



**PREMIER
MINISTRE**

*Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité*

REPORT TO
THE PUBLIC
ON THE WORK
OF THE CIVS
RESTITUTION
COMPENSATION
REMEMBRANCE
IN 2023

Commission pour la restitution des biens
et l'indemnisation des victimes de spoliations antisémites

From Monday to Friday, between 10.00 a.m. and 12.00 p.m.
and between 2.30 p.m. and 4.30 p.m., the CIVS can be contacted
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FOREWORD

This foreword to the Annual Report of 2023, at the end of thirteen years as Chair of the CIVS, is a very moving exercise for me. In 2011, when I joined the Commission, the focus was on setting a cut-off date for the filing of new claims. How and when should you phase out your activity? Thirteen years on, not only is the CIVS still active, but it has been given a new institutional framework and a broader remit.

Why this turnaround? The turning point came in 2018. Noticing that this Commission had largely fulfilled its role, and that the question of its future would arise one day - a day that had not yet come - the Prime Minister solemnly stated on 22 July 2018 during the commemoration of the Vel d'Hiv roundup: *«there is one area in which we must do better, and that is the restitution of cultural property»*. Therefore, without abandoning its historic mission, the CIVS was given a new institutional framework and a broader remit, firstly by the Decree of 1 October 2018 and then, above all, by the Law of 22 July 2023.

“As an exception to the principle of inalienability [...], a public authority shall order [...] the removal of a cultural object from its collections [...] to be returned to its owner or their heirs, where that cultural object was looted between 30 January 1933 and 8 May 1945, as a result of anti-Semitic persecution perpetrated by Nazi Germany, by the authorities of the territories that it occupied, controlled or influenced and by the French State between 10 July 1940 and August 1944. [...] the public authority shall make its decision after obtaining the opinion [of the CIVS].”

Law no. 2023-650 of 22 July 2023



Michel Jeannotot,
Chair of the CIVS
from 10 September 2011 to 30 June 2024

The transition from the regulatory framework of its founding decree of 10 September 1999 to the legislative framework has resulted, in particular, in the renewal of the deliberative panel and the rapporteurs, the new legislation having repealed all the provisions of the regulations in force. At the time, I had already announced my wish to contribute, through my own departure, to the renewal of the remit called for by the reform stipulated in the Law of 22 July. Distinguished members of the deliberative panel took similar action following this announcement.

The particular responsibilities of the Chair of the Commission naturally led me to prepare for the implementation of the new legislation, in coordination with the appointing authorities, with the interests of the CIVS always taking precedence over personal situations. At the end of 2023, reflection on the adaptation of procedures and dialogue within the deliberative panel and departments led to the publication of the implementing provisions of the Law of 22 July 2023.

Before I step down as Chair of the Commission, I would like to say once again and for the last time to the deliberative panel, to all its members past and present, and to its Government Commissioner, how much the freedom of our exchanges and the strong commitment of each of us to the accomplishment of the Commission's work, have made a deep impression on me and will remain firmly etched in my memory.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the key figures who have conceived, brought to life and developed the Commission and taken it to the level of renown it enjoys today:

- its first Chair, Pierre Drai – we still refer to the Commission as the Drai Commission – and his successor, Gérard Gelineau-Larrivet;
- François Bernard, Councillor of State [*Conseiller d'Etat*], Vice-Chair from 1999 to this year, who has been an example to all of us from the outset, and particularly to me, and a point of reference and an ever-effective resource when conducting sometimes delicate deliberations;
- Jean-Pierre Bady, Senior Audit Manager to the Court of Accounts, whose ideas and proposals are directly behind the revival that has been driving policies for the restitution of looted cultural property since 2014;
- and Dean Ruzié, to whom the CIVS owes the involvement of higher education, and one of the first studies on the French system of compensation for anti-Semitic spoliation published by *Documentation française*, a system that he continued to promote through his participation in international conferences.

Lastly, I would like to thank all CIVS staff, in Paris and Berlin, who, together with the team of rapporteurs, welcome and listen to claimants and make their skills available to them. They do so with the essential support of the Ministry of Culture's Mission for Research and Restitution of Looted Property.

When I leave, I will take with me the memories of the many highlights during these years. But above all, I will never forget the words expressed in a claimant's letter of thanks after the CIVS' review of their case: "*up until now, my family has been nothing but ashes; today you have given it a face*".

One chapter is closing for me, and another is beginning for the Commission under the chair of Frédérique Dreifuss-Netter, Honorary Advisor to the Court of Cassation and a member of the panel since 15 September 2017. She was appointed on 1 July 2024, and I wish her every success in her new role.

THE CIVS

As an advisory commission reporting to the Prime Minister, the CIVS is responsible for examining individual claims submitted by victims or their heirs for reparation for losses resulting from anti-Semitic spoliation that occurred in France between 1940 and 1944.

The Commission investigates these cases, in particular on the basis of the research that it conducts in various archive collections in France and abroad. To examine the spoliation of cultural property, it receives support from the Ministry of Culture's Mission for Research and Restitution of Cultural Property looted between 1933 and 1945. It makes recommendations for compensation and restitution to the Prime Minister.

Since the entry into force of the Law of 22 July 2023, the CIVS also examines on its own initiative or at the request of the person concerned, cases of anti-Semitic spoliation of cultural property committed between 1933 and 1945 in a country influenced by Nazi Germany, where the cultural property is now in France in public collections or similar.

**Speech given by President Jacques Chirac on 16 July 1995,
at the commemoration of the Vel' d'Hiv' Roundup (16 July 1942).**

"In the life of a nation, there are times that are painful for the memory and for one's conception of one's country. It is hard to speak of these times because we sometimes struggle to find the right words to describe the horror and express the sorrow of those who lived through this tragedy: they are forever marked in their soul and in their flesh by the memory of those days of tears and shame. [...]"

On that day, France, land of Enlightenment and of Human Rights, land of hospitality and asylum, committed an irreparable act. Breaking its word, it handed those who were under its protection over to their executioners. [...] We still owe them a debt that cannot be repaid. [...]"

In passing on the memory of the Jewish people and of their suffering, and of the camps; in bearing witness again and again; in acknowledging the mistakes of the past, and the mistakes committed by the State; in concealing nothing from the dark hours of our history is quite simply defending an idea of humanity, liberty and dignity. It means fighting against the dark forces that are constantly at work. [...]"

Let us learn from history. We must not allow ourselves to be passive witnesses, or accomplices, of the unacceptable."



RESTITUTION

a key mission of the CIVS

Restitution is the most complete form of reparation, which involves handing cultural property taken by force back to families and returning it to the heritage that was looted. Until the entry into force of the Law of 22 July 2023, it was facing a major difficulty.

When a public entity was the owner of a looted artwork, the principle of the inalienability of public collections applied.

The case-specific law of 21 February 2022 was therefore required to enable 15 paintings to be handed over or returned to the heirs of their owners, who were victims of anti-Semitic spoliation.



A NEW LAW IN 2023 FOR THE RESTITUTION OF LOOTED CULTURAL PROPERTY

Presentation of the draft law by Rima Abdul Malak, Minister for Culture

"In Europe, 80 years ago, the Nazi regime and the collaborating authorities confiscated the Jews' property before taking their lives or forcing them into hiding and exile.

In France itself, 80 years ago, it was decided that Jewish possessions could be taken away from them. Keepsakes, everyday objects, books, etc. Hundreds of thousands of looted and plundered items that have never been found and returned.

Artwork and objets d'art have not escaped this fate. First at the hands of Nazi Germany and then with the active complicity of the French state. Through its Commissariat-General for Jewish Affairs [Commissariat général aux questions juives], art galleries were 'Aryanised', and the property of professionals and private individuals was looted. In other cases, persecuted families had no choice but to flee, selling their property under duress in order to finance their survival or forced exile.

Behind each artwork is a family story.

Behind each spoliation, there is a human tragedy.



Rima Abdul Malak,
ministre de la culture

Each restitution is an act of justice.

We must continue to forge this path of justice, while the last witnesses to the Holocaust are still with us, although not for much longer, and while anti-Semitism is still not a thing of the past.

In 1995, President Chirac's speech at the Vélodrome d'Hiver acknowledged France's complicity in the deportation and murder of French Jews during the Nazi occupation of the country.

In 1997, the Mattéoli Mission lifted the veil on the long-forgotten subject of spoliation of the Jews in France, by counting the unclaimed assets in banks and insurance companies and by drawing up an inventory of the looted art still in the custody of national museums. This research has made it possible to remember that the spoliation was part of the horror of the genocide, since it stemmed from the same desire to deprive the victims of their individuality."

Presentation to the Senate on 23 May 2023
of the draft law on the restitution of cultural
property looted as a result of anti-Semitic
persecution between 1933 and 1945

*"A claim for restitution will be subject to the prior opinion of a commission. While it is not in principle the role of the law to create an administrative commission reporting to the Prime Minister or a minister, this is not the case when the intervention of this commission is provided for in the context of local authorities exercising their powers, as will be the case for those authorities which own cultural property looted as a result of anti-Semitic persecution during the Nazi period. In the case of such property belonging to the State or public institutions of the State, **the existence of this commission is an element of the overall balance between respect for public property and the restitution of looted cultural property to its rightful owners**, which it is the responsibility of the law to ensure. **This commission's composition will guarantee the independence and expertise necessary for a thorough investigation into the traceability of the work and the circumstances of dispossession.**"*

Opinion of the French Conseil d'Etat
on the draft law, 30 April 2023

The CIVS' contribution to the legislative work and the drafting of the regulations

The CIVS took part at every stage in preparing the draft law: at the time of interministerial discussions, then during its review by the French *Conseil d'Etat* [Council of State] and finally during the debate in Parliament, first in the Senate and then in the National Assembly.

In particular, the CIVS accepted an invitation from the Senate rapporteur, Béatrice Gosselin, Senator for La Manche, to attend a hearing on 12 April 2023, and from the National Assembly rapporteur, Fabienne Colboc, MP for Indre-et-Loire, to attend a hearing on 6 June 2023.

It then took part in the interministerial work carried out to draft the implementing provisions for the law. This stipulated that a decree of the French *Conseil d'Etat* would specify the rules on the jurisdiction, composition, organisation and operation of the CIVS. This is the purpose of Decree no. 2024-11 of 5 January 2024, which came into force on 1 February 2024.



National Assembly, 6 June 2023

A FRAMEWORK LAW TO ENABLE THE RESTITUTION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY FROM PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

The Framework Law of 22 July 2023 on the restitution of cultural property looted as a result of anti-Semitic persecution between 1933 and 1945 now makes it possible to depart from the principle of inalienability, after obtaining the CIVS' opinion, and thereby order the removal of looted cultural property from the public domain for the purpose of returning it to its rightful owners.

Adopted by the Council of Ministers and submitted to the Senate on 19 April 2023, the draft law was definitively passed by Parliament, unanimously by both chambers, on 13 July 2023.

It is designed to facilitate the restitution process for looted art in the public domain of the State and local authorities. It enables the public authority to order the removal of any cultural property from the public domain, found to have been looted between Adolf Hitler's accession to power on 30 January 1933 and the German surrender on 8 May 1945, for the sole purpose of returning it to its rightful owners.

The decision to remove items from collections can only be taken after an opinion has been given by the CIVS, which is responsible for establishing the facts, assessing the existence and circumstances of the spoliation and recommending restitution.

NEW GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE OF SPOILIATION

The Law of 22 July 2023 broadens the CIVS' territorial remit and sets new time limits for its action.

Previously responsible for examining only spoliation committed in France during the Occupation as a result of anti-Semitic legislation, the Commission is now also responsible for the restitution of cultural property looted in all territories subject to the influence of National Socialism between 1933 and 1945 where anti-Semitic persecution was perpetrated. The definition of this scope and the reference to this 'influence' was discussed at the drafting stage of the draft law with the members of the Commission.

This means, for example, that the CIVS can now handle the case of a painting looted for anti-Semitic reasons in Germany, Austria or Poland in the 1930s and now identified in a public collection in France, which was not previously the case

Exploring archive collections in Europe

As a result of these developments, the CIVS needs to strengthen its research skills and archival expertise in Europe, such as in Germany, where a branch of the Commission is already established.

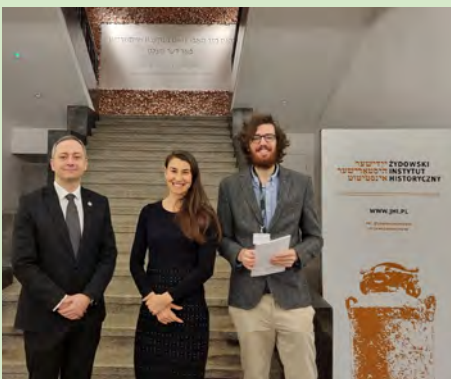
The implementation of the restitution law of 22 July 2023 and the enlargement of the Commission's geographic scope cannot be carried out effectively without a major foresight study in various central and eastern European countries. The challenge for the CIVS is to discover the archival landscape of these countries formerly occupied by Nazi Germany, and to identify local intermediaries, institutional points of guidance and partners, in order to support the investigation of cases.

This exploratory action began in 2021 in **Austria**, where fruitful cooperation with provenance researcher Delphine Telesio di Toritto was successfully completed. This partnership has resulted in the creation of a database listing applications for the export of cultural property from Austria to France between 1938 and 1940. The creation of this database was the first step to an in-depth use of Austrian archives, which will continue over the coming years.

In November 2023, the CIVS also undertook its first mission in **Poland** in order to establish contacts with new institutional partners and identify archive centres that could be used for future research. This mission, led by Coralie Vom Hofe from the CIVS office in Berlin, served in particular to open dialogue with the Polish Ministry of Culture and Heritage.

In Warsaw, the CIVS' remembrance work and the Network of European Restitution Committees were also presented at the headquarters of the European Network for Remembrance and Solidarity, which supports academic research, educational projects and memorial events via an international network of researchers and partner institutions. Lastly, the CIVS has initiated important discussions with the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, whose archives could be useful in tracing the heirs of victims of spoliation. The Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, for example, manages the archives of the Warsaw ghetto; it also has a recognised genealogical research department, whose expertise could be called upon by the Commission. Finally, important relations have been established with the Museum of the History of Polish Jews and the French Embassy in Poland.

In 2023, thanks to the trusting dialogue cultivated with the German-speaking association of provenance researchers (*Arbeitskreis Provenienzforschung e.V.*), the CIVS finally turned its attention to Italy, paving the way for action to be taken from 2024 onwards. The implementation of the restitution law warrants similar missions to Hungary, Ukraine, the Czech Republic and Romania in the future.



Further work to identify heirs

The new remit entrusted to the CIVS has led its departments to broaden the scope of their research. The CIVS already regularly seeks help from the French diplomatic and consular network and the central registry office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The involvement of the Holocaust Claims Processing Office also makes it possible to trace any heirs who may have emigrated to the United States. An agreement with the *Cercle de Généalogie Juive* supplements the research carried out with the consular services in Poland.

The CIVS bases its work on the documents provided by claimants and carries out investigations in registry offices, notary offices and archive centres in France and abroad. Access to **new archives digitalised** by public administrations, town hall registry offices, notaries, the courts, the general directorate of public finances, in particular for inheritance declarations, the national archives and the Paris archives makes it much easier to look for potential heirs. The departments also have access to the specialist commercial databases *Ancestry*, *Filae*, *Geneanet* and *Myheritage*.

SUPPORTING RESTITUTION INITIATIVES

The CIVS prefers to return looted cultural property as opposed to compensation, which it only recommends as an alternative, when returning the property is not possible. Its practice therefore leads it not to recommend compensation for works where it is still possible to carry out research into their whereabouts or to take steps to recover them. Admittedly, the CIVS cannot issue binding opinions to private entities or private collectors who may be in possession of works whose ownership is disputed. The same applies to all foreign entities, regardless of their legal status.

However, its legal nature and the flexibility conferred on it by the legislation that governs it mean that it can sometimes play a conciliatory role. In 2023, it recommended the return of paintings held by foreign museums and, for the first time, to a private individual abroad.

Around forty books looted from Erich Stern are returned

In 2022, the CIVS issued an opinion supporting the intention of the *Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin* to return the looted books identified in its collections to Erich Stern's heirs.

The CIVS helped to find the heirs and acted as a mediation body. Since then, provenance research has been stepped up, and around twenty additional books have been identified in the ZLB's collections, as well as in the collections of the library of the Free University of Berlin. This development demonstrates the great vitality of provenance research in German libraries.

On 29 September 2023 in Toulouse, libraries in Berlin returned around forty books to the *Groupe Toulousain de la Société Psychanalytique de Paris*, the beneficiary of Dr Erich Stern (1889 - 1959).



Persecuted in Germany by the Nazi regime, Erich Stern, a famous psychiatrist, psychologist and educationalist, found refuge in France in the 1930s, where he continued to practise his profession. Threatened, he and his family, by the anti-Semitic policy of the Vichy regime, Dr Stern was forced to go into hiding during the Occupation. His only daughter bequeathed her father's cultural and intellectual heritage to the *Groupe Toulousain de la Société Psychanalytique de Paris*.

On 29 September 2023 in Toulouse, Michel Jeannoutot, Chair of the CIVS, took part in the ceremony to return around 40 books by Dr Erich Stern.

CIVS mediation: contributing to reconciliation

The Commission's work may lead it to be approached spontaneously by individuals wishing to return property acquired in France during the Second World War, without being able to confirm that its acquisition was the result of anti-Semitic spoliation. In this case, although the CIVS does not have the authority to issue a formal recommendation, it can offer to put the individuals in touch with those likely to accept this property.



«In many ways, books are an unparalleled medium providing memories. Their sentimental, historical, cultural and biographical value is priceless. They are irreplaceable markers in a family's personal history. Books have a special aura; they involve their readers, projecting us back into the places where they were stored and recalling, at the turn of a page, those memories we thought had disappeared.»

Michel Jeannoutot, Chair of the CIVS

The restitution of two paintings in Audierne



Lieselotte Hoffmann, née Müller, a German national, inherited two paintings from her mother, who died in 1990. They are signed by the Breton painter Lionel Floch; one represents a market scene and the other, people collecting seaweed. According to family accounts and records, her father Max Müller brought these paintings home after a period during which he was stationed in France, particularly in Audierne, Brittany, while serving in the Wehrmacht.

Petra Hoffmann, Lieselotte's daughter living in Iena (Germany), had always been unaware of the conditions under which her grandfather had come into possession of the paintings. Acting in a personal capacity and as a representative of her mother, and her brothers and sisters, she approached the French Embassy in Berlin and the CIVS with a view to organising the return of the paintings to France and their restitution to their rightful owners. Demonstrating their willingness to part with Lionel Floch's paintings for good, the parties concerned relinquished all rights that they held in both these oil paintings.

Pending identification of the owners and heirs, the CIVS entrusted the paintings to the town of Audierne. Continuing their research, the CIVS and the Mission for Research and Restitution of Cultural Property looted between 1933 and 1945 succeeded in clarifying the provenance of the paintings, identifying their owner and then finding the heirs. The CIVS then carried out genealogical research and determined the rights of the heirs.

Both canvas paintings were returned to the heirs at a ceremony organised by the town of Audierne on 1 April 2023.

The return of five objets d'art in Pontivy

In 2020, the niece of a German soldier in the Wehrmacht contacted the CIVS to return five objets d'art to their rightful owners, which she had inherited from her uncle. Before he died in 1945, the soldier told his family that he had taken these objects to save them from the fire and destruction of a château in the Pontivy region.

At the end of the CIVS' searches, the rightful owners of the objets d'art could not be identified. It was not possible to determine whether the property was seized as a result of anti-Semitic spoliation or wartime looting.

The CIVS then proposed handing over the property to the town of Pontivy. The soldier's niece agreed to this proposal unconditionally and without any compensation, stressing that this was the ideal solution if the true owners of the objects could not be found. In November 2023, the Mayor of Pontivy confirmed that Pontivy had agreed to receive the five objets d'art.

This will enable them to be exhibited in a space open to the public, in a setting able to explain their history. This type of exhibition makes it possible to organise an educational activity about these objects involving school groups, or to symbolise the shared memory between France and Germany, the foundation of the friendship between the two countries.

The exhibition of the cultural property will also contribute to the identification work initiated by the CIVS: the objects could prompt further research after having piqued the curiosity of local experts, or they could be identified and recognised.



COOPERATION WITH RESTITUTION COMMISSIONS IN EUROPE

Founded in 2019 following a working meeting in Paris to coincide with the CIVS' 20th anniversary conference, the "Network of European Restitution Committees" brings together France, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom in an unprecedented forum for exchange and cooperation.

Bringing together the restitution committees in Europe

The network's objectives include exchanging information, putting doctrines into perspective and transferring practices and know-how, in the spirit of the Washington Principles and bearing in mind that the search for looted art is necessarily a cross-border and cross-cultural challenge, as the works have generally travelled through several European countries.

In 2023, the CIVS thus helped write and distribute several editions of the network's Newsletter, which are read and used by most of the institutional players working in the field of looted art. By publishing several articles in English via this European network newsletter, the CIVS has been able to inform the international public of its latest developments, present textbook recommendations and report on restitutions of cultural property organised by its teams, in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture's Mission for Research and Restitution of Cultural Property looted between 1933 and 1945.

In September 2024, to mark the network's fifth anniversary, the CIVS will take over the presidency and develop a programme of meetings and publications.



**Network of European
Restitution Committees
on Nazi-Looted Art**

As part of this European network, the CIVS deliberative panel wishes to organise meaningful and regular bilateral meetings with its partners. In July 2022, the CIVS and its German counterpart, the *Beratende Kommission*, met at the French Embassy in Germany for a working meeting.

Meeting between the CIVS and the Austrian Commission

From 15 to 16 June 2023, the CIVS repeated the exercise in Paris, this time inviting the Austrian Restitution Commission. The members of the Commission's deliberative panel, its director and its principal rapporteur, as well as the head of the M2RS (Mission for Research and Restitution of Cultural Property looted between 1933 and 1945), spent two days exchanging views at a workshop during which elements of doctrine, case studies and practical exercises were discussed in the spirit of trusting dialogue and using innovative methods.

This unprecedented Franco-Austrian meeting was first and foremost an opportunity for fruitful exchanges based on individual cases: the commissions were able to assess their respective practices and thus create a significant learning experience. Taking the form of discussion workshops, the various working meetings led to comparing working methods through the practical contrast of case studies.

Following presentations by Jean-Pierre Bady for the CIVS, David Zivie for the M2RS and Franz Philipp Sutter for the Austrian Advisory Council, the discussions began with a better mutual understanding of the structures and organisations involved.

On the initiative of Claude Bitter, Principal Rapporteur for the CIVS, a case was then simulated for deliberation. This innovative exercise enabled the members of both panels to highlight their different ways of thinking and the differences that sometimes separate their deliberation processes, while at the same time highlighting common requirements, such as legal rigour, an interdisciplinary approach to the context of spoliation, listening to claimants and the evolving dynamic of doctrines.



CIVS, Paris, 15 June 2023



Austrian Embassy in Paris, 15 June 2023



Berlin, 14 September 2023

The various working sessions were also a major source of mutual inspiration for both panels, resulting in a learning experience that is sure to last. The meeting also emphasised the need to continue Franco-Austrian exchanges in the field of provenance research in the future.

Finally, the meeting between the CIVS deliberative panel and the Austrian *Kunstrückgabebeirat* had an important diplomatic dimension. The chargé d'affaires praised the good cooperation and the efforts to achieve transparency at a reception at the Austrian Embassy in Paris on 15 June.

Meeting with the German Commission

On 14 September 2023, a CIVS delegation led by Gilles Bon-Maury, CIVS Director, and Claude Bitter, CIVS Principal Rapporteur, travelled to Berlin to take part in a ceremony celebrating the 20th anniversary of the German Restitution Advisory Committee [*Beratende Kommission*].

The event took place at the Jewish Museum Berlin and gave CIVS representatives the opportunity to meet the German commission, almost a year after the joint working seminar organised at the French Embassy in Germany. The trip was also an opportunity for the CIVS delegation to speak with representatives of the Dutch and Austrian commissions, CIVS partners in the Network of European Committees, who were also present in Berlin for this international event.

In Berlin, the CIVS delegation was able to explain to its European partners the structural changes introduced by the restitution law of 22 July 2023 and to take a closer look at the reform plans then being discussed with regard to the German commission.

A new commission created in Switzerland

In Switzerland, on 22 November 2023, the Federal Council approved the creation of an independent commission of experts to examine cultural heritage “with a problematic past”. Following the example of institutions in France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, the Swiss commission will base its work on the Washington Principles and pursue “just and fair solutions”.

In 2023, the CIVS had frequent and trusting discussions with the Swiss authorities and played an advisory role to the partner bodies responsible for setting up the review panel. In the future, Switzerland could become the sixth member of the ‘Network of European Restitution Committees’, an institution that will be steered by the CIVS from September 2024.



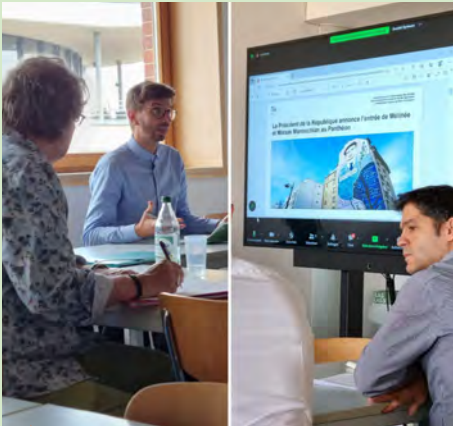
CLOSE RELATIONS WITH PROFESSIONALS

The success of the reform introduced by the Law of 22 July 2023 will depend to a large extent on the ability of the CIVS and its partners to combine the expertise and know-how of the many stakeholders in this restitution policy: 20th century historians, art historians, provenance researchers, teachers, archivists, lawyers, notaries and genealogists, etc. With this in mind, the CIVS teams are developing links with these disciplines and professions.

With historians

At the invitation of Fabien Théofilakis, a historian specialising in the National Socialist period, the CIVS gave a talk on 22 June 2023 at the Viadrina University in Frankfurt (Oder) to Master's students enrolled in the seminar "*Penser les génocides au XX^e siècle*" ["Thinking about genocide in the 20th century"], as part of the "*Rendez-vous de l'Oder*" Franco-German conference series.

Julien Acquatella, head of the Berlin branch of the CIVS, began by presenting the work of the CIVS in a talk entitled: "*Réparer l'irréparable. Les politiques d'indemnisation et de restitution, une œuvre de mémoire.*" ["Repairing the irreparable. Compensation and restitution policies, a work of remembrance"]. The CIVS' work was described on this occasion as part of France's public policies on remembrance. More than the compensation of losses or the restitution of looted objects, the public measures strengthened around the CIVS are now part of the Franco-German field of remembrance, where the question of reparation has given way to that of communication; this was the substance of the discussions held with the students of Viadrina University.



Frankfurt (Oder), 22 June 2023

With librarians

The search for and return of libraries looted and plundered under National Socialism is a priority for the CIVS. Between 5 and 10 million books were stolen in France during the Occupation, particularly from Jewish families. So there is a great deal of potential for research and restitution in Germany today.

As such, the CIVS is developing and cultivating fruitful relations with German libraries, in order to create research synergies and support restitution procedures. At the time of the 111th annual conference of German librarians (*BiblioCon 2023*), the head of the CIVS Berlin branch was invited to give a presentation on 24 May 2023 in Hanover entitled: *“La recherche des livres spoliés par les nazis : une contribution à la culture mémorielle franco-allemande”* [“The search for books looted by the Nazis: a contribution to the Franco-German culture of remembrance”]. In addition to explaining the work of the CIVS and making an offer of cooperation to librarians, this talk highlighted the main issues involved in returning looted books.

This talk will give rise to a publication in June 2024 in the journal *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Kunst- und Museumsbibliotheken*.

With provenance researchers

At the invitation of the German-speaking association of provenance researchers (*Arbeitskreis Provenienzforschung e.V.*), the CIVS spoke on 6 September 2023 in the amphitheatre of Berlin’s Technical University, alongside Professor Gilbert Lupfer, President of the *Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste*, an approved partner of the CIVS, Pia Schölnberger, Director of the Austrian Restitution Commission, and Professor Bénédicte Savoy, a specialist in restitution issues.



Hanover, 24 May 2023



During a debate on the application of the Washington Principles 25 years after they were established, an audience of specialists heard about the strengthening of France's research and restitution policy, which began in 2018, as well as the restitution law of 23 July 2023 and the extended powers of the CIVS.

Within this association, a working group made up of librarians, archivists and experts is dedicated to the research and restitution of books looted under National Socialism.



Meeting at the Free University of Berlin for their annual seminar, the experts in the search for looted books in Germany were invited by the CIVS to the French Embassy in Germany on 26 September 2023, to organise the opening evening of their study day under the aegis of the Ambassador.

In addition to a presentation of the CIVS' work on looted libraries by the head of its Berlin branch, the reception was the occasion for a fascinating exchange between researchers and institutional representatives, during which the touring exhibition "*Rose Valland : en quête de l'art spolié*" ["Rose Valland: in search of looted art"], an installation managed by the CIVS, was also presented to the public.



Debate in Berlin

On 8 December 2023, as part of the celebrations marking the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Washington Principles by the German Foundation for tracing looted art [Deutsche Zentrum Kulturgutverluste - DZK], the Tikvah Institute (a non-governmental organisation with public interest status dedicated to combatting anti-Semitism) organised a panel discussion on the future of restitution in Germany.

This meeting brought together those involved in the restitution of artwork looted under National Socialism in Germany. The CIVS was invited to present France's restitution policy over the past 25 years, as well as the framework law of 22 July 2023.

With teachers

The Academy for Civic and Political Education in Tutzing, Bavaria [Akademie für Politische Bildung], invited the CIVS to speak at a study day entitled: "La France dans le monde" ["France in the World"], alongside France's Consul General in Bavaria.

The seminar provided an opportunity to present the Commission's contribution to Franco-German remembrance work, as well as its involvement in diplomatic action through its department at the French Embassy in Germany.

Moderated by historian Michael Meyer, a specialist on France under the Occupation, the talk was given to an audience mainly made up of teachers and academics specialising in education.



With archivists



On 20 February 2023, the CIVS Research Coordination Department gave a presentation to a group of future archivists on the challenges of archival research to document the anti-Semitic spoliation that occurred in France during the Occupation.

Students on the 'Archives and Archiving Management' master's course at the University of Versailles-Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines found out about the organisation and the CIVS' work and took part in a group workshop. This workshop used a practical case study to determine which archive centres should be consulted to establish the genealogy of a looted family and identify the heirs of a case.

Visit to the Minutier central des notaires in Paris

On 28 November 2023, the CIVS Research Coordination Department met with members of the collection unit at the *Minutier central des notaires* in Paris [*notaries' central register of legal instruments*]. This meeting provided an opportunity to jointly study a selection of notarial deeds that shed light on the context of various anti-Semitic spoliation (business assets and real estate in particular).

Thanks to the indexing work carried out by the *Minutier Central* of all Paris notaries' records relating to anti-Semitic spoliation during the Second World War, it is now easier to identify notarial deeds concerning looted families who file a case with the CIVS. A meeting between the *Minutier Central* and the CIVS branch at the National Archives is planned for the summer of 2024.

The digitalisation of the Artistic Recovery archives

Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs,
La Courneuve

2023 saw a change of pace in the digitalisation of the Artistic Recovery collection. Initiated in 2019, this project follows on from an initial digitalisation project carried out in 2015 (the digitalisation of the ERR lists and 20,000 photographs of looted property) and aims to digitalise all 1,200 boxes of archives in the collection. These archives are the main source of information on the spoliation of cultural property committed in France during the Occupation. Their digitalisation aims therefore to make it easier for researchers, particularly international researchers, to access them and thus to comply with the Washington Principles formulated in 1998, of which France is a signatory (Principle II on access to sources).

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has been involved in a partnership agreement with the Archives department since 2013 and has provided substantial additional funding to that provided by the Archives department for several years. Thanks to the efficiency of the teams working for the service provider, Flash-Copy, and the extensive preparatory work carried out in-house by the Diplomatic Archives (checking that the inventories match the archive boxes, enhancing the indexing, removing dust, restoring damaged sheets and repackaging), it has been possible to increase the number of boxes digitalised from 99 in 2022 to 300 in 2023.

Priority has been given to digitalising series that have been particularly consulted: claim files sent by victims to the Artistic Recovery Commission [*Commission de récupération artistique*] and the Office for Private Property and Interests [*Office des biens et intérêts privés*], lists of looted libraries, and alphabetical series containing investigations carried out by the French and Allied artistic recovery services in Germany and Austria. This work will continue over the coming year, with almost 170 boxes being processed so that the entire collection is digitalised. The project will then be completed.

COMPENSATION

The CIVS has been compensating material and financial spoliation that occurred as a result of anti-Semitic legislation during the Occupation. This may include a looted apartment, business assets, confiscated art or furniture, money or jewellery. In such cases, the victims are compensated by the State upon the Commission's recommendation.

Spoliation may also be the work of banks and financial institutions (blocked accounts, unreturned assets, unclaimed life insurance policies, etc.). For these specific cases, compensation is awarded through funds provided by the banks.

Any person whose family was a victim of spoliation in France may submit a claim to the Commission, regardless of their nationality and current country of residence. The CIVS carries out research to establish the content and extent of the spoliation. The procedure is completely free of charge and the assistance of a lawyer is not required. As the Commission is not a court of law, it operates in a pragmatic and not simply a legal way. The statute of limitations does not apply to the applications it considers.



COMPENSATION FIGURES FOR 2023

In 2023

- > **17** meetings of the deliberative panel were organised
- > **77** cases were examined in meetings (with 68 opinions drafted in 2023 and 9 in 2024)
- > **46** cases were handled under the procedure by which the Chair acts alone.

77 opinions were issued by the deliberative panel:

- > **41** concerned material spoliation
- > **20** concerned bank-related spoliation
- > **16** concerned the spoliation of cultural property.

Of the 77 opinions issued, 22 resulted in rejections (primarily due to lack of evidence of spoliation): 4 cases of material spoliation, 11 cases of bank-related spoliation and 7 cases of spoliation of cultural property.

46 opinions were issued by the Chair acting alone:

- > **34** reserved portions allocated for material spoliation
- > **7** reserved portions allocated for bank-related spoliation
- > **2** reserved portions allocated for the spoliation of cultural property
- > **2** opinions involving beneficiaries of restitutions
- > **1** opinion recommending compensation for material spoliation.

Opinions are adopted at a meeting of the CIVS deliberative panel, or under the procedure by which the Chair acts alone, depending on the urgency of the matter, the claimant's personal situation and whether the case presents any particular difficulties. This procedure applies in particular to applications for which banks have agreed in principle, and for allocations of reserved portions.

30,013

The number of cases recorded by the CIVS between 1999 and 31 December 2023:

19,836

for material spoliation

10,054

for bank-related spoliation

123

for spoliation of cultural property since May 2019

85

The number of new cases recorded by the Commission in 2023:

54

for material spoliation

19

for bank-related spoliation

12

specifically for spoliation of cultural property

Recommended compensation of €4,213,053

in recommended **compensation** to be paid by the State (i.e. €4,032,529 corresponding to the 68 opinions issued in 2023), including **€20,369** for bank-related spoliation.

THE SCALE OF THE SPOILIATION AND EXTENT OF THE COMPENSATION

€201,685

recommended in 2023

€164,306,012

since 1999

(looting of apartments, including jewellery,
excluding refuges)

Although psychological harm, such as psychological trauma and deportation conditions, does not fall within its scope of compensation, the French system does however allow for an extended definition of losses eligible for compensation:

Looting of apartments and shelters

From May 1940, German occupying forces removed furniture in order to fill the offices, apartments and homes requisitioned. They also looted homes, including refuges, abandoned by Jews who had fled persecution or were deported (an operation carried out by the Nazi looting organisation "Möbel Aktion"). The contents of nearly 72,000 apartments was emptied in occupied France, including 38,000 apartments in Paris. This 'civil theft' by Nazi Germany covered all types of in-home property: clothing, furniture, silver, office equipment, pianos, etc. Most of these items were transferred to Germany.

Business and real estate spoliation

The objectives of this economic “Aryanisation” policy, first conducted by the Germans in the occupied zone (orders and instructions of 20 May 1940, 27 September 1940 and 12 November 1940) and then by the Vichy government across the entire country (Law of 22 July 1941), were to confiscate property belonging to Jews and to ban them from the majority of professional activities. Under the authority of the CGQJ (Commissariat-General for Jewish Affairs), 50,000 businesses and buildings were “Aryanised” between March 1941 and June 1944. These sales and liquidation operations were carried out by temporary administrators. Economic ‘Aryanisation’ gave rise to spoliation valued at more than €450 million. In addition, a number of business assets were looted outside the scope of this procedure. Indeed, because they were prohibited from doing business, merchants, craftsmen and independent professionals were forced to flee and go into hiding after abandoning the businesses.

€367,480

recommended in 2023

€175,820,144

since 1999



€2,592,045
recommended in 2023

€57,768,385
since 1999

Theft or forced sale of moveable cultural property

The looting of artwork began immediately after the occupation of Paris. From autumn 1940, this activity was assigned to a German organisation, the ERR (*Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg für die besetzten Gebiete*, or Reichsleiter Rosenberg Taskforce, in the occupied territories). The ERR seized works over a period of four years, targeting 200 prominent collectors. In addition, many cultural and religious objects were stolen from homes. The safes opened or broken into by the *Devisenschutzkommando* could also contain artworks. In total, 100,000 objets d'art and several million books were looted.

The Ministry of Culture's Mission for Research and Restitution of Cultural Property looted between 1933 and 1945 (M2RS) studies cases of spoliation of cultural property investigated by the CIVS. The complexity of the issues involved in reconstructing the journey of works means that a wide range of sources must be consulted. This research provides the opportunity to make the best possible assessment of the particularities of each case and to propose the most appropriate repair measures.

The CIVS makes a decision on the basis of the documents produced, inventories and testimonies dating from the time of the events, steps taken post-war and the presence of works in catalogues raisonnés. When property cannot be returned, the CIVS recommends that it be compensated on the basis of its estimated value at the time of the spoliation.

On several occasions in 2023, the CIVS had to take decisions after noting a discrepancy between the claims filed after the war with the French authorities and those filed in the 1960s with the German federal authorities. The research, investigation of the case and assessment by the deliberative panel should then lead to a common list of property that may be compensated or returned.



€67,303
recommended in 2023

€22,400,778
recommended since 2023

The payment of fees for smuggling to unoccupied France or across borders

From June 1940 to November 1942, a 1,200km border separated occupied France from 'free' France. Clandestine networks of smugglers formed to help people cross this 'border'. Some smugglers charged fees for their services; others seized all the property, cash, jewellery and silverware belonging to the people they transported. During this period, several thousand Jews had to call on the services of smugglers to flee persecution, often leaving behind cash and valuables. Lump-sum compensation is allocated to each person having used a smuggler.

Confiscation of valuables during internment in a camp

About 75,000 Jews were deported from France to foreign extermination camps. 67,000 passed through the Drancy camp. Others were interned in other camps scattered across France (in particular Pithiviers, Beaune-la-Rolande, Gurs, Compiègne, Les Milles and Rivesaltes). All the property they possessed was confiscated and the money was deposited with the Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations. The spoliation totalled more than €750 million.

Unpaid insurance policies and confiscation of bank assets

A German order dated 28 May 1941 read as follows: "Jews and Jewish businesses, for which an administrator has not been appointed, shall not dispose of payment instruments, receivables and securities or transfer them to another location without the approval of the Temporary Administrators Oversight Department". The Law of 22 July 1941 went even further, stating that "the balances of deposit accounts, and in general all sums belonging to Jewish people shall be transferred to the Caisse des dépôts et consignations [...]". During the war, 80,000 bank accounts and 6,000 safe deposit boxes were blocked. Financial spoliation (insurance policies, bank assets and capital market holdings) amounted to €520 million.

Supplements to previous compensation

The aforementioned compensation should be considered together with the supplementary compensation allocated after the Second World War by the French authorities (French War Damages Act) and German authorities (Brüg Act), where the Commission considers these reparation measures to have only partially compensated the victims for the losses incurred. This supplementary compensation relates to the looting of homes, the 'Aryanisation' of businesses, looting of businesses and pillaging of moveable cultural property, given that German compensation was most of the time limited to 50% of the value of the property in question.

€306,044

recommended for insurance policies since 1999

€20,369

payable by the French State
€35,210 payable by banks,
recommended for bank assets in 2023

€10,871,312 payable by the French State
and **€45,499,558** payable by banks
recommended for bank assets since 1999

(Source: Caisse des dépôts et consignations and the FSJU (United Jewish Welfare Fund))

€446,670

recommended in 2023

€90,924,130

recommended since 1999

BANK-RELATED SPOILIATION

€20,369

borne by the State
and **€35,210** to be paid by the banks,
recommended for bank assets in 2023

€10,871,312 borne by the State
and **€45,499,558** to be paid by the banks,
recommended for bank assets since 1999

(source: *Caisse des dépôts et consignations* and
the FSJU (United Jewish Welfare Fund))

10,054 claims submitted to the CIVS since
its creation

781 cases were created on the Commission's
initiative, when its investigation revealed
the existence of bank assets in the names
of looted persons or their businesses.

Since 2001, searches have revealed the existence of 12,308 cash accounts, securities accounts and safe deposit boxes. For most of these cases, the CIVS questioned the banks concerned by the possible reparation to be made, in accordance with the adversarial principle.

Since its creation, the CIVS has established unjust enrichment resulting from financial assets being illegally obtained or left with public or private institutions, and it has been able to assess bank-related losses. However, it could not recommend reparation measures to these institutions.

The signing of the Washington Agreement between the governments of France and the United States of America on 18 January 2001 established the conditions for bank reparation in terms of referral, research, investigation, decision-making, authorisation and payment.

20 cases were reviewed or further researched in 2023 by the Research Coordination Department, bringing the total number of cases handled to **10,054**:

- > in **13** cases, **32** cash accounts, securities accounts or safe deposit boxes were identified
- > the research into the remaining **7** cases did not turn up anything.

If the Commission recommends compensation for the spoliation of a personal account, it is to be paid by the banks. However, if the personal or business account was managed by a temporary administrator, the compensation is paid from the budget of the French State; in addition, supplementary compensation provided for under the Washington Agreement may be awarded. The United Jewish Welfare Fund [*Fonds Social Juif Unifié* (FSJU)] orders and pays out compensation from the Bank Fund.

Partners involved in implementing the Washington Agreement

As it does every year, in line with the recommendations of the Washington Agreement on monitoring and regular information between the parties, on 16 May 2023, the Commission received representatives of the complainants, Mr Eric Freedman and Professor Richard Weisberg.

In the same spirit, it met with its partners from the French Banking Federation [*Fédération bancaire française* (FBF)]. During these discussions, the concern of stakeholders honouring their international commitments and maintaining enhanced dialogue was reaffirmed. This dialogue was consolidated by organising two working meetings with these partners.

On 3 and 20 October 2023, two meetings were held between the CIVS and nine banks that are signatories to the Washington Agreement, with which the CIVS has been working since its creation to find solutions in order to compensate certain bank-related losses: HSBC Continental Europe, BPCE Group, Crédit Agricole S.A., BNP Paribas Group, Société Générale, Fédération Nationale Banque Populaire, Banque de France, Confédération national du Crédit Mutuel, and La Poste Group.

Although the number of bank-related claims submitted to the CIVS has fallen sharply over the years, a low plateau has been maintained, with new claims being submitted every year. This continuity, together with the natural evolution of research methodologies, meant that the parties involved had to take stock of the way in which they organised their work together.

This follows the reorganisation in 2021 of the processing of bank-related claims by the CIVS. The Research Coordination Department is now in charge of all the processing of cases before they are investigated.

This meeting provided an opportunity to present the major advances resulting from the Law of 22 July 2023 relating to the issue of cultural property, but which have no impact on the processing of claims for compensation of bank-related spoliation. Lastly, this meeting provided an opportunity to rethink the methods used by the Research Coordination Department to question banks and to note the complementary nature of the research carried out by both the CIVS and the banks at the National Archives.

SEARCHING FOR HEIRS WHO WERE INITIALLY ABSENT FROM THE PROCEEDINGS

The CIVS may reserve portions of the compensation for heirs not involved in the claim referred to it. These reserved portions totalled €27.5 million in 2015. Improvements to the system for tracing heirs have helped to reduce this amount.

The investigation of the cases regularly reveals the existence of other heirs who are not involved in the claim, either because they did not wish to give the initial claimants power of representation, or because their identities are unknown.

The deliberative panel is then required to reserve the portions of compensation due to these heirs, and it is up to the beneficiaries to make themselves known to the Commission and request it to release the portion of compensation reserved for them. If a reserved portion is not claimed, it is kept until the heirs concerned come forward.

The CIVS is developing its search for heirs in order to ensure that compensation is paid. This measure has two aims: to limit the creation of new reserved portions by seeking out the heirs as soon as the case is opened and until the end of the investigation; and to allocate reserved portions by looking for those entitled to them in cases that have already been recommended for compensation.

€24.23m

Total amount of the reserved portions to be borne by the State at 31 December 2023

€1.64m

Total of reserved portions from bank funds (source: FSJU (United Jewish Welfare Fund))

43

recommendations for the allocation of reserved portions were issued in 2023.

The 43 reserved portions allocated in 2023 amounted to **€523,357**.

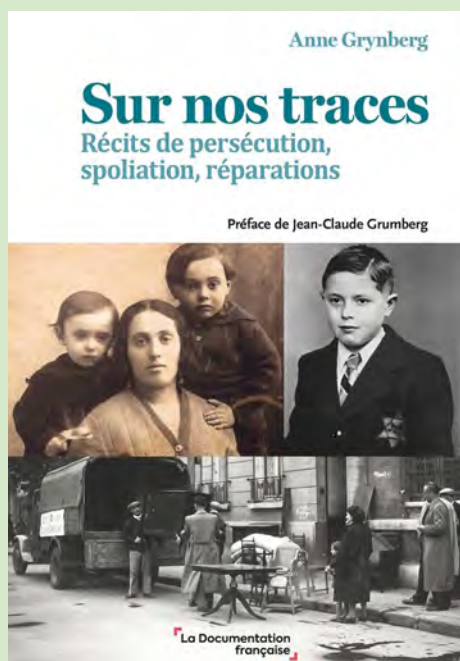
REMEMBRANCE

The Commission's legal action on behalf of victims cannot be dissociated from the memory of spoliation, persecutions in France and the Holocaust.

This is why the reparation, restitution and compensation measures are extended to projects that pursue the same ambition, "to find the right words to describe the horror and to express the sorrow of those who lived through this tragedy" (commemoration of the Vel' d'Hiv' Roundup, Jacques Chirac, 16 July 1995).

For several years now, the Commission has been carrying out this action at the Franco-German level, in various ways, such as support for research, memorial events, or participation in restitution initiatives.

RECALLING THE EVENTS



Establishing the facts and telling them means recognising, recounting and communicating in order to initiate a dialogue.

Telling the story: “Sur nos traces”

In September 2023, *Documentation française*, in partnership with the CIVS, published *Sur nos traces. Récits de persécution, spoliation, réparations* [In our footsteps. Stories of persecution, spoliation and reparation]. This book by Anne Grynberg, University Professor and Scientific Director of the History Committee, has a foreword by Jean-Claude Grumberg, writer and scriptwriter, himself the son of a deportee.

The fundamental role of the Commission is to examine claims submitted by victims of spoliation or their heirs and to propose measures for compensation or, where possible, restitution. However, the dispossession of material possessions cannot be studied in isolation: firstly, because it was an integral part of the persecution, exacerbating the vulnerability of the victims, and secondly, because this loss goes far beyond the strictly financial aspect: many claimants testify to the emotional and symbolic absence that it represents. Many regret their lack of knowledge about their family history, before and during the Holocaust, which the research carried out by the CIVS to process their cases is helping to remedy.

Sur nos traces brings together fifteen family life stories, representing the diversity of “Jewish life” in France between the two wars and in the 1940s, as well as the types of claimants.

There is a variety of “circumstances”: direct victims, children born before, during or just after the war, and more distant descendants, in generational terms or in terms of their family tie.

There is also a wide variety of geographic origins (Alsace-Lorraine, Eastern Europe, Turkey, Algeria, Germany, etc.), dates of arrival in France (from the 16th century to the 1930s), socio-economic situations (e.g. a banker, tailor), and religious and political beliefs (Orthodox Jews, traditionalists, agnostics, communists, and Zionists, etc.).

These stories, told over a 'long period of time', are interwoven with a contextual setting that helps the claimants piece together a jigsaw puzzle, many of the pieces of which they had previously struggled to find.

The following topics are covered:

- > direct or indirect memories of the place of origin;
- > the memory of childhood before the 'Catastrophe';
- > the relationship with France: fervent patriotism, confidence — which turned out to be illusory — in a host country inherited from the French Revolution, which was the first to emancipate the Jews, recognition of the 'Righteous', whether officially recognised as such or not;
- > persecution and bereavement;
- > survival strategies used;
- > the pain of absence and the difficult post-war reconstruction;
- > the evolution of public policy on remembrance of the complicity of the Vichy regime, and the turning point in the second half of the 1990s;
- > the importance of communication, within the family (children, grandchildren) and beyond.

By shifting the scale between 'mainstream history' and 'infra-ordinary' history, by putting the witness/historian approach into perspective, and by the complementary nature and dialogue between direct victims and younger generations, the aim of this book is to make a modest contribution to the fight against oblivion and falsification, in a France that is finally coming to terms with its past... and its responsibilities.

ACTING TRANSPARENTLY

The historic mission entrusted to the CIVS would not be fully accomplished if it did not provide information to the widest public possible. The annual publication of the CIVS activity report, the half-yearly distribution of the report on the application of the Washington Agreement and the monthly online publication of key figures accurately reflecting changes in the number of cases all contribute to this information.

The publication on the Internet of the CIVS' main developments also reflects this desire to showcase its work. In 2023, work on improving the www.civs.gov.fr website and the CIVS' presence on social networks made it possible to prepare for the production of a new version of the website that is more responsive, accessible and compliant with the ergonomic rules that apply to government websites, and to define a new strategy for the institution's presence on social networks.

Publishing CIVS opinions

Since 2021, the CIVS has decided to make a selection of opinions available to researchers and victims' families by publishing them on its website. Since 1 February 2024, the French Heritage Code has set out the conditions under which the opinions issued under the Law of 22 July 2023 must be published on the CIVS website.

Information enabling the individuals mentioned in the opinion to be identified is concealed if its disclosure is likely to infringe the privacy of these individuals or their close family.

GIVING A VOICE TO THE WITNESSES

In 2023, the Berlin branch of the CIVS, which acts as a 'history and remembrance contact point' for the French ambassador to Germany, took the initiative of organising several remembrance events in order to give a voice to the last witnesses of the Holocaust.

Testimonies from Judith Elkan-Hervé and Léon Weintraub

On 23 February 2023, in cooperation with the Jewish Claims Conference, the Commission invited Judith Elkan-Hervé and Léon Weintraub, both Auschwitz survivors, to meet Franco-German schoolchildren in the auditorium of the French Embassy in Germany.

Originally from Poland, Leon Weintraub and his family were interned in the Lodz ghetto in 1940; Mr Weintraub was deported to Auschwitz in 1944, where he narrowly escaped the gas chambers by being assigned to an outside work *kommando*. He was then interned at the Flossenbürg and Natzweiler-Struthof camps, before being liberated by the French army. After the war, Mr Weintraub studied medicine in Germany and moved to Sweden, where he practised as a gynaecologist.

Born in Transylvania into a Hungarian Jewish family, Judith Elkan-Hervé was interned with her family in the Oradea ghetto in May 1944. At the age of 18, she was deported to Auschwitz, before being transferred in the autumn to Germany to the Zittau forced labour camp with her mother, where they were both liberated in May 1945. After the war, Mrs Elkan-Hervé moved to Paris, France, where she still lives today.



Berlin, 23 February 2023

After introductory speeches by François Delattre, France's Ambassador to Germany, and Jérôme Bénézech, Director of the CIVS, both guests engaged in dialogue, reflecting on their role as witnesses, the unspeakable experience of the deportation and the need to renew the work on remembrance.

Mr Weintraub and Mrs Elkan-Hervé then spent a long time talking to the 150 or so pupils from various Berlin secondary schools, underlining their desire to pass on the memory of the camps to the younger generation.

Testimony of Raymond Renaud

Raymond Renaud, who was deported to Buchenwald concentration camp in 1943 because of his political involvement and his work in the Resistance, celebrated his 100th birthday on 15 July 2023. He was also invited by the CIVS as part of its 2023 series of testimonies on the deportation.

Assigned to Block 40 at Buchenwald, reduced to forced labour in a quarry and then assigned to deforestation, Raymond Renaud took part in the clandestine armed action that helped liberate the camp in 1945.

Raymond Renaud is deeply committed to the Franco-German friendship, and in 2022 he was made an honorary citizen of the town of Weimar, and in 2023 he was made a *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur* [Knight of the Legion of Honour] by the French Ambassador to Germany, with support from the CIVS.

On 19 October 2023, in front of nearly 200 people, most of them secondary school students, Raymond Renaud described on the stage of the auditorium of the French Embassy in Germany, his arrest by the Gestapo in Montceau-les-Mines, then his deportation to Buchenwald, life in the concentration camp, forced labour supervised by the SS, and then the liberation of the camp and his return to France after the war, where witnesses to the deportation were not listened to.

At the end of his talk, Raymond Renaud took the time to answer questions from the young audience, whom he called on to be vigilant in the face of the weakening of democracy.



Mr Raymond Renaud



Berlin, 19 October 2023

Testimony of Marie Vaislic

On 14 November 2023, the CIVS organised for Marie Vaislic, a former deportee to the Ravensbrück and Bergen-Belsen camps, to give her testimony at the French Embassy in Berlin.

Marie Vaislic, née Rafalovitch, was arrested in Toulouse in July 1944 following a tip-off when she was just 14 years old. She was deported to Ravensbrück on 30 July 1944, without her family, who were hiding in a refuge. Transferred to the Bergen-Belsen camp as the Allied armies approached, where famine and a typhus epidemic prevailed at the time, Marie Vaislic was liberated on 15 April 1945 by the British army. After the war, she was reunited with her family, whose property had been completely looted.

Organised as a direct discussion with around ten classes from Berlin and Brandenburg, Marie Vaislic reflected on anti-Semitism in France under the Occupation, on the unspeakable nature of life in the concentration camp, and on the impossibility for survivors to recount the events of the deportation after the war, in a France where priority was given to national reconciliation and the denial of the collaboration.

Since the early 2000s, Marie Vaislic, often accompanied by her husband Jean, who was deported to Auschwitz and Buchenwald, has given numerous talks in schools in the Toulouse region. The testimony organised by the CIVS in Berlin was also an opportunity to promote Marie Vaislic's forthcoming biography entitled *Il n'y aura bientôt plus personne* [Soon, there won't be anybody left] (Grasset, 2024).



Talk at the Lycée Français de Berlin as part of the week of education and action against racism and anti-Semitism



On 24 March 2023, as part of the week of education and action against racism and anti-Semitism organised by the Ministry of National Education and Youth, the head of the CIVS branch in Berlin was invited by the *Lycée Français* in the German capital to speak to the school's teaching staff. He addressed the issue of anti-Semitism, the importance of remembrance work in the Franco-German context and the work of the CIVS in Berlin within the French Embassy in Germany.

Following a presentation entitled "*Le travail de mémoire face au racisme et à l'antisémitisme*" ["Remembrance work in the face of racism and anti-Semitism"], Julien Acquatella answered questions from the teaching staff taking part in this awareness-raising seminar, to which the CIVS contributed.

PRESENTING THE HISTORY

History is a living subject, nourished by historians' work and debate at university and in the public arena. Representations of these troubled times are being updated as research and eyewitness accounts come to light. Exhibitions bring this history to life.

"Déportés, leur ultime transmission" with Karine Sicard-Bouvatier

Following the *"Filmer les procès"* ["Filming the process"] exhibition in 2020 and the *"Gurs 1940"* exhibition in 2021, the CIVS presented the *"Déportés, leur ultime transmission"* ["Deported, their final communication"] exhibition by photographer and author Karine Sicard-Bouvatier at the French Embassy in Germany in 2023.

This photographic exhibition, supported in particular by the Shoah Memorial and UNESCO, presents the portrait of a unique pairing of former deportees on one side and young people of the same age as the witnesses at the time of their deportation on the other side.

The exhibition was on show for two months at the French Embassy in Berlin and was visited by a large number of people. Since then, with the support of the CIVS, it has been touring various cultural venues in Germany. A project to extend the exhibition across Europe is also underway.



