

Defining social work within the history of France

Well-known and hidden origins of a complex professional identity

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Outline

- Introduction : Professional Identity in the light of French History
- Three main « stages » in the development of Social Work
 - Early 20th Century : Promoting and uniting the family unit
 - Mid 20th Century : Working within a « hygienist » State
 - Late 20th century : From family based to citizenship based social work
- Discussion and perspectives : Hidden and explicit influences on social work identity
- Conclusion : Constructing a sustainable social work identity in times of crisis : lessons from history

Introduction

Similar questions in France and America

Quest for a clear professional identity still not resolved in France -

- Is social work a single profession ? Or only a number of « semi-professions »
- Who should govern social work ?
- What should its goals be and who has authority to define them ?
- What legitimacy do social workers have ? In public affairs ? And when they intervene in the field of private life ?

Different context - different answers

- Fourteen different professions and many more diplomas
- State intervention and control over social work is (still) widely accepted
- Protecting families long seen as priority sometimes even over protecting children
- Now aims of « social cohesion », citizenship and user participation placed higher on the agenda
- Existence of a scientific knowledge base of social work still in debate

1 *Early 20th century :*

Promoting and uniting the family unit

Aims of social work in 1922

Marie Jeanne Bassot

- “By the complete Settlement I mean one that reaches every member of the family, awakening in them a sense of their unity, and giving them well-balanced development. The most essential points are physical, intellectual, artistic and moral and social development...”

Melle R. de Montmort

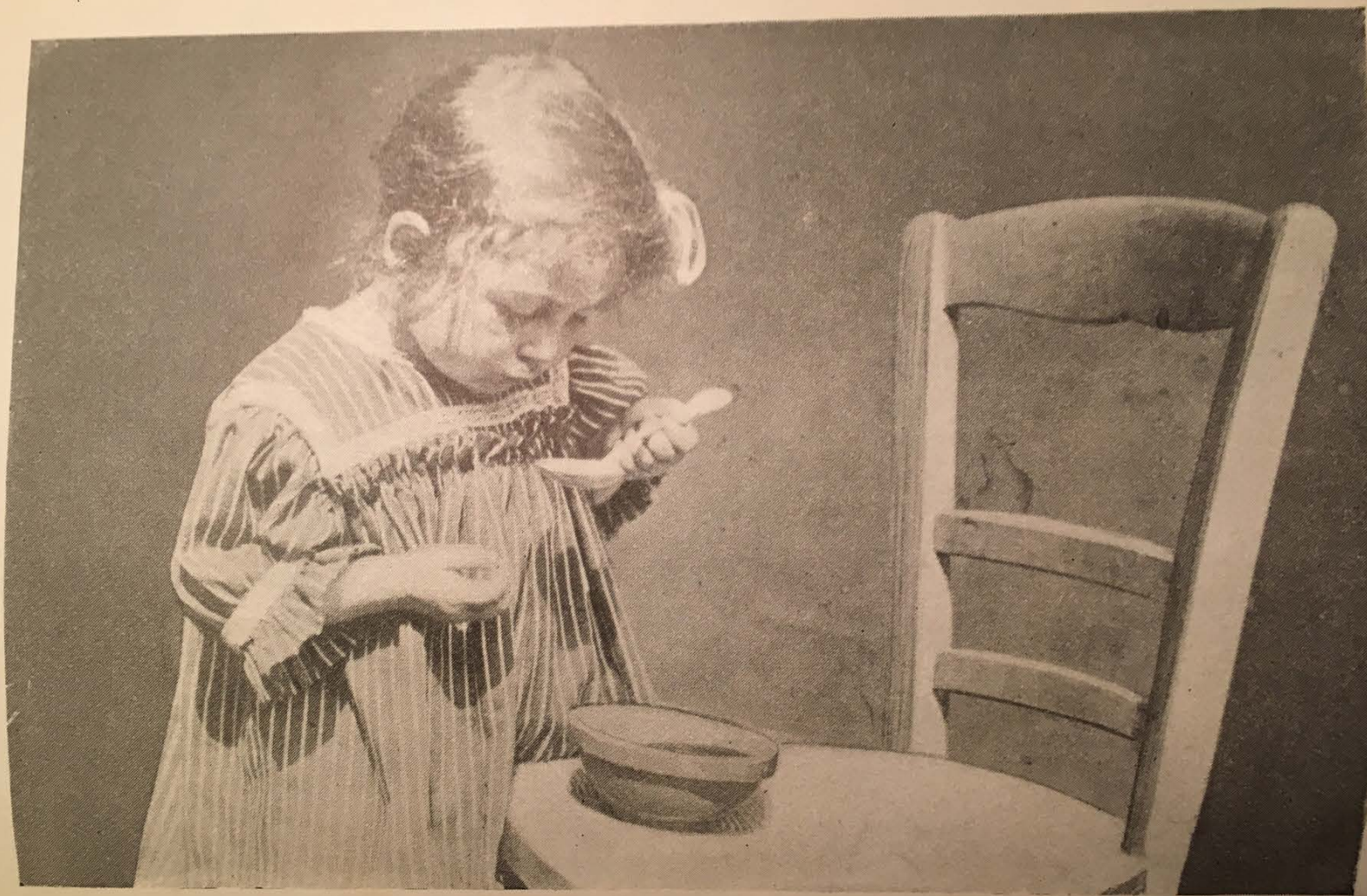
- “French Settlements are all united in the same fundamental principle - reconstruction of home-life, strengthening of family ties”
- Settlements and their Outlook, An Account of the First International Conference of Settlements, Toynbee Hall, London, July 1922. P.S. King and Son, London.”, p. 142

The organic family vs the contractual family

Marriage as sacred union	Marriage as contract
Marriage of reason	Marriage of passion
Unified family as social protection unit	Social protection by individual rights
Paternal power	Equal power between men and women
Essentialized view of gender (Abbot Viollet)	Gender characteristics determined by the heart (Léon Blum)

An early settlement at Levallois-Perret
still active today





"THE HOOVERMITE"

This little Miss Muffit has an American dress and is testing American sugar

Social work as part of reformist feminism

Women seeking emancipation became social workers

Social work as part of wider social engagement : peace movement ; child protection societies ; church work ; « circles » ; movements

Exemplified by Cécile Brunschvicg

- Minister in the two Popular Front governments
- Founding member of first social work school (social superintendents) in 1917
- Consensual feminist and pacifist
- Influential in many social movements
- Forced to hide from persecution during the 2nd world war
- Died in 1946

Cecile Brunshvicg 1877 - 1946



General assembly of feminism 1929



En haut de gauche à droite : Mmes Eugénie Weill ; de Corlieu ; Mlles Tollay ; Louise Thuliez ; Mme Brunschvicg ; Mme Violet ; Mlle Huguette Godin ; Paule Herfort ; Mme Malaterre-Sellier ; Mlle Alice La Mazière ; Claire de Pratz ; Huguette Garnier ; Auché Viollis ; Sellier ; Blanche Vogt.

En bas de gauche à droite : Mme Marx Lazard ; Mlle Zanta ; Mmes Robert Mourod ; Fonsèque ; Jane Misme ; Avril de Sainte-Croix ; Pichon-Landry ; Legrand-Falcot ; Chevalier-Marescq ; Bouviers ; Marguerite Durand.

Social Work as « secular evangelism »*

- Influenced by the Encyclicum *Rerum Novarum* which engaged the church in social action
- Strong religious figures as founding fathers of social institutions
- Counterbalanced by protestant and secular influences particularly in the field of industrial social work and in the Peace movement
- Jewish social organisation l'Œuvre de secours aux enfants : headquarters transferred from Berlin to Paris in 1933

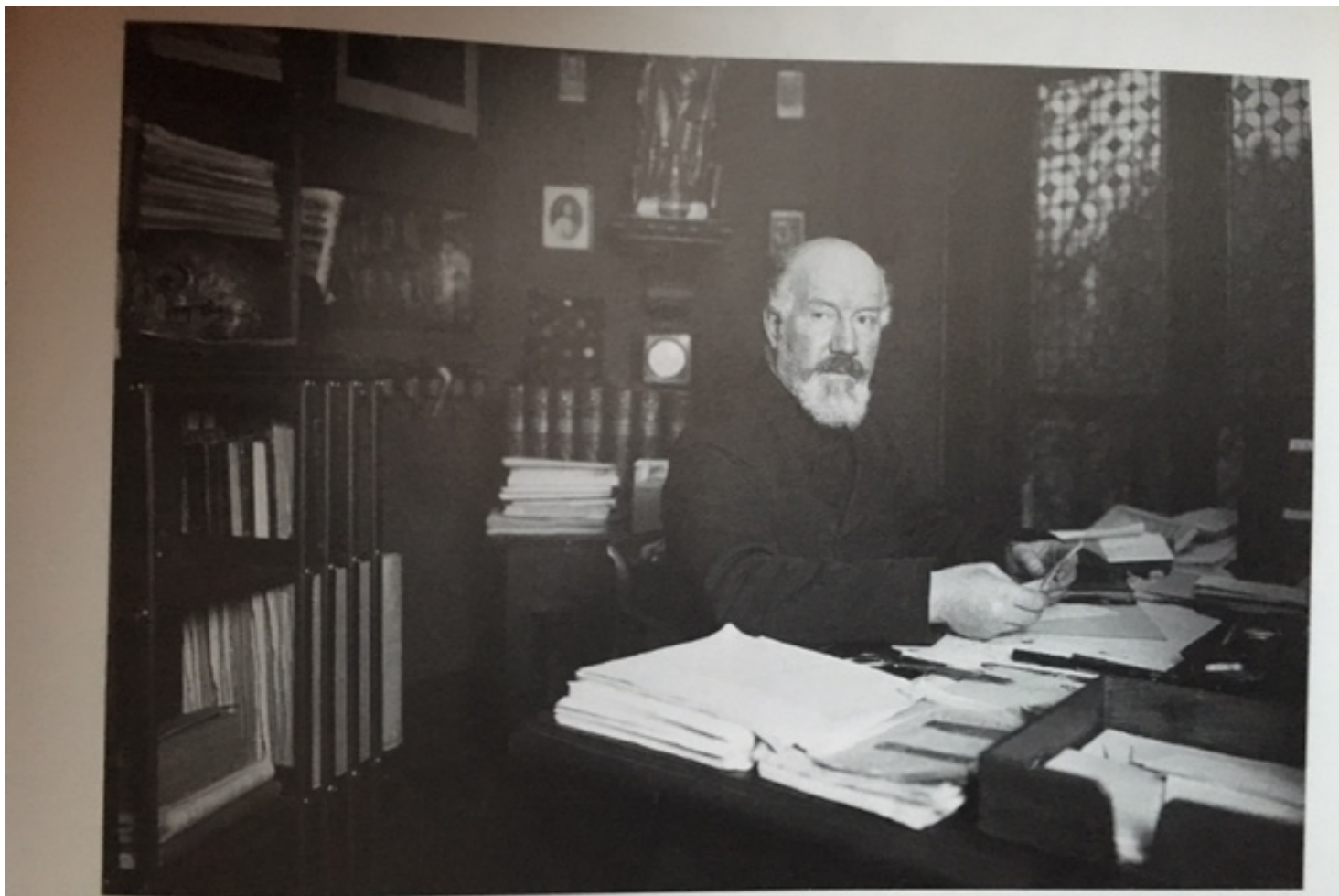
* Mattias Gardet, historian

Social Catholicism a dominant influence

Exemplified by Abbot Jean Viollet : a strongly influential figure

- Founded the « Green Mill » Federation and many other social work organisations
- Active and founder member of several movements to defend and promote the family
- Believed in the value of « secular » organisations despite opposition from church members and traditional Catholic opinion
- Strongly anti contraception and anti abortion

Abbot Viollet in 1930



Jean Viollet dans son bureau, 86, rue de Gergovie,
Paris 14^e arrondissement, années 1930 ? Collection Viollet.

2. Mid 20th Century

Social work within the « Hygienist » State

- Hygienist period spans the pre war, war years and post war period
- Vichy government both a parenthesis and a continuation of hygienism..
- Public policy focuses on population growth, contagious diseases and « heredity » (including alcoholism)
- Emphasis on organisation and coordination of services

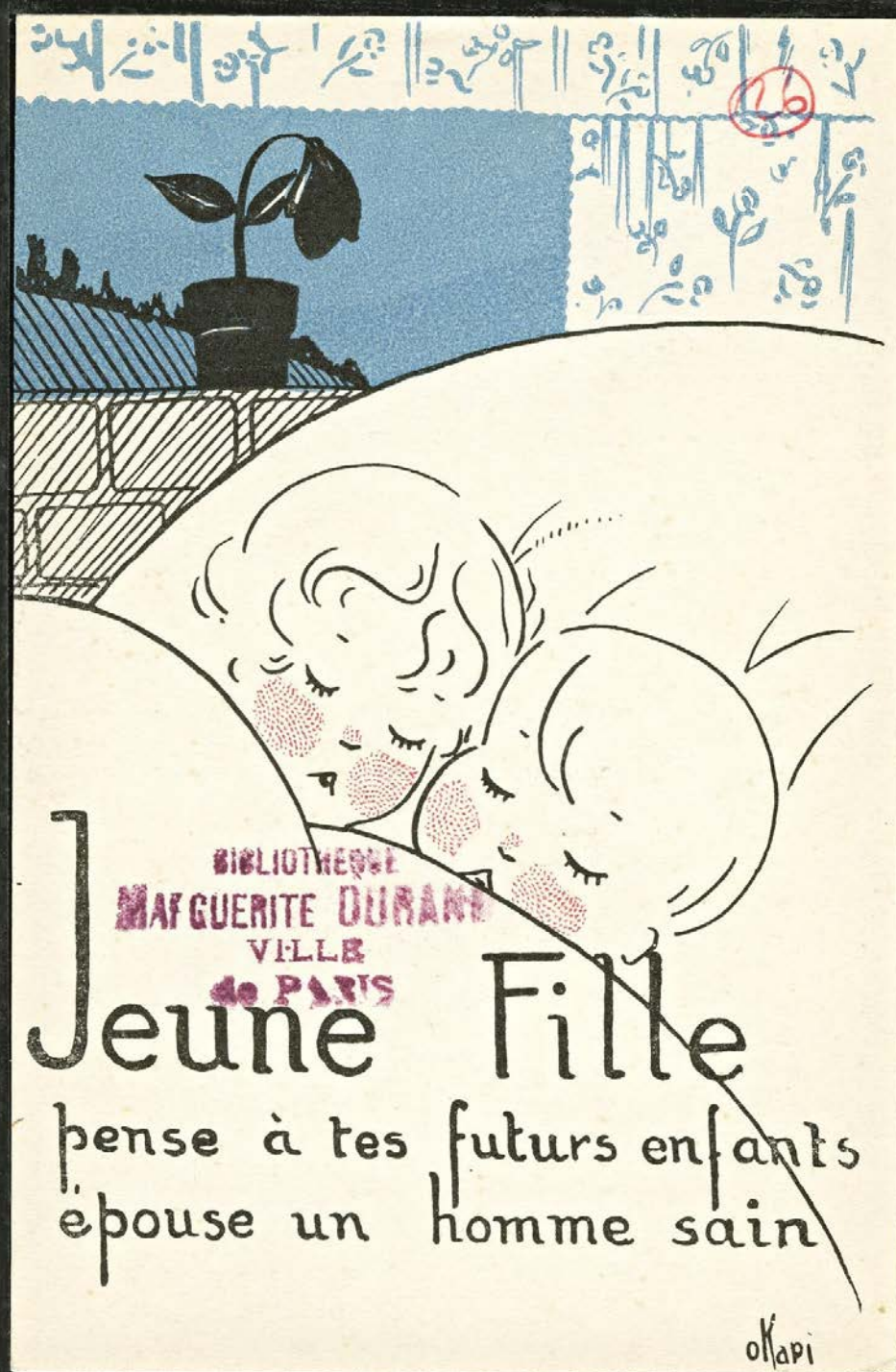
Aims of social work : tinged with eugenics

Pre War : Fighting the « social scourges » : Syphilis, alcohol, tuberculosis, child mortality

War Years : « Bringing Joy and Health to families »

Post War : Contributing to population growth

- Medicine and social eugenics as a key to administrative science - used in Municipal Social Work
- Longstanding rivalry between Nursing Visitors and Social Assistants (first diploma in 1932) – a brake on professional recognition

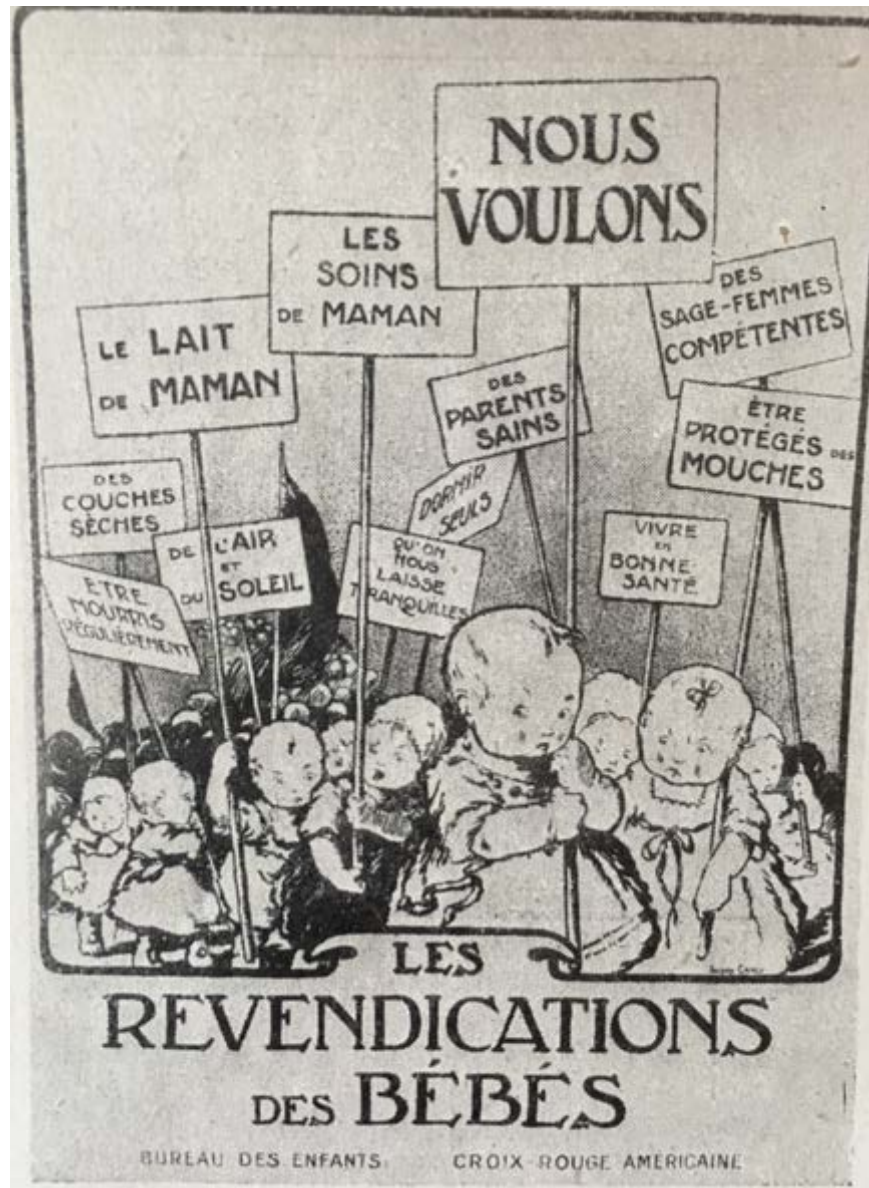


Young Lady

Think about
your future
children and
**Marry a
healthy
man**

Poster 1923

Red Cross Poster – circa 1923



Babies
Demands

Mothers' Milk
To be protected
and noses blown
Air and Sun
Dry nappies

Red Cross Conference 1919





Poster by Wilquin
published in 1942

Field Social Worker
Working for the
National Assistance
(Secours national)
Social workers
bring Joy and
Health to
Families

Social Work in the Resistance movement and in the war years

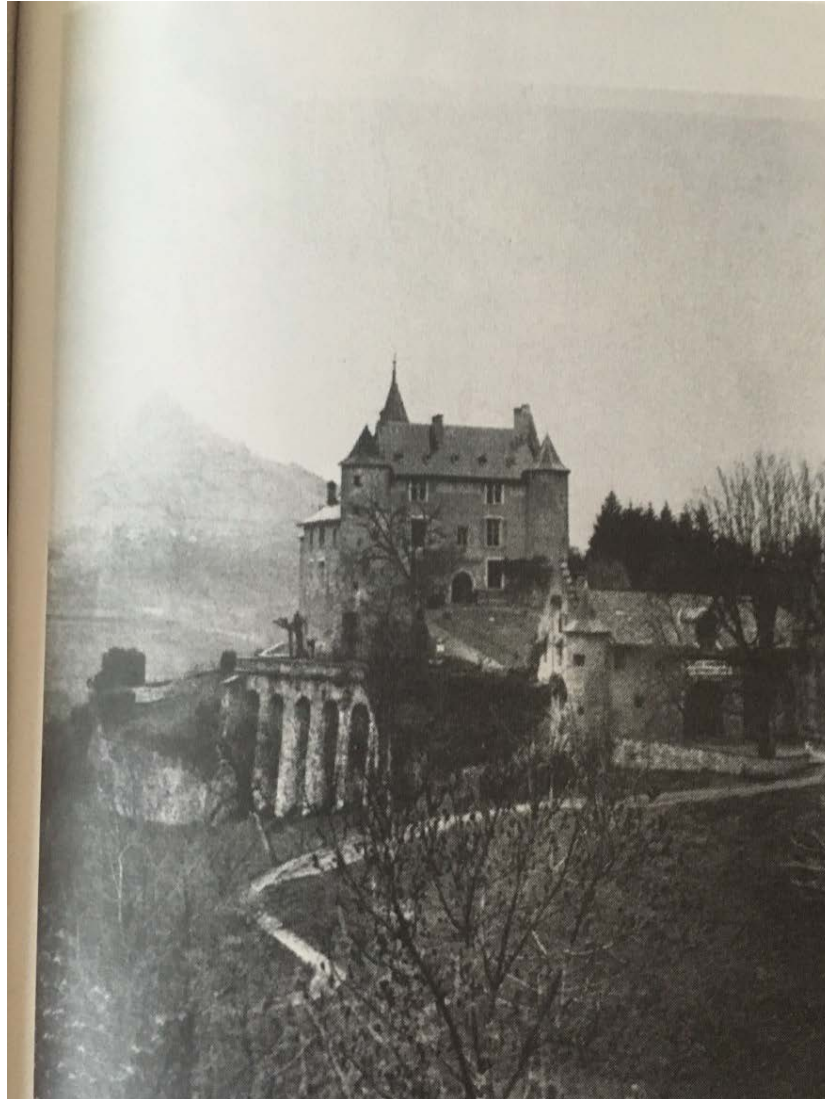
- Famous figure : Bertie Albrecht
- Many unsung heroines : difficult to identify those who resisted and how they did so
- The Ecole de Cadres at Uriage is converted to resistance and many die in combat



1942 - Ecole des cadres - Uriage - Isère

Uriage
College for
Leaders
Ecole de
cadres
1942
[www.rhone-
alpesolidaires
.org](http://www.rhone-alpesolidaires.org)

Uriage – The château in 1943



3. *Late 20th Century :*

From family to citizenship based social work

- NGO's built during the interwar period seek and acquire « public service » missions and financing
- New Welfare (providential) State based on family benefits (50 percent of social security spending in 1950)
- Centralized state fails to guarantee full status as a « profession » for social workers – despite the efforts of Germaine Poinso-Chapuis – first women minister in the post war administration

Aims of mainstream social work – social adaptation

Social field worker in 1953

- Aims at being : “palliative : educational :
constructive and coordinated”

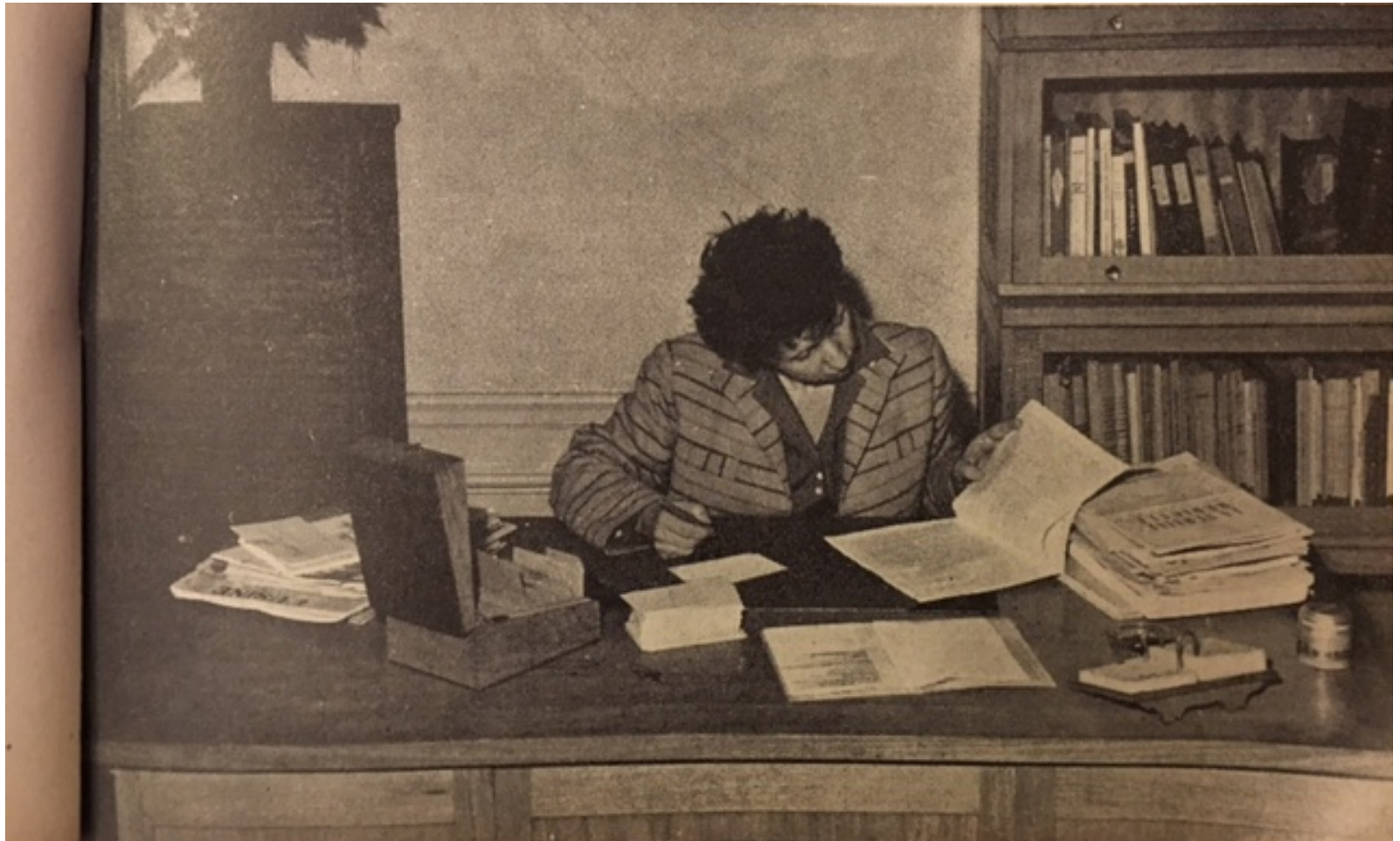
Informations Sociales 1st April 1953

- The field social worker’s function is to help the individual to obtain the best that society can give him when he cannot obtain it on his own and to help Society to fulfill its role towards the individual”

ANAS, *Déontologie en service social*, 4th edition 1976, p. 97

A field social worker in the office

Informations Sociales : October 1953



Home Visit 1965



Home Visit 1965



Ph. Service départemental de Coordination des Services Sociaux de la Seine

Working with everyday life : specialised educator in 1974



The 1970ies and '80ies : New influences from outside the mainstream

- Strong critique of social control – influenced by Foucault – Bourdieu – Kristeva... and Marxist thought
- Alternative forms of social action favored by the « social educator » profession : Fernand Deligny, Ferdinand Oury,
- Lacanien psychoanalysis – a radical alternative to psychological and psychodynamic theory

Fernand Deligny A « Franc tireur »



1980ies... Aims of Social Work based on individual citizenship

- *« Over and above personalised help, where the individual is recognised as having rights, social action must be capable of taking into account the collective difficulties of concerned populations and to enable « users » to become citizens in the full sense of the word »*
- *Circulaire de Nicole Questiaux du 28 mai 1982*
- The Welfare State now in question :
 - Demographic and financial limits to redistributive social insurance
 - Political critique from economic liberalism and from the left wing ..
- Decentralisation and territorial approaches require closer links between political deciders and social workers
- Societal aims still take precedence over « technical » goals

Scope of first level social work professions in France today

Common skills : educators (ES) and field workers (AS + CESF)

- Assessment (related to individuals +families) – Personal support - Planning reviewing and evaluating practice – Training students – Collaborative work – Partnership – Project work – Prevention of risks - Management of risk - Social Development – Intercultural social work

Skills specific to one or two professions

- Residential work –(ES) Outreach (ES) Readaptation (ETS) Family Counselling (CESF) - Statutory and Probation Work (ES PJJ) – Research methods (AS) Work with young children (EJE)

Not usually or exclusively considered as « social work » :

- Advocacy - Family Therapy – Case management – Social insertion - Addictology - Work counselling – Some forms of mediation – Marriage counselling

A separate branch : Social and Cultural Animators

- Social animation – organisation – Community education - Local and Cultural and Art organisation - Youth work

Discussion : Strategies adopted historically by the developing professions

Internal

- Seeking legitimacy from authorities : authorisation, title, licencing, accreditation, control over conduct (AS CESF EJE)
- Negotiating status and pay with employers
- Constructing a knowledge base – (or borrowing a knowledge base ?)
- Defining scope, skills and expertise

Paul Fustier : Author of work on the support relationship (relation d'accompagnement)



Externally orientated strategies and their limits

External

- Making religious, political alliances **vs** accepting their influence
- Going into politics - **vs** -recruiting politicians to key positions
- Seeking public recognition by developing communication – **vs** integrating social work into public service communication about social problems
- Lobbying and /or work with service user groups **vs** reluctance to trust voluntary or pressure groups
- Working on the basis of local needs **vs** working within universally accessible services

Discussion : « hidden » and explicit influences on social work identity

Defining bodies and influential persons often social workers « in disguise »

- How much room for peer regulation and peer control ?

Few well accepted models for social work intervention

- Where should social work turn for a sound knowledge base ? - Science or applied science ? Reflexive and experiential knowledge as « science » ? History of France shows strength of ideology over « science ».

Multiple aims of social work lead to constant negotiation of its goals within social policy

- Should SW seek more independence from the State or better .recognition by public authorities ? History of France shows advantages and limits of a strong State.

The ambivalent heritage of the Vichy period is still all too present

- How can social work values be affirmed in the current political and social context ? Current period as a turning point in relation to family ideology – and role of State.

Conclusion :

Constructing a sustainable social work identity in times of crisis

- Professional identity in France needs to take strength from a critical view of the values, culture and ideologies that forged it
- History of the pre war and Vichy years can help understand the current debate about family « responsibilities » : need to affirm ethical principles in the face of new pressures towards « social control »
- Need to rethink social work's relation to the State, the civil service and local democracy
- Need for better cooperation between French social work and international bodies