially as they are not always considered as Holocaust victims.

The most vulnerable of the hidden children are those who lost one or both of their parents during the war, who we call "Shoah Orphans". They were officially recognized in 2000, when, thanks to the efforts of Serge Klarsfeld, a decree allowed them to choose between a payment of an indemnity, or a monthly pension which is indexed to inflation. Thus in 2000 it was 330 euros per month while today it amounts to 520 euros per month.

7000 people chose the one-off payment and 7000 chose the pension, 2/3 living in France and 1/3 living outside France, especially in Israel, but also in the US. As Stuart Eisenstadt has recalled, 60 million dollars have already been given to orphans living in the US

The recent agreement, signed in December 2014 will allow another 60 million dollars to be given to non-French Holocaust survivors deported from France who could not access French pensions, but also, and this is new, to the heirs of victims who died after the war, children or grandchildren born after the war. The fund will be open to all nationalities not covered by former agreements whatever their place of residence.

If I come back to the orphan decree, which we also call the "Klarsfeld rent", it is certainly for us one of the most representative measures to have been enacted by the French government. At the same time, at the end of the 1990s in France, an important decision was taken to create 2 new institutions.

It followed President Chirac's official recognition of France's responsibility during the Holocaust and after a Commission of historians had studied and assessed the levels of spoliations and restitutions made in France.

The first institution was the CIVS Commission for the Compensation of Victims of Spoliation resulting from Antisemitic legislation in France during the Occupation, which deals with direct compensation to victims. Since 2000, 500 million Euros have been distributed to victims of Aryanizations, and of spoliations, and to their heirs.

The Second institution was our foundation, the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah, which received an endowment of 393 Million euros, considered as the money stolen to the Jews which could no longer be returned to individuals.



With the funds generated from this endowment, we subsidize the Shoah Memorial in Paris and the new Shoah Memorial in Drancy, near the former internment camp, and we support projects in welfare, history, education, memory, Jewish life and projects against antisemitism.

Our foundation supports the Jewish institutions in France in their welfare programs for survivors, to complement the care they are entitled to within the public system.

Compared to the Claims Conference, we operate locally, mainly in France, and our budget is about 3 to 4 million Euros per year for welfare.

We do not collect supplementary funds and we do not operate any programs directly. We finance projects, purely from the funds generated by our endowment. We work with several major Jewish institutions in France like Casip Cojasor, FSJU, OSE, Adiam, who all set their own programs.

We support:

1 Medicalised homes for the elderly and Alzheimer day centers; this sector is well financed by the public system in France; we help the Jewish homes to provide specific programs aimed at Survivors, taking into account that they need more care and more attention; we finance thus mainly supplementary caregivers for survivors and activities for them such as Yiddish classes, music and so on.

2 Orientation services aimed at survivors, and programs to combat loneliness have been created among the main Jewish welfare organizations; more programs evolved and now there are dozens of places in Paris offering activities for the elderly and helping people to access social aid when needed. Those initiatives are to be developed in the coming years and adapted also to elderly dependants.

3 Homecare programmes; our activity here is complementary to that of the Claims Conference; we are currently trying to work on more specific needs that are not covered sufficiently, such as psychological support at home.

4 Individual aid through institutions

We support an emergency fund, which helps survivors with all kinds of needs: if someone needs a hearing aid, for example, which is not covered by the health insurance system in France; or for burial costs, or special expenses which are limited; recently we also integrated recurring expenses such as rentals costs. This fund is operated by Passerelles.



And we have also, thanks to casip Cojasor, a health cover programme: in addition to standard health provided by the Sécurité sociale, this Mutuelle allows complementary insurance schemes to reimburse medical expenses.

As providers of finance, one of our questions is how better to organize complementarity.

Although there are some redundancies among the various programs supported by FMS, since today not all French Jewish victims are cared for, it is more relevant, and beneficial to develop programs and to promote better coordination than to merge existing programs. Our position is that Survivors should be entitled to choose from amongst different programs, agencies and caregivers.

In the future, we will probably have to work more closely with agents in the field in order to reach all the survivors who are not close to Jewish institutions and who are sometimes not well informed about what they should be entitled to.

We have also to confront the fact that public financing is going to decrease in the coming years and that we will have to face increasing needs, especially among the population of hidden children.

Thank you.