

## Chapter II.

### Paris and Berlin as Urban Archives of the Second World War: The Vél' d'Hiv' and the 'Holocaust Monument'

Comparisons between debates over monuments and commemorations offer insight into similarities and specificities of different memory cultures. Similar monuments may be understood in different ways, for example, or different monuments understood in similar ways. Comparisons between historical representations do not show how solutions in one case might be exported to another, but how similarities and differences between memory cultures arise, interact and overlap. In France and Germany, for example, the Second World War represents a shared historical caesura and the origin of post-war political cultures. Historical memories of this event are also fixed in comparable commemorative media, as central monuments or rituals, yet charged with specific symbolic and narrative significance. The following examination of monuments in France and Germany aims to establish both specific and shared characteristics of the political construction of social memories of the Second World War in the 1990s: the function of petitions and the mass media, architectural competitions and exhibitions, public conferences, debates and the role of the state. Particular attention will also be paid to the question of what audience is addressed by historical discourse employed during the commemorations. Can this audience today be described as "national" and, if so, why?

Monuments are neither the product of an anonymous historical process, nor naturally "national". Rather, they are a product of the political will of members of associations, institutions, political parties, states and intellectual elites, and are construed as national during the course of their planning - either as a consequence of their central site in a capital city, state involvement, their emotional appeal to a broad section of society, or their repeated rhetorical definition as "national". Among all the factors contributed to the emergence of the Vél' d'Hiv' and Holocaust Monument, discourse proved to be the single most influential element in their national construction. The very origins of the French controversy, which led to the introduction of a national day of commemoration in 1993, the inauguration of the monument in 1994 and Chirac's speech in 1995, lay in the appeal to the president by the Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42 for an explicit *verbal* recognition of Vichy crimes. The origins of the German controversy lay in the petitions of the association Perspektive Berlin for a *sculptural* recognition of the genocide against Jews. The resulting discursive events consisted in a conflict of interpretations expressed by rival political

communities or individuals striving to achieve social acceptance of their vision of the past. In order to understand how these elaborately contrived symbols acquired national significance as late as the 1990s, we must analyse in detail the rhetorical strategies employed in petitions for the commemorations, in statements and speeches of political representatives, and in ensuing media debate, as well as the significance of this rhetoric in relation to the political context in which it emerged. Since both debates lasted for several years, it is appropriate to analyse the media debate as a form of commemoration in its own right. These commemorations and monuments functioned as a catalyst of what James Young calls "memory-work", resulting from an *unresolved* memorial which "challenges visitors into a dialogue between themselves and their past".<sup>1</sup>

I propose to compare the memory cultures of two countries which are historically interconnected, but whose present-day methods of commemoration do not bear obvious similarities.<sup>2</sup> The similarities and differences examined here are specific to the period following 1989. This year marked not only the end of the Cold War, but also the beginning of extensive fiftieth anniversary commemorations of the Second World War. These commemorations contributed to the increased transition of the transmission of Second World War history from oral to recorded communication. Parallel to the release of state archives after 1989, therefore, there was also an increase in aesthetic and ritual communication in the public sphere provoking debate over the transmission and pedagogical function of history in the present. The disappearance of people with personal memories of a historical event inevitably results in the historicisation of that period via the substitution of recorded documentation for living memory. Moreover, although the national monuments in Paris and Berlin were initiated "from below" by citizens' action groups with petitions in national newspapers, the subsequent participation of state representatives and the public in the debates ensured that these monuments acted as pretexts and proxies for the concurrent political and aesthetic representation of the Second World War.

The following two case studies will therefore attempt to focus upon the similarities and differences of memory cultures in France and Germany on the basis of public debates over the inauguration of national monuments and commemorations of the Second World War. The aim of this chapter is not to situate the monuments historically in relation to earlier commemorations and monuments,<sup>3</sup> but to examine how they served to incorporate the complex and disturbing memories

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<sup>1</sup> James Young, *The Texture of Memory*, New Haven & London: Yale, 1993, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> An often ignored condition for a comparison is that the objects under study must be different.

<sup>3</sup> In the case of France see, for example, Serge Barcellini & Annette Wieviorka, *Passant, souviens-toi! Les lieux du souvenir de la Seconde Guerre mondiale en France*, Paris: Plon, 1995; and Eric Conan & Henry Rousso, *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas*, Paris: Fayard, 1994. In the case of

of deportation and genocide into a repertoire of national symbols appealing to a cohesive national self-understanding. In each case, I will focus on four points, in the following order: (1) The relation of the monuments to other Second World War memorials in Paris and Berlin and the history of their emergence; (2) the discursive strategies employed in petitions and in the responses of artists, critics, historians and politicians; (3) the political context in which the projects unfolded, linking issues of the 1940s to those of the 1990s; (4) the various means undertaken to achieve "national reconciliation" or "national consensus", and the way in which protagonists of the commemorations thus appealed to national "identity" during the debates.

*1. "National Reconciliation"? Mitterrand, Chirac and the Commemorations of Vichy at the Vél' d'Hiv' Monument 1992-95*

The highly controversial inauguration of a central monument commemorating the deportation of Jews from Paris in 1942 became the focus of presidents Mitterrand's and Chirac's attempts to secure national reconciliation from 1992. Memories of state persecutions and victims of national policy presented an obstacle to the representation of conventional national "identity". This chapter analyses the ways in which the monument and related commemorations of Vichy were nevertheless used to legitimate a cohesive official state memory: by rhetorical appeals to humanist traditions and to nationhood as an ideal, almost religious vocation.

The introduction of a "National Commemorative Day of Racist and Anti-Semitic Persecutions"<sup>4</sup> in 1993 and the inauguration of a monument in 1994, at which to perform an annual wreath-laying ceremony on this day in Paris, marked a turning point in the official state interpretation of French collaboration. Whereas anti-Semitic persecutions and deportations had previously been mourned in private ceremonies or, when public, subsumed to republican ritual,<sup>5</sup> the commemoration of 1993 appeared to satisfy both Jewish and state interests<sup>6</sup> and was generally sanctioned by historians and all political parties except the extreme Right. The commemoration

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Germany, see Stephanie Endlich & Thomas Lutz, *Gedenken und Lernen an historischen Orten. Ein Wegweiser zu Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus in Berlin*, Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1995; Ulrike Puvogel & Martin Stankowski, *Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus. Eine Dokumentation*, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1995; and Eva-Maria Klother, *Denkmalplastik nach 1945 bis 1989 in Ost- und West-Berlin*, Münster: Lit Verlag, 1996 (see bibliography).

<sup>4</sup> "Journée nationale commémorative des persécutions racistes et antisémites commises sous l'autorité de fait dit 'gouvernement de l'Etat français' (1940-1944)", marked annually by a wreath-laying ceremony at the Vél' d'Hiv' monument (see fig. 2) on the first Sunday following 16 July.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Annette Wieviorka, *Mémoire et génocide. Entre la mémoire et l'oubli*, Paris: Plon, 1992, p. 356.

was instigated in 1992 by President François Mitterrand on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the internment of 13152 Jews on 16 and 17 July 1942 in the Vél' d'Hiv', the winter cycling stadium "Vélodrome d'Hiver" in Paris, before deportation. This event rapidly became a focal point of nationwide attention when Mitterrand refused to respond to the petitions of the citizens' action group Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42 requesting him to make a speech in the name of the Fifth Republic acknowledging responsibility for crimes of the Vichy regime. Mitterrand's silence, and otherwise ambiguous statements about his involvement in Vichy before working on behalf of the Resistance from 1943, deepened public mistrust. The controversy over this commemoration culminated three years later when the newly elected President Jacques Chirac responded positively to the demands of petitions by giving a historic speech, the first in which a president of the French Republic officially acknowledged the responsibility of the Vichy regime for the deportations, and therefore in the genocide of the Second World War. The new commemoration and monument thus secured - with symbolic means - "national reconciliation" between the republican state and those who demanded symbolic reparation for the crimes of the French State of Vichy.<sup>7</sup>

The novelty of this rhetorical gesture consisted in its solemnity and explicitness. Although numerous collaborators had already been tried, sentenced and often executed in the purge or "purification" ("*épuration*") measures from 1944, Chirac's speech was perceived as a primary gesture of historical enlightenment and national reconciliation which would radically revise the Gaullist myth of a nation united in resistance. The speech of 1995 was therefore compared to official verbal and symbolic reconciliatory measures made in the Federal Republic of Germany, in particular Willy Brandt's act of kneeling before the monument at the Warsaw ghetto in 1970.

The aim of this chapter is not to situate the Vél' d'Hiv' historically in relation to earlier commemorations and monuments,<sup>8</sup> but to examine how the Vél' d'Hiv' served to incorporate the complex and disturbing memories of collaboration, anti-Semitism and deportation into a repertoire of national symbols fostering a cohesive national identity. I will focus on four points, in the following order: the relation of the Vél' d'Hiv' to other Second World War memorials in Paris; the political expediency of discursive strategies employed in petitions urging Mitterrand to make a

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<sup>6</sup> Henry Rousso speaks of a tension between the claims of the "national and international collectivity" and of "communitarian" interests. Cf. Rousso, interview with Philippe Petit, *La Hantise du passé*, Paris: Les Editions Textuel, 1998, p. 33.

<sup>7</sup> In order to avoid confusion between the generic term "Etat français" (French state) and the official name of the Vichy regime (also "Etat français": French State, the term used in state documents from 1941 instead of "Republic"), some commentators speak of "l'Etat français de Vichy". References to "l'Etat français" during discussions in the 1990s were therefore often ambiguous.

<sup>8</sup> This has already been done by Serge Barcellini & Annette Wiewiorka, *Passant, souviens-toi! Les lieux du souvenir de la Seconde Guerre mondiale en France*, Paris: Plon, 1995; and Eric Conan & Henry Rousso *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas*, Paris: Fayard, 1994. See also Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy 1944-198...*, Paris: Le Seuil, 1987.

speech in 1992 and in the formal responses of both Mitterrand and Chirac; the political context in which the commemoration unfolded, relating issues of the 1940s to those of the 1990s; the differing propositions of the two presidents for "national reconciliation", and the way in which protagonists of this commemoration thus appealed to national "identity" during the debate.

The historian Henry Rousso has already demonstrated historically the mutations of political interpretations of Vichy after 1944 in his pioneering study *Le Syndrome de Vichy 1944-198...*<sup>9</sup> and, in collaboration with Eric Conan, in the more recent *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas*.<sup>10</sup> Yet both these studies interpret the public preoccupation with Vichy in psychological terms as an "obsession". Instead, I will attempt to show that the controversy over the Vél' d'Hiv' marks the transition of the memorial legacy of Vichy from "obsession" to a period of relative reconciliation. Parallel to the trials of the last surviving Vichy officials Paul Touvier in 1994 and Maurice Papon in 1997/98, the Vél' d'Hiv' marks symbolically the historicisation of Vichy: the end of a compulsive preoccupation with this period and the beginning of its integration into a complex national legacy of both "positive" and "negative" sites of memory.

#### *A. The Emergence of the Vélodrome d'Hiver as a "Site of Memory", 1992-97*

##### *a. The site and its urban context*

A visitor may encounter the site of the Vél' d'Hiv' in several different ways, for it consists of three, if not four elements: the site of the former cycle stadium (an office block now stands in its place belonging to the Interior Ministry), a stele with an inscription recalling the events of 1942, a street sign marking the "Place des Martyrs Juifs", and a figurative sculpture nearby on the Quai de Grenelle. This monumental ensemble therefore draws our attention to five types of commemorative site: the original historical site itself, the street name, the historical facts and figures inscribed onto the stele and sculpture, the stele as an indicator of the precise site of the former building, and the artistic qualities of the sculpture. The first is authentic and exists only in photographs or in the imagination, while the other four draw on different degrees of formal mediation of the site: the street sign literally inscribes the memorial into the urban geography of the city; the stele, a small stone surrounded by grass and a railing, is engraved with an inscription recalling the history of the

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<sup>9</sup> Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy 1944-198...*, Paris: Le Seuil, 1987.

<sup>10</sup> Eric Conan & Henry Rousso, *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas*, Paris: Fayard, 1994.

deportations; the sculpture also includes an inscription recalling the event and the need for remembrance, but it also offers a visual rendering of the events of 1942 by depicting a group of people seated, waiting with suitcases. An additional form of mediation is the ritual state ceremony, where speeches are held and wreaths laid, either in front of the stele until 1994 or in front of the sculpture since 1994.

The site of the Vél' d'Hiv' was initially marked by a plaque installed in 1946 by an anti-racist association at the entrance to the building on 8 boulevard de Grenelle, and used exclusively for private commemorations. It only began to acquire national significance on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary commemoration in 1982, when Jacques Chirac in his function as mayor of Paris attended the ceremony. This fortieth anniversary was overshadowed by the crisis in the Lebanon, and several critics marked the event by calling for vigilance against contemporary racist sentiments in France.<sup>11</sup> The site of the stadium has been marked by a monument since 1986, when Chirac, now prime minister, unveiled a stele marking the site of the stadium (fig. 1) and a street sign naming the square between the Bir Hakeim bridge and the boulevard de Grenelle "Place des Martyrs Juifs du Vélodrome d'Hiver". On this occasion, the gathering included major dignitaries from the Jewish community, the Israeli ambassador, rabbis Joseph Kaplan and René Sirat, as well as an estimated 1500 spectators.<sup>12</sup> Only in 1992 did it become a focus of media attention following the controversy over Mitterrand's handling of the commemoration. The bronze sculpture depicting a seated group with suitcases was finally erected in a small park on the adjacent Quai de Grenelle in 1994 (fig. 2). Since 1992, either the president or prime minister in person have attended this ceremony at the site of the monument, which has become an established date in the calendar of national commemorations.

The novelty of this memorial consists not only in its explicit recognition of Jewish victims, but also in the symbolic link it creates between deportation, genocide, the French State of Vichy and, as a result of the commemorations, the Fifth Republic. In contrast to the inscribed stele inaugurated in 1986, which imputes responsibility for the deportations to "the police of the government of Vichy under the orders of Nazi occupiers",<sup>13</sup> the inscription on the new monument

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Special dossier on this issue, *Le Quotidien de Paris* 816, 12.7.82, pp. 1-8.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Brochure of the Commission du Souvenir du C.R.I.F., "Inauguration de la Place des Martyrs Juifs du Vélodrome d'Hiver. Grande Rafle des 16 et 17 juillet 1942", July 1986.

<sup>13</sup> Full inscription: "Les 16 et 17 juillet 1942/ 13152 Juifs furent arrêtés dan Paris et sa banlieue/ déportés et assassinés à Auschwitz/ Dans le vélodrome d'hiver qui s'élevait ici/ 4115 enfants/ 2916 femmes/ 1129 hommes/ furent parqués dans des conditions inhumaines/ par la police du gouvernement de Vichy/ sur ordre des occupants nazis/ que ceux qui ont tenté de leur venir en aide/ soient remerciés/ passant, souviens-toi." Cf. Serge Barcellini & Annette Wieviorka, *Passant, souviens-toi! Les lieux du souvenir de la Seconde Guerre mondiale en France*, Paris: Plon, 1995, p. 477.

directly accuses the French State: "the French Republic pays homage to the victims of racist and anti-Semitic persecutions and crimes against humanity committed under the de facto authority called "government of the French State" 1940-1944".<sup>14</sup> However, both the inscription on the monument of 1994 and President Chirac's speech of 1995 distinguish clearly between the French State of Vichy and the Republic; by paying "homage", they testify to the moral, not the political responsibility of the Republic. Although the Vél' d'Hiv' commemorations and the more recent monument explicitly acknowledge the responsibility of French authorities in the deportations of 1942, therefore, and thereby contradict the Gaullist myth of a nation united in resistance, they do not disqualify the moral integrity of the Republic. By flaunting the disgrace of collaboration as a negative model (the deportations of 1942 had not previously been commemorated by heads of state on this large scale), this memorial serves to contain and appropriate potentially volatile memories by simultaneously projecting an alternative, "positive" republican tradition.

The fact that the site of the Vélodrome d'Hiver today consists of a diffuse ensemble of elements, dispersed within an area of two to three hundred square metres, is testimony to the somewhat improvised evolution of the site. This monument is not the result of a calculated decision to erect a monument, as in the case of the "Holocaust Monument" in Berlin or the Jewish memorial in Vienna, but rather an accidental accumulation of minor commemorative events over a period of thirteen years since 1982, if not since 1946. The Vél' d'Hiv' is not a monument in the traditional sense, therefore, for the elements of the ensemble emerged in staggered intervals over time and are scattered in space. They nevertheless have the collective quality of a monument insofar as they remind us of a single aspect of the past. They have also acquired added monumentality as the setting for annual national commemorations and as the focus of explosive public debates. As a result, "Vél' d'Hiv'" has become a household name in France.

The style of the sculptural centrepiece of the Vél' d'Hiv' is strikingly anachronistic in comparison to innovations in monumental art since the 1960s, including the Vietnam memorial in Washington, the counter- or anti-monuments of Jochen Gerz and Edward Kienholz, for example, which all bring into question traditional forms of monument. The bronze sculpture, designed by Walter Spitzer, depicts a group of seven figures: two women, one holding a child, a child and baby playing together, an old man, and a middle-aged woman, who all appear seated beside suitcases as if awaiting deportation. The figures are slightly smaller than life-size, and the entire group, raised

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<sup>14</sup> Full inscription: "La République française/ en hommage aux victimes/ des persécutions racistes et antisémites/ et des crimes contre l'humanité/ commis sous l'autorité de fait/ dite 'gouvernement de l'Etat français' (1940-1944)/ N'oublions jamais."

on a concrete platform representing the curved planks of a cycle track, measures approximately 3.5m x 2m. It should be stressed that the diffuse, improvised nature of the monumental elements and the aesthetic banality of the central sculpture constitute the peculiar logic of this monument. At no time in the evolution of the site did the public debate focus on aesthetic considerations of form and lay-out, neither before nor after the inaugurations. Instead, debate centred exclusively on the peripheral political rituals taking place on the site of the monument. In this respect, the contrast between the lack of debate over the aesthetic dimension of the monument in France and the relative intensity of debates over the form of equivalent monuments to the memory of the fate of Jews in the Second World War elsewhere, is significant in its own right. Public debate over the form of the Holocaust Monument in Berlin prior to its inauguration lasted eleven years, and debate over the Yad Vashem monument in Jerusalem lasted twelve years. The highly political nature of the process of deliberating and negotiating monumental forms, involving architectural competitions, associations, parliamentary committees, debates, pressure groups, charity collections and the mass media, is a convention which does not apply to the Vél' d'Hiv'. Although the challenge of representing history in a single visible sign was an absolute condition of the success of projects in Berlin, Jerusalem or Vienna, where the artistic challenge was intimately linked to processes of negotiation, and where the success or failure of the artistic project was interpreted as a measure of the success or failure of these processes,<sup>15</sup> the Vél' d'Hiv' is nevertheless perceived as a "national" monument. The unconventional political and historical context of its production therefore merits attention as an alternative model of comparison.

Whereas in Austria, Germany and Israel the question of the artistic representation of history was a serious consideration for political representatives from the start, the French monument emerged piece by piece over time *incidentally* to ritual ceremonies. The Vél' d'Hiv' monument is therefore a by-product of immediate political desires to ritually commemorate historic dates. Its elements, which served as a backdrop and pretext for symbolic political representation, represent remnants or traces of successive commemorations: the presence of political representatives, gestures of wreath-laying, and political speeches. They therefore remind us not only of history in the 1940s but of the history of their making in the 1980s and 1990s. In contrast to the Holocaust Monument or Yad Vashem, the Vél' d'Hiv' was not planned as a central national monument, and

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<sup>15</sup> In spite of constant disagreement over the form of the Holocaust Monument in Berlin, organisers, sponsors, experts and politicians were often accused of having refused to abandon the project in order not to invalidate the elaborate negotiation procedures and thus mar their reputation. See Volker Müller, "Der lange Weg zum Mahnmahl", *Berliner Zeitung*, 17.11.97, p. 11.

did not pose the absolute challenge of representing history in a single object. The lack of debate over its form therefore results from its singularly *accidental* origins.

Another striking aspect of the Vél' d'Hiv' monument is its use of long inscriptions rather than abstract plastic forms. The inscribed stele, street sign and sculpture fulfil a largely denotative function to mark the site with terse rhetorical rather than elaborate sculptural interpretation. The monumental elements are dominated by inscriptions containing essentially historical facts. The function of stone and steel materials here is not sculptural, but primarily to act as a durable support for words. The sculptor Walter Spitzer appears to have ignored twentieth century innovations in monumental art by opting for a purely figurative form of monument. The emergence of the Vél' d'Hiv' as a central national monument to Vichy therefore has less to do with the artistic enhancement of the site than with peripheral symbolic commemorations, speeches, and the generation of media interest.

Nevertheless, the Vél' d'Hiv' monument relates geographically and historically to other national memorials of the Second World War in Paris. These include numerous street plaques marking the site of the homes or the assassination of members of the Resistance, as well as street names. Many existing Second World War memorials in Paris commemorate events or figures associated with de Gaulle. There are two Gaullist memorials in the immediate vicinity of the Vél' d'Hiv'. First, the bridge across the Seine close by the Vél' d'Hiv' has been named Pont Bir Hakeim, after the military victory of the Free French Forces in northern Africa in May and June 1942. In the centre of the bridge stands the statue "La France renaissante" (1930) by the sculptor Wederkirch, which has been complemented by a plaque with an inscription recounting the military glory at Bir Hakeim and interpreting this victory as a symbol of the continuity of the French government in exile and in resistance against occupation: "la France n'a jamais cessé le combat". Another Gaullist memorial is situated 200m upstream from the Vél' d'Hiv', a stone memorial (approx. 6m wide x 3m high) to general Diego Brosset who is said to have responded to de Gaulle's historic radio appeal of 18 June 1940 by leading the military campaign in central Africa and the battle at Bir Hakeim. The most famous Gaullist monument in the west of Paris is the tomb of the unknown soldier and eternal flame installed beneath the Arc de Triomphe in 1920 in honour of dead soldiers of the First World War. Like the Cenotaph in London and the Neue Wache in Berlin, this memorial was later adapted as a joint memorial to victims of both world wars. It consists not only of the tomb of the unknown soldier but also of a group of six bronze plaques set in the ground, three of which are devoted to Gaullist memories of the Second World War: to the campaign in North Africa, to de Gaulle's radio

broadcast to the "Free French" of 18 June 1940, and to all soldiers who died fighting for France from 1939-1945.<sup>16</sup> The Vél' d'Hiv' is therefore a memorial anomaly, for it represents a specific Jewish memory of the Second World War while all surrounding memorials represent only Gaullist memories. The Vél' d'Hiv' and its surrounding topography therefore embody in stone the two most pervasive public memories of Vichy - the Gaullist perspective dominant until the 1970s, and the more recent Jewish perspective. This architectural contradiction represents the as yet unresolved conflict between these two forms of social memory, a conflict which intensified during the 1990s.

In contrast to the west of Paris, the eastern sector of the city contains monuments which do not adhere to the specifically Gaullist vision of the Second World War. Two monuments in particular tell an alternative story to the glorification of military victories. First, the Mémorial du Martyr Juif Inconnu in the Marais district, erected in 1956, which combines a specifically Jewish memory of genocide with elements of traditional war memorials of universal appeal: in the courtyard stands a large concrete cylinder bearing the names of concentration camps and containing ashes of victims from Auschwitz, while the crypt contains the tomb of an unknown victim and an eternal flame.<sup>17</sup> At the time of its inauguration, this combination of Jewish and universal symbolism characteristic of twentieth century war memorials was not perceived as contradictory. Its historical site in the Saint-Paul area, where Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe first arrived during the nineteenth century, was not interpreted as a site of Jewish resistance against or victimisation by the state, but as a place of reconciliation where immigrants arrived and were successfully integrated into French society.<sup>18</sup> This monument therefore locates the memory of the national integration of Jews during the nineteenth century in the vicinity of the monument in Paris, and the memory of genocide as an event which occurred in distant concentration camps outside French territory. Second, the Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation designed by O. Pingusson, a massive concrete monument situated on the eastern tip of the Ile de la Cité and inaugurated in 1962 by de Gaulle, is, like the Vél' d'Hiv', devoted to the memory of deportations. However, this monument makes no specific reference to Jewish victims, and its dedication to "the two hundred thousand *French* martyrs who died in the deportation camps" [our italics], identifying victims as French nationals, distorts the historical record by suggesting that victims died willingly

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<sup>16</sup> The other three plaques address the proclamation of the Third Republic in 1870, the repossession of Alsatia and Lorraine in 1918, and the victims of the Indochinese war.

<sup>17</sup> Ashes, unknown individuals and eternal flames belong to a repertoire of symbols used in First World War memorials internationally. Cf. Ken Inglis, "Entombing Unknown Soldiers: From London and Paris to Baghdad", *History & Memory* 5, 1993, pp. 7-31.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. A. Alperine, "Les Martyrs juifs ont leur monument à Paris" (1956), in Serge Klarsfeld (ed.), *Mémoire du génocide*, Paris: Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine & Association "Fils et Filles des Déportés Juifs de France", 1987, pp. 15-16.

for a *national* cause rather than as victims of state persecution. Moreover, in spite of the monument's official title, inscriptions on the interior walls of the memorial account not for the conditions of departure but for the destinations of deportees. Like the Mémorial du Martyr Juif Inconnu, the Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation therefore integrates symbolically the specific Jewish memory of the Second World War into national memory.

The centrepiece of both monuments is a crypt containing remains of an unknown deportee. Unlike the unknown soldier traditionally used in national war memorials to associate military endeavour and patriotic self-sacrifice as national ideals, however, the unknown individuals in these monuments are not victims who died in combat, but innocent victims of persecution. These tombs of unknown deportees therefore create a symbolic link between the nation and its victims by exhibiting victims in a symbolic form traditionally reserved for national heroes. The authority responsible for their fate is not named. Instead, a panoply of dramatic symbols evokes the fate of the victims in terms which transcend the specific historical causes of the events. In the Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation, for example, impressions of imprisonment are evoked with a long dark corridor, narrow passageways, iron railings and a spiked portcullis, and inscriptions include the names of concentration camps and quotations by well-known French writers. In short, the Mémorial du Martyr Juif Inconnu recalls the genocide against Jews in general, and the Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation recalls deportation in general. Their symbolism defies the paradox that deportees were largely victims of the very nation in whose name they are commemorated.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast to existing monuments, the Vél' d'Hiv' breaks new ground by not representing victims in general as "unknown" individuals, standing for victimisation as such regardless of the identity of persecutors or those persecuted, but as specific, historically identifiable Jewish victims in association with a specific date and specific place, as well as a specific perpetrator, the "French State". Renouncing the universalist claims of the former two monuments, the Vél' d'Hiv' creates a unique link between historical specificity and monumentality. The physical proximity of the Vél' d'Hiv' monument to a number of urban ornaments reminding us of de Gaulle's military victories further establishes a dialectical relation between the "positive" myth of the Resistance and the "negative" commemoration of deportation and genocide. The Vél' d'Hiv' monument is therefore a symbolic anomaly, but also a complement to its immediate memorial surroundings. It therefore challenges the traditionally celebratory function of commemoration by pinpointing the culpability

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<sup>19</sup> N.B. In the case of the Mémorial du Martyr Juif Inconnu, this paradox applies only to the symbolic aspect of the crypt and memorial: the same building houses the Centre for Contemporary Jewish Documentation which contains invaluable archives on all aspects of Vichy including, since December 1997, the files used from 1940 to register Jews resident in France.

of the French state and society. How, in light of the criminality of the nation implied by the Vél' d'Hiv' monument, does the nation commemorate the memory of its own crimes in an artistic and ritual form which has traditionally been the domain of national glorification?

Unlike parallel debates in Germany over the architectural and sculptural arrangement of the Neue Wache or the Holocaust Monument, the aesthetic character of the Vél' d'Hiv' monument was conspicuously absent from public debate. This testifies either to a chronic indifference to the significance of monumental art in France, or to the fact that the relatively intense interest in the symbolic significance of ceremonies and presidential speeches distracted attention from the question of architectural forms. The petition was also decisive insofar as it demanded a speech, not a monument. Since the collection of artefacts which constitute this monument were installed largely as a result of successive political initiatives and emotional public debates during the 1980s and 1990s, it is not possible to consider this monument in isolation from the day-to-day events which led to its construction. In the following section I will therefore present a chronological overview of the commemorative events leading to the emergence of the site as a national monument.

The significance of a monument cannot be deduced from its architectural and urban characteristics alone. In order to assess the question whether the monumental, rhetorical and ritual innovations of the Vél' d'Hiv' site genuinely redressed the previous memorial and commemorative imbalance, in which Gaullist ideals pervaded official state representations of Vichy, we must examine more closely the reasons why this commemorative site acquired symbolic significance leading to the introduction of the national day of commemoration in 1993, the inauguration of the monument in 1994 and Chirac's historic speech of 1995.

#### *b. Phases of the commemorative debate*

On 16 and 17 July 1942, 13,152 Jews were rounded up and interned in the winter cycling stadium "Vélodrome d'Hiver" (Vél' d'Hiv') in Paris prior to their deportation to camps elsewhere in France and then to camps in the east. On 16 July 1992, President François Mitterrand attended the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the round-ups at the site of the Vél' d'Hiv', the first official ceremony which brought together the highest state representatives including the president, the presidents of the National Assembly, the Senate and the Constitutional Council, as well as ministers, the chief of police and church leaders. The ceremony gained added symbolic

significance because a group of intellectuals calling themselves the Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42 had previously urged Mitterrand to make a speech recognising the persecution of Jews under the Vichy regime.<sup>20</sup> However, Mitterrand refused to comply with their petition, explaining his motives in the annual television declaration on 14 July that year. Instead, Robert Badinter, President of the Constitutional Council, delivered an inofficial speech recalling the history of the events of 1942, insisting that "mon propos n'est en rien lié à mes fonctions".<sup>21</sup> Public outrage ensued, which was only quashed three years later when Jacques Chirac, shortly after being elected president on 7 May 1995, delivered a speech at the annual Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration which, in accordance with the demands of the Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42, expressed official recognition of the crimes of the Vichy regime..

The evolution of this commemorative debate may be traced chronologically from 1992 to 1997, where debates largely took place either in anticipation of or in response to the Vél' d'Hiv' commemorations in July each year. The arguments of petitioners and politicians revolved around the consequence of the speech, that is, whether the Fifth Republic should be morally implicated in the crimes committed under the Vichy regime. The petition of the Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42 on 17 June 1992 demanded "que soit reconnu et proclamé officiellement par le président de la République, chef de l'Etat, que l'Etat français de Vichy est responsable de persécutions et de crimes contre les juifs de France".<sup>22</sup> Mitterrand responded by refusing to recognise responsibility on behalf of the Fifth Republic, claiming that post-war France, "la Résistance, puis le gouvernement de Gaulle, ensuite la IV<sup>e</sup> République et les autres ont été fondés sur le refus de cet Etat français", and therefore that one must ask for an explanation not from the Republic, but from the "Etat français" (of Vichy) itself.<sup>23</sup> A second petition of the Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42 on 16 July reinforced the first by claiming that "de tout ce qui s'est fait au nom de la France, l'Etat français est aujourd'hui comptable" and that the act of recognition is one "engageant la Nation toute entière".<sup>24</sup> The official speech given by Robert Badinter contained factual information about the events of 1942, a condemnation of the involvement of the French police, an affirmation of the necessity of commemorative events for "l'enseignement de la vérité et la force de la justice", but also that the

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. "Un appel est lancé à M. Mitterrand pour que soient reconnus officiellement les 'persécutions' et les 'crimes de Vichy contre les juifs'", *Le Monde*, 17.6.92, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Badinter, "M. Badinter: nous devons aux victimes l'enseignement de la vérité et la force de la justice", *Le Monde*, 18.7.92, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> *Le Monde*, 16.7.92, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

Republic "ne saurait être tenue pour comptable des crimes commis par les hommes de Vichy".<sup>25</sup> The Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42 responded critically by insisting that the president in person should have held the speech as an act of "représentation nationale". Their call for the introduction of a "journée nationale de commémoration des persécutions et des crimes perpétrés contre les juifs par l'Etat français de Vichy",<sup>26</sup> was fulfilled by Mitterrand in December.

Petitions by other associations followed in 1993 and 1994. The Union des Etudiants Juifs de France (UEJF) launched a petition in January 1993, repeating the demands of the Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42, while also demanding the president to end the ritual of laying a wreath at the grave of Philippe Pétain.<sup>27</sup> Then, in 1994, the civil representatives of the Jewish community at the trial of Paul Touvier claimed that "la réconciliation nationale ne peut se réaliser que par la volonté clairement exprimée par les plus hautes autorités de l'Etat d'assumer les crimes de la collaboration".<sup>28</sup> Finally, President Chirac held his historic speech at the Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration in 1995, in which he claimed that "nous conservons à l'égard [des déportés juifs de France] une dette imprescriptible", and that "il y a une faute collective".

Two years later in 1997, the newly elected prime minister Lionel Jospin delivered the speech at the Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration, interpreted by Olivier Biffaud of *Le Monde* as a reiteration of Chirac's speech of 1995, for Jospin claimed that "ce crime doit marquer notre conscience collective". However, Jospin adopted a less emotional, more historical approach than Chirac, underlining not that France or the nation in *general*, but that "un gouvernement, une administration de notre pays, ont alors commis l'irréparable".<sup>29</sup> He avoided referring to the nation as a vague transhistorical entity and defined instead individuals and institutions - "des responsables politiques, des administrateurs, des juges, des policiers, des gendarmes" - insisting that "cette réalité ne nous conduit pas à confondre le régime de Vichy et la République".<sup>30</sup> Jospin thus *combined* both Chirac's and Mitterrand's perspectives by acknowledging responsibility and differentiating historically between France, the Republic, Vichy, the institutions of both regimes, and the individuals working on their behalf. Some politicians such as Philippe Séguin claimed to be tired of the repeated trials of prominent French officials of the Vichy regime, and deplored the

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<sup>25</sup> Badinter, *Le Monde*, 17.7.92, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. "Le Comité Vel' d'Hiv' '42 s'adresse aux parlementaires", *Le Monde*, 19-20.7.92, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. "Vichy: les étudiants juifs attendent un geste de Mitterrand", *Libération*, 14.1.93, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> "Les parties civiles juives s'indignent des propos de M. Mitterrand", *Le Monde*, 21.4.94, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> Lionel Jospin, "Un gouvernement, une administration de notre pays, ont alors commis l'irréparable", *Le Monde*, 22.7.97, p.8.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

spectacle of what he called "cet esprit d'autoflagellation, [...] cette obsession de l'expiation collective" conveyed by both the trial of Papon and Chirac's Vél' d'Hiv' speech of 1995.<sup>31</sup> Séguin argued that Chirac's expression of collective guilt or "debt" appeared to equate "Vichy" with "France" and therefore contradicted Gaullist doctrine and encouraged national criticism which might fuel the more patriotic discourse of the Front National.<sup>32</sup> Séguin's dissatisfaction also spurred Prime Minister Lionel Jospin to take a public stance against Chirac's Vél' d'Hiv' speech of 1995 by declaring that "il n'y a pas de culpabilité de la France parce que [...] Vichy était la négation de la France".<sup>33</sup> Chirac nevertheless responded to these criticisms by defending the arguments he expressed in 1995 in another speech given on 5 December 1997 at the Mémorial du Martyr Juif Inconnu during a ceremony to open a permanent exhibition of files used for the census of Jews in France from 1940.<sup>34</sup>

Between 1992 and 1997, the commemoration of a single event of 1942 evolved alternately from a divisive into a consensual, and again into a divisive vector of political and public opinion towards Vichy which spurred politicians and intellectuals to take a public stand on complex historiographical questions of collective guilt, the continuity of state and society before and after 1940 and 1944, and the role of Vichy in French social memory in the 1990s. The public was given the apparently arbitrary choice between Mitterrand, Séguin and Jospin on the one hand, and Chirac on the other, that is, between the denial of continuity between Vichy and the Republic, or the acknowledgement of their interconnectedness. These two visions of national history became an object of political debate, condensed in the symbol of the Vél' d'Hiv'.<sup>35</sup> As politicians temporarily adopted the stance of historians, however, they did not lay claim to scientific method. Their debate was governed instead by laws of symbolic representation, involving a stark polarisation of opinion between political figures, parties, factions within the Gaullist party *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR) and between the readiness to acknowledge (Chirac) or not acknowledge (Mitterrand) moral responsibility of the French State of Vichy for war crimes. The outcome of this debate over national symbolics was therefore determined only partly by the historical accuracy of statements made by either of the presidents and essentially by the effectiveness with which

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Philippe Séguin, "Assez! Assez! Assez!", *Le Figaro*, 21.10.97 p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Séguin, "Assez! Assez! Assez!"

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Jean-Baptiste de Montvalon, "Pour Lionel Jospin, la 'France' n'est pas coupable de Vichy", *Le Monde*, 23.10.97, p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> Chirac, "Quatre années de menace et d'exclusion programmée", *Le Monde*, 6.12.97, p. 11.

<sup>35</sup> According to Murray Edelman, "condensation symbols" "condense into one symbolic event, sign, or act patriotic pride, anxieties, remembrances of past glories or humiliations, promises of future greatness". Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, Urbana, Chicago & London: University of Illinois Press, 1964, p. 6.

symbols, ritual and rhetoric were used in *appeals* to existing national traditions and public emotions. In 1992, Mitterrand bluntly refused to make an official verbal recognition of war crimes whereas, in 1986 and 1995, Chirac acknowledged the memory of Vichy as a negative example of republican values of liberty, justice and solidarity which constituted the "lesson" and "message" of his speeches.<sup>36</sup>

The polarisation of the two heads of state with respect to the historical symbol repeatedly divided opinions and fuelled public debate. This symbol was not a source of consensus, therefore, but of sustained political and social division. How are we to understand the conflicting interpretations of Vichy and French nationhood on the basis of the political usage of the Vél' d'Hiv', expressed in particular via presidential speeches? And how do the speeches reflect commemorative and rhetorical strategies designed to relate the Vél' d'Hiv' monument to a sense of national belonging, to present this site as a consensual historical symbol?

In the following section, I will trace how the Vél' d'Hiv' monument became a national symbol in the course of its symbolic and rhetorical enhancement in spite of historians' claims that there exist other, more representative national sites of memory. The persistently controversial nature of this monument and commemoration heightened its symbolic and emotional value for all political representatives involved in the dispute, whether for or against the presidential acknowledgement of national guilt. The symbolic potency of this monument as a specifically *national* site of memory seemed to increase in proportion to the intensity and duration of the debate as such, yet independently of particular interpretations of those involved. In the case of the Vél' d'Hiv', controversy resulting from the lack of consensus contributed to its emergence as a national symbol or "site of memory". The progressive discursive construction of the Vél' d'Hiv' may therefore be traced in relation to the successive demands laid on political leaders and their respective responses, which formed the core of public debates over the site. The monumentality of the Vél' d'Hiv' is not only an architectural quality, but a social construction within a specific "semiosphere" or "communicative field"<sup>37</sup> comprising political interests, ritual commemorations, media publicity and

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<sup>36</sup> Chirac's Vel' d'Hiv' speech of 1986 is published in the brochure of the Commission du Souvenir du C.R.I.F., "Inauguration de la Place des Martyrs Juifs du Vélodrome d'Hiver. Grande Rafle des 16 et 17 juillet 1942".

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Andreas Dörner, *Politischer Mythos und symbolische Politik. Sinnstiftung durch symbolische Formen am Beispiel des Hermannsmythos*, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994, p. 45 & 49.

public debate. Furthermore, the emergence of this monument as a national monument was not a result of social consensus over its meaning, but precisely the lack of consensus in a debate whose participants were united in their certainty over which symbols were worth disputing.

The "nationalisation" of the site and symbol of the Vél' d'Hiv' was therefore motivated by contemporary political expediency. Swamped in a succession of presidential speeches, wreath-laying ceremonies, and overshadowed by political disputes among and within parties regarding their stance towards the Front National, it is not surprising that the Vél' d'Hiv' site or monumental ensemble - the ostensible focal point of the original commemoration - was entirely omitted from public debate, except on the occasion of the inauguration of Walter Spitzer's bronze sculpture in July 1994, where the sculpture was mentioned and illustrated, but not discussed in French newspapers. The Vél' d'Hiv' site and commemoration therefore represent a case of both the politics of art, defined as the political use of symbolics, and the art of politics as expressed in oratory, defined by Edelman as the "symbolic use of politics".<sup>38</sup> In the first case, art (the inauguration of a sculpture, for example) and peripheral commemorative events relating to the site serve as a *pretext* for making political gestures and debating historical interpretations. In the second case, political communication employed during the commemorations relies on artistic and artful rhetorical appeals to emotions and traditions such as Gaullism, including the ideal, eternal, transcendent nation.

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In contrast to monuments such as street plaques, the Mémorial du Martyr Juif Inconnu or the Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation in Paris, which were erected between the 1940s and 60s, the Vél' d'Hiv' monument has, in the course of public debate, acquired a particular status as a *national* monument to French collaboration. In addition to gaining nationwide attention, it was officially classified as a central monument on 3 December 1993 when selected by decree as the site of the annual "Journée nationale commémorative des persécutions racistes et antisémites". The Vél' d'Hiv' is therefore not only an architectural monument in the traditional sense, to be judged by its physical dimensions and the degree to which it fits into the existing urban landscape. Although it provides a significant addition to the urban memorial architecture of Paris, its significance cannot be defined in purely architectural and urban terms, for it has also given rise to a series of peripheral

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<sup>38</sup> Edelman, *The Symbolic Use of Politics*, p. 64.

political commemorations which polarised public emotions relating to memories of the recent past. As one of the most well-known and most controversial sites of memory of the Second World War in France during the 1990s, its monumentality is less a material, architectural category than one of political expediency.

The relatively limited political impact of this monument prior to the controversies of the 1990s makes the highly emotional tone of the controversies, once they broke out, more remarkable. The public invisibility or negligence of this site before 1992 is compounded by the fact that there remain very few visual documents of the round-ups of 1942.<sup>39</sup> The political scientist Pierre Birnbaum, writing shortly before the Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration in 1992, claimed that "ce lieu de mémoire par excellence s'est tout simplement évanoui. [...] Bien rares sont en France les lieux physiques d'une mémoire juive".<sup>40</sup> However, Birnbaum overlooks the fact that the stele and Place des Martyrs Juifs in memory of victims of the Vél' d'Hiv' round-ups existed as early as 1986 in addition to a plaque and private memorial ceremonies from 1946. It would be more accurate to say that memorials at the sites of the Vél' d'Hiv' round-ups and the internment camp of Izieu did exist before the 1990s, but that they were largely ignored by the mass media and public.<sup>41</sup> Within only a few years, however, the relative lack of interest in sites of memory of the Jewish community in France, which Birnbaum interprets as outright scarcity, has been reversed.

Historians have repeatedly questioned whether the Vél' d'Hiv' possesses characteristics of a site of memory of the Vichy regime in the sense asserted by Pierre Nora, as a "focal point of our national heritage".<sup>42</sup> This monument, and the national day of commemoration performed there each year, convey a somewhat one-sided image of Vichy history insofar as they focus attention exclusively on the state persecution of Jews and therefore detract from the role of both the "interior" and "exterior" Resistance, that is, of clandestine communist groups inside and de Gaulle's forces outside France. Until the 1970s, two of the strongest myths of post-war France were founded on the memory of the Resistance: either of the democratic ideals and patriotism promoted by de Gaulle, or of a "vaste mouvement populaire d'insurrection nationale",<sup>43</sup> both of which have since

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<sup>39</sup> Surviving photographs are reproduced in Serge Klarsfeld, *Le Mémorial de la déportation des juifs de France*, Paris: Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine de Paris, 1979.

<sup>40</sup> Pierre Birnbaum, "Grégoire, Dreyfus, Drancy et Copernic", in Nora (ed.), *Les Lieux de mémoire* III, Les France 1, Paris: Gallimard, 1993, pp. 561-613, p. 561f.

<sup>41</sup> The 40th anniversary of Vel' d'Hiv' in 1982 was characteristically uncontroversial and largely ignored by the national press. Cf. Annie Kriegel, "Ce jour-là, j'ai quitté mon enfance", *Le Figaro*, 16.7.82, p. 11

<sup>42</sup> Nora, "Das Abenteuer der *Lieux de mémoire*", in Etienne François et al (eds.), *Nation und Emotion*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995, pp. 83-92, p. 83.

<sup>43</sup> H. Roussou, *Le Syndrome de Vichy 1944-198...*, Paris: Seuil, 1987, pp. 316, 319.

been relativised by the rise of Jewish memory and the realisation, promoted by historiography, exhibitions, films, commemorations, trials and debates since the 1970s, that a large section of French society not only actively collaborated with the occupiers but also supported an indigenous anti-Semitism, as well as state anti-Semitism introduced in legislature of 1940-41.<sup>44</sup>

Eric Conan, Henry Rousso and Théo Klein suggest alternative sites of memory of Vichy which, they claim, convey a more balanced understanding of the motives for and consequences of French collaboration. Conan and Rousso suggest that the introduction of laws on the status of Jews, passed between July 1940 and summer 1941, would better represent the function of the regime because these laws highlight an indigenous form of anti-Semitism, "un principe d'exclusion politique et sociale inscrit au coeur d'une certaine tradition française",<sup>45</sup> and because they reveal how racism may be written into common law, and therefore not only arise in extreme situations such as the Vél' d'Hiv' round-ups. By contrast, the Vél' d'Hiv' symbolises an act of state collaboration which was not related to specific Vichy policy, for the French police were responding to orders from the Gestapo. These round-ups exemplify an extreme, exceptional form of persecution which contains no elements of the everyday social consequences of xenophobia. Klein suggests that 10 July 1940 would be a more plausible national day of commemoration since on this day the National Assembly of the Third Republic voted to promulgate a new constitution and thereby granted Pétain the legal means, in the name of the Republic, to enforce his programme of "National Revolution".<sup>46</sup> Such a commemoration would lay blame for the existence of the Vichy regime on representatives of the Third Republic, suggest a strong political continuity between the Republic and the Vichy regime, and therefore undermine the Gaullist doctrine that Vichy was a brief interruption or form of "parenthesis" in French history.

From a historical point of view, therefore, the Vél' d'Hiv' represents Jews as victims of state collaboration with Germany rather than of indigenous French anti-Semitic laws and xenophobia. One must nevertheless inquire precisely how and why this symbol of state collaboration was in fact perceived and constructed as one of the most explosive national sites of memory of this period during the 1990s. In spite of its limited historical pertinence as a national monument, the impact of the Vél' d'Hiv' merits examination in its own right as an illustration of contemporary social and political constraints leading to the public understanding of the past.

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Conan & Rousso, *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas*, Paris: Fayard, 1994, p. 271f.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Théo Klein, "Une manière d'être juif", interview with Théo Klein, *Le Débat* 82, 1994, pp. 117-128, p. 126.

*B. The Rhetorical Construction of the Vél' d'Hiv' Site*

The Vél' d'Hiv' site was not conceived as a national monument prior to its construction, but acquired such significance over time due to peripheral symbolic and ritual reinforcement. Hence the discrepancy between its inconspicuous and banal architectural qualities, due to its small size and invisibility from the street, and its conspicuous social impact. In addition to the architectural forms and the elaborate ritualisation of this monument, we may also examine more closely the terminology and phrasing of the commemorative speeches made by political leaders, for these speeches constituted the very focus of petitions and the subsequent debate leading to the politicisation and therefore to the social construction of the Vél' d'Hiv' as a site of memory.

The ceremony of 1995 was widely applauded by historians in the press because no president had previously given verbal acknowledgement of crimes committed in the name of the Vichy regime in this frank manner. "Pour la première fois," claimed Eric Conan and Henry Rousso, "un président de la République employait un langage dépourvu des ambiguïtés, des détours et des contorsions qui avaient caractérisé jusque-là la plupart des discours présidentiels - et ils furent en définitive assez rares - abordant la question de Vichy."<sup>47</sup> According to Henri Hajdenberg, president of the Representative Council of the Jewish Institutions of France (CRIF), Chirac's declaration amounted to "a turning point, for this marks the end of the eclipse of the responsibilities of the French State".<sup>48</sup>

The uncompromising campaigning of citizens' action groups for a verbal gesture<sup>49</sup> raised public expectations to such an extent that verbal acknowledgement by the president was construed as a single exclusive condition of the commemoration, a moral imperative which suggested that a verbal statement would effectively expiate the state's responsibility for crimes committed during the Second World War. Petitions and speeches both employed the moralistic vocabulary of "debt", "affliction", "accountability" and "atonement". The petition of 17 June 1992 spoke of the verbal

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<sup>47</sup> *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas*, 2nd ed, Paris: Gallimard, 1995, p. 451.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Gilles Bresson, "Chirac: la France complice des nazis", *Libération*, 17.7.95, pp. 10-11.

<sup>49</sup> Three versions of the petition by the Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42 appeared in *Le Monde* between 1992 and 1994, including an additional petition by the Union of Jewish Students of France (UEJF) in 1993.

gesture as "une exigence de la mémoire collective française malade de ce non-dit".<sup>50</sup> The petition of 16 July 1992 similarly claimed that "l'Etat français est aujourd'hui comptable".<sup>51</sup>

However, emotive appeals to the "Etat français", that is, the state generally without specific reference to either the Vichy regime or the republic, threw doubt over precisely who and what was held to be accountable: the French State (of Vichy) or the French (republican) state. Although, as Robert Paxton has shown, several members of administrative elites of Vichy, including the police and judiciary, continued to operate after 1944, the moralistic tone of politicians who inculcated the "Etat français" in *general*, as a homogeneous ahistorical community extending into the present, accentuated the emotive nature of the debate. The contrast between Mitterrand's refusal and Chirac's willingness to fulfil the demands of the petitions further polarised the perceived moral attitudes of the two presidents and the moralistic judgements made on them, such that Mitterrand was surrounded by scandal and Chirac's gesture understood, as Hajdenberg's response shows, as a form of reconciliation. Although Chirac's rhetorical acknowledgement of "collective error" and "imprescriptible debt"<sup>52</sup> in 1995 belongs to the realm of *informal* politics (the speech was purely symbolic and had no direct bearing on policy), and is historically untenable (collective guilt and imprescriptible debt are moral categories hardly applicable to a collective or entire nation), it nevertheless put a temporary end to controversy over the allegedly ambiguous attitudes of post-war political leaders towards Vichy.

*a. The petitions: a verbal act as an exclusive condition of moral reparation?*

The sequence of rhetorical exchanges between petitioners, political leaders, journalists and historians over a period of more than three years turned the debate over the Vél' d'Hiv' into a debate over the most appropriate terminology to describe the nation. The Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42 had initially provoked this preoccupation with terminology in 1992 by refusing all types of commemorative gesture other than a rhetorical statement acknowledging Vichy crimes. However, the terminology used in this exchange was plagued by confusion, since it was not clear precisely *for what*, and *in the name of what*, the president was being asked to recognise responsibility. "Qui est comptable des crimes de Vichy?" ask Conan and Rousso, "La France? Les Français? L'Etat? La

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<sup>50</sup> "Un appel est lancé à M. Mitterrand pour que soient reconnus officiellement les 'persécutions' et les 'crimes de Vichy contre les juifs'", *Le Monde*, 17.6.92, p. 10.

<sup>51</sup> "Le Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42: l'Etat est 'sourd'", *Le Monde*, 16.7.92, p. 8.

<sup>52</sup> All references to Chirac's Vél' d'Hiv' speech of 1995 are from *Passages*, July-August 1995, pp. 35-40 (see annex).

Nation? La République?"<sup>53</sup> Confusion was increased by the number of terms used during the debate to describe the French nation, which included the Gaullist term "a certain idea of France", "the de facto authority",<sup>54</sup> and "the de facto authority known as "the government of the French State"" (term used for inscriptions on the Vél' d'Hiv' and a number of other monuments unveiled throughout France in 1994), as well as related expressions such as "national reconciliation" or "civil peace". The wealth of expressions used to describe the nation in relation to the Vél' d'Hiv' commemorations therefore reflects the multiple ideological dimensions acquired by this site during the debate. The Vél' d'Hiv' served as a focal point for lobby groups, politicians, journalists and historians to demonstratively interpret history in the public sphere by attaching appropriate rhetorical labels to the nation. Attention was diverted from the monument and the commemorations to the specific problem of how to *name* the nation in relation to Vichy.

The progressive "nationalisation" of this site of memory may be best observed if we analyse the dynamics of the commemorative debate, which were determined by the identity of political agents in the past and present: *who* commemorated *what* in the *name of what*? The answer to the question "who?" is fairly straightforward, since it almost invariably involved a president or prime minister, that is, a head of government representing the political authority of the nation in the 1990s. "What?" refers to the historical events being commemorated in the 1940s, and poses the challenge of naming the nation at that time, such as the "l'Etat français".<sup>55</sup> "In the name of what?" refers to the polity on behalf of which the commemoration takes place, that is, the present-day state. In reality, however, the latter was referred to in various terms as "the Republic", "the government", or "l'Etat français", such that confusion arose over whether the "Etat français" was being used extensively to denote the state in general, regardless of historical changes, or whether it referred specifically to the Vichy state or to the present-day state. Chirac, Hadjenberg, Rousso used the term "Etat français" extensively, for example, while Mitterrand, Jospin, Badinter used it in its strictly historical dimension. It therefore became difficult to understand the precise meaning of the Vél' d'Hiv' speeches when any of these terms were used ambiguously, or when the use of apparently ahistorical terms such as "France" or "a certain idea of France" glossed over the precise historical period of the nation in question. These terms led to the rhetorical amalgamation of different historical periods, presenting the nation as an eternal transhistorical entity. In order to

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<sup>53</sup> Conan & Rousso, *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas*, p. 46.

<sup>54</sup> Official term used by the Comité Français de Libération Nationale (CFLN) from 1944. See Paxton, *Vichy France. Old Guard and New Order*, p. 330.

dissipate the confusion surrounding terminology defining the nation, and to understand the political *uses* of such confusion, it is worthwhile exploring in more detail the political function of historical rhetoric in commemorative speeches at the Vél' d'Hiv'.

The first petition of the Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42 set the tone of the debate:

[...] A l'occasion du 50e anniversaire de la rafle du Vél' d'Hiv', les 16 et 17 juillet prochain, nous demandons que soient reconnu et proclamé officiellement par le président de la République, chef de l'Etat, que l'Etat français de Vichy est responsable de persécutions et de crimes contre les juifs de France. Cet acte symbolique est une exigence de la mémoire des victimes et de leurs descendants. C'est aussi une exigence de la mémoire collective française malade de ce non-dit. C'est enfin l'idée même de la République française, fidèle à ses principes fondateurs, qui est en jeu.<sup>56</sup>

The purpose of this petition was to urge president Mitterrand to recognise officially, in the name of the Fifth Republic in 1992, the moral responsibility of the "French State of Vichy" for anti-Semitic persecutions of the 1940s, with the stated goal of appeasing "the memory of the victims and their descendants" as well as "French collective memory". From the beginning, therefore, the petition focused upon the presidential commemorative speech as the single means by which the French state could atone for acts of the French State of Vichy, with the aim of appeasing "collective memory" and of sustaining the "idea" of the Republic and its "principles". Both the moral and political dimensions of the petitions were formulated in general, absolute terms. In moral terms, for example, the petitions supposed that crimes of the French State may be expiated or "cured" by means of formal verbal recognition; the petition presented the nation as an organic, personified whole capable, in religious terms, of achieving personal redemption by contrition and confession. The petitions thereby overstated the symbolic authority of the president by demanding a verbal recognition as an *exclusive* condition in order to end the "inflicted" or "ill" ("malade") state of the nation. Non-verbal symbolic acts such as the presence of President Mitterrand at the Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration, and inauguration of the monument there and of the museum at the Izieu internment camp, or the introduction of a national day of commemoration in 1993, were considered insufficient. The petition was based on the combined political and religious assumption that the president's verbal recognition of an apparently unspoken fact would be equivalent to moral reparation for the entire nation.

This insistence on a *verbal* gesture characterised all subsequent symbolic gestures and statements relating to the Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration. Moreover, by making verbal utterances the

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<sup>55</sup> Official term used instead of "République Française" to define the Vichy state from January 1941, as recorded in official documents such as the *Journal Officiel*, the protocol reports of governmental proceedings.

sole condition for the success or failure of the commemoration, the debate over the Vél' d'Hiv' revolved not around the most appropriate rituals or sculpture, but around the *wording* of commemorative speeches and definitions of the French nation as a collective whole: either as the nation under Vichy, the object of commemoration, or the nation under the Fifth Republic, the commemorative agent drawing legitimacy in the present from the commemoration.<sup>57</sup> The issue of defining adequately the French nation with respect to the Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration was determined by distinctions between France and Vichy, and thus became the main condition for the perceived success or failure of subsequent commemorations. Chirac's speech of 1995, which acknowledged in unambiguous terms - in the same moral vein as the petition - the crimes of the Vichy regime, was therefore applauded as a form of redemption or "final stroke" which verbally reconciled the French nation of the 1990s to its recent history.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *Le Monde*, 17.6.92, p. 10.

<sup>57</sup> Comparison with other monuments here reveals the specificity of the Vél' d'Hiv': whereas controversy over the Vél' d'Hiv' focused on rhetoric, for example, that over the "Holocaust Memorial" in Germany focused on sculptural form.

<sup>58</sup> For commendations by public figures such as Joseph Sitruk, Henri Hajdenberg, Serge Klarsfeld, Jean-Marie Lustiger and André Rossinot, see "Le président du CRIF salue 'le discours que l'on n'attendait plus'", *Le Monde*, 18.7.95, p. 6.

*b. Mitterrand's reticence: "the Fifth Republic is not Vichy"*

In the annual presidential television interview on 14 July 1992, Mitterrand refused to comply with the petition of the Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42 on ideological grounds. A verbal acknowledgement of "debt" by the president, pronounced in the name of the Fifth Republic for acts occurring under the Vichy regime, would have evoked symbolically a moral, historical and political continuity between the Vichy government and the Republic of 1992, that is, between the France of 1942 and the France of 1992. According to Mitterrand,

la République, à travers toute son histoire, a constamment adopté une attitude totalement ouverte pour considérer que les droits des citoyens devaient être appliqués à toute personne reconnue comme citoyen et en particulier les juifs français. [...] Alors, ne demandons pas de comptes à la République! Mais en 1940 il y a eu un Etat français, c'était le régime de Vichy, ce n'était pas la République. Et à cet Etat français on doit demander des comptes, je l'admets naturellement, comment ne l'admettrais-je pas?<sup>59</sup>

The act of recognition as demanded in the petitions would have brought into question two fundamental aspects of French political culture to which Mitterrand alludes in the interview. First, citizens' rights and republicanism, implying the founding constitutional principles of the Republic, the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man, which were officially denied under Vichy.<sup>60</sup> Second, such a recognition would have contradicted the Gaullist perception of Vichy as an anomaly or form of "parenthesis" in French political tradition, an interpretation which both overestimates the role of the Resistance and underestimates political, legal and social continuities between Vichy and the Republic before and after 1944.

The petitions were also based on premises which could lead to historical misrepresentation. As Conan and Rousso have noted, the stringency of the appeals of 1992 implied that crimes had never before been recognised whereas, in reality, they had been recognised both symbolically and legally during the purges of collaborators immediately after the war, which led to trials of over 120000 collaborators, over 700 executions and some 4500 summary executions by the Resistance.<sup>61</sup> "En ayant l'air de stigmatiser une sorte de culpabilité collective aussi générale qu'indéterminée, ou en désignant l'Etat comme seul responsable des silences passés, ils suscitaient

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<sup>59</sup> Annual presidential declaration of 14 July by Mitterrand, "De Mauvaises moeurs se sont répandues partout, y compris dans la justice", *Le Monde*, 16.7.92 p.7.

<sup>60</sup> For example, the republican motto "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité" was replaced by "Travail, Famille, Patrie". Cf. Mona Ozouf, "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité", in Nora (ed.), *Les Lieux de mémoire* III, Les France 3, pp. 583-629, p. 623.

<sup>61</sup> Approximate figures cited in: Robert Paxton, *Vichy France. Old Guard and New Order*, London: Berrie & Jenkins, 1972, p. 329.

des polémiques anachroniques."<sup>62</sup> The novelty of the petition lay not in its content, therefore, but in the fact that it demanded a purely *verbal* form of reparation as a symbolic act by the head of state.

Exclusive emphasis on verbal declarations, which was set in motion on the initiative of the Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42, characterized the entire sequence of commemorations. Public controversy over Mitterrand's refusal to make a formal declaration of recognition was intensified by indignation over the biographical entanglement of the president himself, and inflated the significance of the symbolic gesture as if it were a mirror of national self-understanding as such. Although speeches are an integral component of most historical commemorations, they are rarely singled out as exclusive conditions of public and political acceptance. The focus on the wording of speeches was therefore unique to the Vél' d'Hiv'. In contrast to Mitterrand, Chirac accepted the challenge of making a speech in 1995. However, although his speech at the Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration of 1986 contained precisely the same themes, narrative structure and arguments as that of 1995, only the later speech was subject to close scrutiny in the press.<sup>63</sup> We must assume, therefore, that controversy over the Vél' d'Hiv' in the 1990s resulted from contextual political and historical conditions. Without the insistence of the Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42 on a verbal gesture, for example, it is possible that Mitterrand's non-verbal gestures of attending the ceremony, laying a wreath, inaugurating a day of national commemoration and the Vél' d'Hiv' monument would have been accepted as signs of recognition and reconciliation. The political impact of this monument was therefore determined not by architectural qualities or mass participation in commemorative ritual, but by lobbying and petitioning for a verbal gesture, with which Chirac complied in 1995 and thus secured broad social acceptance.

### *c. Chirac's oratory: the myth of universalism*

President Chirac's commemorative speech at the Vél' d'Hiv' in 1995 initially created "very broad consensus"<sup>64</sup> among representatives of Jewish associations, intellectuals, politicians from both the left and the right, and from governments abroad. This speech also appeared - "at least in

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<sup>62</sup> Conan & Rouso, *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas*, p. 39.

<sup>63</sup> In 1986, Chirac aimed to "rendre hommage à ceux qui ont si cruellement souffert", to draw a lesson from the memory of 1942 as a "sursaut de la conscience nationale", and therefore to reaffirm republican values on the basis of this lesson: "Telle est la leçon que nous devons tirer des tragiques événements que nous commémorons aujourd'hui. Nous avons, à l'égard de toutes ces victimes, une dette imprescriptible: celle d'être fidèles aux valeurs de liberté et de justice qui, aux yeux de l'humanité entière, sont le message et la légitimité même de notre pays." Cf. Brochure of the Commission du Souvenir du C.R.I.F., July 1986.

words"<sup>65</sup> - to break with the controversial Gaullist notion that Vichy was illegal, a notion which had been implicitly sanctioned by Mitterrand's silence in 1992. It therefore brought the public debate to a temporary halt. The press reflected overall support for Chirac, with only muted criticism. Gilles Bresson, writing in *Libération*, alluded to the conflict between the two presidents over the Vél' d'Hiv' by reporting that "Jacques Chirac a bel et bien tourné la page du miterrandisme"<sup>66</sup> while Henry Rousso claimed that "Jacques Chirac s"éloigne du mythe et se rapproche de l'"Histoire".<sup>67</sup> The first thorough critique appeared only several weeks later in *Le Monde*, when Blandine Kriegel exposed some philosophical and historical fallacies of the speech.<sup>68</sup> This was followed by a critique of the ethical implications and rhetorical inconsistencies of the speech by Nathalie Heinich.<sup>69</sup> In short, Chirac scored a political success by responding to demands to assuage controversy on the basis of the assumption that the verbal recognition of crimes 53 years after their occurrence in some way neutralised or, in moral terms, expiated them.<sup>70</sup> But what was the precise wording, and what historical and political meanings did the speech attribute to memories associated with the Vél' d'Hiv'? Closer examination of the terminology reveals ambiguities which suggest that public consensus won by the president's gesture may be imputed to the skilful rhetorical manipulation of the issues at stake. This speech couched the recognition of crimes in a rhetoric of the nation, where the affirmation of collective moral fault served as a negative model for the reaffirmation of nationhood as a transcendent, abstract ideal.

One reason why Chirac's speech won widespread approval is its timely response to a mounting sense of anticipation which the petitions had created by turning the question of verbal recognition into an exclusive condition, and which had been intensified by the prolonged dispute over Mitterrand's silence. Expressions of the desire to overcome the enduring controversy surrounding Mitterrand had been sounded early in the debate. The repeated petitions of Jewish associations, for example, emphasised a sense of impatience over the continuing controversy: the second petition called on the president to "mettre un terme au silence officiel qui dure depuis

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<sup>64</sup> Rousso, in a debate between Nathalie Heinich & Henry Rousso, *Le Débat* 89, March-April 1996, pp. 191-207, p. 199.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Bresson, *Libération*, 17.7.95, p. 10.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Rousso, interviewed by Annette Lévy-Willard, *Libération*, 17.7.95, p. 11.

<sup>68</sup> B. Kriegel, *Le Monde*, 8.9.95, p. 14.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Debate between Heinich & Rousso, *Le Débat* 89.

<sup>70</sup> The Vel' d'Hiv' affair is one in a series of purely verbal public apologies for crimes of the Second World War, including that of the French Catholic church (September 1997), the French police force (1997), and the conditional apology of the Vatican (March 1998).

cinquante ans [...] C'est pourquoi nous réitérons notre appel".<sup>71</sup> In reality, however, the "silence" over Vichy had in fact been broken immediately after occupation in the purges, and documented more thoroughly in literature and films since the 1970s. In addition, prognoses such as that of Pierre Bérégovoy, who was reported to have announced in November 1992 that president Mitterrand would finally perform a "significant act"<sup>72</sup> of recognition that year, were *not* fulfilled and thus both aggravated and frustrated assumptions among associations that Mitterrand would indeed comply with demands of the Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42.<sup>73</sup> The subsequent non-fulfilment of such expectations reinforced indignation about the behaviour of Mitterrand and assured approval of the behaviour of Chirac. Accumulated criticisms of Mitterrand's involvement in Vichy and his handling of the Vél' d'Hiv' commemorations ensured that Chirac's fulfilment of Mitterrand's omission, that is, the breaking of silence with respect to the demands of the Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42, increased public satisfaction when it was finally fulfilled. In this way, the speech acquired intense symbolic proportions. Non-verbal gestures performed by Mitterrand such as the laying of a wreath or the inauguration of the national day of commemoration were considered to be inadequate, such that the presidential speech in recognition of the responsibility for events occurring fifty years earlier appeared to be the sole solution to the controversy.

Although the symbolic act of verbal recognition in itself had been posited as a condition for a satisfactory commemoration, the precise contents of Chirac's Vél' d'Hiv' speech of 1995 nevertheless merit serious analysis. The very debate over the wording of this speech offers insight into a state-sanctioned or official understanding of Vichy in relation to traditional Gaullist paradigms of French memory culture. For if we accept, as proposed above, that the means by which the Vél' d'Hiv' monument was politically appropriated and represented were governed less by the architectural character of the site itself than by the peripheral claims to interpret the site by naming the nation, then we must look more closely at the precise wording of Chirac's speech of July 1995, which marked a historic moment in the state reception of Vichy.

This speech was organised according to a stringent narrative structure and employed complex terminology conveying an equally complex portrait of the nation. The thematic sequence of the speech may be divided into five segments, each conveyed in a specific rhetorical mode of

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<sup>71</sup> *Le Monde*, 16.7.92, p. 8.

<sup>72</sup> *Libération*, 14.1.93, p. 5.

<sup>73</sup> The phenomenon of the "generation of assumptions" in the public sphere has been examined in detail by Murray Edelman in *Political Language. Words That Succeed and Policies That Fail*, New York: Academic Press, 1977, pp. 35-37. A similar technique was applied by Serge Klarsfeld in 1993 in order to provoke public indignation over Mitterrand's wreath laying at the tomb of Pétain: "M. Mitterrand ne fera plus fleurir la tombe de Pétain", *Le Monde*, 22.7.92.

lament, history, appeal, warning and prognosis, as follows: a) a lament on the injury done to the memory of France by the Vichy regime, and on the inadequacy of words to account for the events being commemorated; b) a historical account of these events emphasising the fact that France was directly implicated in the deportations of Jews; c) an appeal to remember these events as a moral duty, both because Jewish theology lays emphasis on memory, and because these crimes represent an "imprescriptible debt" for French people; d) a warning against the persistence of racism, anti-Semitism, fear and "exclusion", combined with an appeal to memory and "vigilance" in order to counteract enduring "obscure forces", a lightly veiled reference to the Front National; e) a prognosis that hope for the future is based on the lessons of history and conscious resistance to xenophobia in the name of humanitarian values. These five themes were couched in highly stylised rhetoric containing a number of references to the nation, some of which evoked and therefore invested the Vél' d'Hiv' with traditional Gaullist paradigms of national self-understanding. These may be summarised as follows:

*Nation as person (identity):* The speech opens with the words "Il est, dans la *vie* d'une nation, ..." [my italics]. The nation is subsequently referred to as "la France" followed by an active verb as in the phrase "la France accomplissait l'irréparable". Repeated references to four complementary subjects of the nation in the speech - "je", "la France", "vous" and "nous" - therefore creates a rhetorical bond of solidarity between the person of the president ("je"), the person "France", the vaguely defined collectivity of spectators ("vous") and the all-encompassing collectivity "nous". This conception of the nation as a person is reinforced throughout the debate by reference to the moral integrity of society. The petitions of 1992, for example, referred to the nation as "afflicted"<sup>74</sup> and "accountable",<sup>75</sup> - hence Philippe Séguin's radical criticism of this conception of the nation as a single moral organism, to which he referred ironically as "la France, coupable en bloc, solidairement, des crimes de Vichy".<sup>76</sup>

*Nation as idea:* One of the most celebrated and most quoted phrases of de Gaulle, "une certaine idée de la France",<sup>77</sup> is reiterated and reinforced by Chirac. He appeals to this essentially abstract, subjective perception of the nation, "une certaine idée de la France, droite, généreuse, fidèle à ses traditions, à son génie" as an alternative to Vichy, one which offers a positive moral foundation for collective emotional allegiance to the nation. Chirac accentuates the values implied by this "certain

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<sup>74</sup> *Le Monde*, 17.6.95, p. 10.

<sup>75</sup> *Le Monde*, 16.7.92, p. 8.

<sup>76</sup> *Le Figaro*, 21.10.97, p.6.

idea" by describing them as something essentially pure which has been momentarily soiled by the comparable historical impurity of Vichy: "ces heures noires souillent à jamais notre histoire, et sont une injure à notre passé et à nos traditions". Universal humanist values - "les valeurs de liberté, de justice, de tolérance qui fondent l'identité française" - are thus affirmed in contrast to Vichy, which is thus evoked as a negative model, the rejection of which serves to reassert French republican traditions. In this way, the speech effectively evokes the rejection of Vichy as a basis for the affirmation of the set of *apolitical* timeless values of rectitude, generosity and loyalty to tradition. The very abstraction of nationhood as a set of apolitical ideas thus appeals more effectively to social consensus: the abstract, moral conceptualisation of the nation here leaves the political significance of the Vél' d'Hiv' site open.<sup>78</sup> Appeals to national consensus on the basis of moral ideas are consistent with the core Gaullist doctrine of national unity ("*rassemblement*"). Chirac also characteristically maintained this policy in his appeal to the memory of André Malraux as a consensual, apolitical cultural symbol in his speech at the ceremony to transfer Malraux's remains to the Panthéon in 1996: "Vous incarner mieux que tout autre le gaullisme tel que le voulait le Général, ni de droite ni de gauche, mais de France".<sup>79</sup>

*Eternal nation (time)*: Chirac's speech combines several time sequences which transcend, and therefore appear to diminish the consequences of the years 1940-44. First, the personified nation is measured as a life-span interrupted intermittently by "moments" of tragedy or shame, exemplified by 16/17 July 1942. This timescale is surmounted by more or less extensive historical time-spans: the past is conceived of as open, if not eternal, in references to "nos traditions" and "notre passé", or else as having originated in the Enlightenment ("une idée de l'Homme, de sa liberté et de sa dignité") and in the Resistance ("esprit de vigilance"); the future is evoked as "hope" based on the "lessons" of history. Both these references to distant origins in the past and an open future are transcended by repeated invocations of immeasurable atemporal "values". The speech therefore evokes a nation founded on a tradition of timeless humanitarian values which were interrupted momentarily by the events of 1940-44. In the short term, since 1944, it also represents the nation under the cloud of "imprescriptible debt", under the threat of "les forces obscures, sans cesse à l'oeuvre", yet capable of hope and progression from bad to good via the affirmation of values from earlier traditions. This multiple time sequence is consistently reproduced in Chirac's official

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<sup>77</sup> Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre*, 6 vols, vol 1: *L'Appel 1940-1942*, Paris: Plon, 1976, p. 1.

<sup>78</sup> The political usages of ambiguity in political symbolics is explored in depth by Robert Meadow, in *Politics as Communication*, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corp., 1980, p.35.

<sup>79</sup> *Le Figaro*, 25.11.96, pp. 6-7.

declarations relating to Vichy: in the speech at the Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration in 1986, the declaration on Radio Communauté-Judaïques in 1992,<sup>80</sup> in the Vél' d'Hiv' speech of 1995, as well as in two commemorative speeches given in November and December 1997,<sup>81</sup> where Chirac repeatedly declared that we may learn from history in order to prevent its repetition, and that we may come to terms with and learn from the past in order to seek guidance for the future: "Assumer le passé, c'est se donner les moyens de construire l'avenir".<sup>82</sup>

*Memorial nation (identity & time):* References to the nation by Chirac were expressed in non-political terms as a community bound by history: "nous" and the possessive pronouns "notre" and "nos" were employed 18 times, interspersed with the terms "notre histoire", "la France", "l'identité française", "pays", "familles françaises", and "une certaine idée de la France, droite, généreuse, fidèle à ses traditions, à son génie". The Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration was thus devoted exclusively to the symbolic and rhetorical evocation of memories of the past and projections for the future. Chirac refers to two communities of social memory, that of the "Jewish community" and that of "France": "la communauté juive se souvient, et toute la France avec elle". Although Chirac does not subsume the memory of Jews to that of the nation, and avoids the integrationist rhetoric used in his speech of 1986, where he spoke of the Jewish community's "enracinement dans la communauté nationale", he nevertheless evokes the integrative force of the nation in apolitical, ideal terms as noted above. These references to memory reinforce the link between the idea of a personified nation endowed with the human faculty of memory and timescales governing the nation, whether those of a lifetime, history, or eternity.

*Nation of guilt and hope:* The dichotomy of a nation having committed "l'irréparable" and one representing "valeurs de liberté" is sustained throughout the speech. According to Rousso, Chirac thus accurately reflects the duality of French history, "un clivage historique".<sup>83</sup> On the one hand, France is charged with "l'irréparable", "une faute collective", "une dette imprescriptible", and is threatened with racism and anti-Semitism, "forces obscures sans cesse à l'oeuvre". On the other hand, Chirac evokes these memories of Vichy in order to appeal for "vigilance", an "incessant combat", "le choix de l'espoir", "les valeurs humanistes [...] qui nous obligent pour l'avenir". Some terms employed here, however, such as "faute collective" and "dette imprescriptible" are problematical. It is questionable whether a society can be *collectively* at fault, since many sections

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. "M. Chirac souligne 'le devoir de nous souvenir des atrocités du nazisme'", *Le Monde* 17.7.92, p. 9.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. "Le message du chef d'Etat", *Libération*, 3.11.97, p. 16; "Quatre années de menace et d'exclusion programmée", *Le Monde*, 6.12.97, p. 11.

<sup>82</sup> *Le Monde*, 6.12.97, p. 11.

of society, including resisters or victims, do not feel responsible or accountable for Vichy or harbour a sense of guilt.<sup>84</sup> It is equally questionable whether society can be held to be morally accountable on the basis of an "imprescriptible debt" fifty years after the events. Imprescriptibility, a legal term referring to rights which cannot be removed due to the lapse of time, is presented in the speech as a morally and collectively imprescriptible debt, implying that the responsibility for immoral acts is inherited biologically by successive generations.

*Nation divided and united:* Although, as Henry Rousso points out, the duality or "division" ("clivage") of French history conveyed in Chirac's speech reflects an authentic historical division between collaborators and resisters, the speech constructs the image of a nation united in ideas and values, which is bolstered by rhetorical references to the nation as a transcendental, ideal community: "vous", "nous", "la France", "[...] une est indivisible, dans le coeur de ces Français". The statuses of "Vichy" and of "France" are therefore not presented in equal terms in the speech, for Vichy is described as a historical "moment" which interrupts or "soils" the ideal continuity of timeless republican values. They do not constitute, as Rousso argues, a "double nécessité" or a "clivage", but a *historical* principle on the one hand (Vichy), and a *transcendental* principle on the other (France). The rhetorical construction of a nation divided between historical guilt about "une faute collective" and pride in "une certaine idée de la France" in fact reaffirms the unity of the national community: the affirmation of division is, by definition, affirmation that something whole is divided, therefore divided yet intact. This rhetorical double bind, employed by Chirac and defended by Rousso, may only be sustained if we distinguish clearly between the terms in which the French nation is here understood: as divided in history, and united in an atemporal transcendental set of values.

#### *d. Reparation with rhetoric?*

The petitions of 1992-93 were based on the assumption that a rhetorical gesture would constitute a form of collective reparation of the nation's memory, a social equivalent of financial or judicial reparation of victims. They summoned the presidential authority to sanction what was perceived as the personified historical conscience of the nation. Although the pedagogical function of the speech had already been fulfilled by the petition itself and by the highly publicised trial of

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<sup>83</sup> Rousso, in Heinich & Rousso, *Le Débat* 89, p. 207.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, Heinich, p. 194.

Paul Touvier in 1995, which clearly indicated the continuing burden of the memories of Vichy in the 1990s, the petitioners tirelessly insisted on a presidential speech. The logic of their campaign assumed a direct correlation between a verbal gesture of the head of state and national self-understanding.

The dispute over the president's participation in the Vél' d'Hiv' commemorations of the 1990s consequently revolved around the rhetorical problem of naming the nation: how to define the nation to be commemorated, and in the name of which nation did the commemoration take place? Terminology used in conjunction with the commemorations varied between "Republic", "France", "the nation", and confusion arose over whether the term "French State" was intended to mean the state of Vichy, the Fifth Republic or the state in general over time.<sup>85</sup> The initial petition of the Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42 defined the nation in *holistic* terms, where "la mémoire collective française" was described as "malade", the French state as "responsable" and "comptable", and where the president was required to act on behalf of "la Nation toute entière". It did not take into account historical or social discrepancies within the nation, including differences over time between the Vichy regime and the Republics and between successive generations, or between differences in various sections of society at any one time, whether bystanders, resisters, collaborators, or (in Mitterrand's case) collaborator then resister in succession. The petition of June 1992 set this holistic notion of the nation as a condition for the most appropriate rhetorical accompaniment to the Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration. The ensuing debate therefore focused on each president's relative capacity to find adequate words to commemorate Vichy in relation to the holistic conception of the French nation defined in the petitions. The debate was coloured by a persistent desire to *name*, and therefore categorise the nation in a singular noun. As Murray Edelman observes, however, categorization in itself - of political communities, interests and beliefs - fosters an understanding of political communities in almost religious terms: "The continuous evocation of problematical beliefs through categorizations and figures of speech that are not recognized as symbolic at all makes terms like "society" and "the national interest" look like calls to a higher duty rather than public relations ploys."<sup>86</sup> Mitterrand's silence, combined with readiness to bear witness to history with symbolic gestures, may be understood as a refusal to officially categorise the nation in these terms. By contrast, Chirac complied with the petitions' appeal to rhetorical categorisation in order to

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<sup>85</sup> See debate between Heinich and Rousso, *Le Débat* 89, p. 205f.

<sup>86</sup> Edelman, *Political Language. Words That Succeed and Policies That Fail*, p. 154f.

repair or, in accordance with the metaphor conveyed in the petition of 17 June 1992, "cure" French memory "malade de ce non-dit".

The verbal association of the present-day nation with that of Vichy implied in the act of recognizing national responsibility in 1992 for crimes committed in 1942 could lead to a historical misrepresentation, if not to the anachronistic "obsession" with national guilt as described by Conan and Rousso. In reality, one may draw moral lessons, but not assume moral or political responsibility for Vichy in the present-day. Perhaps the only means of overcoming the dilemma of how to verbally acknowledge historical events is to avoid the rhetoric of nationhood altogether. To break down the nation into its component parts, for example: institutions, corporations, individuals. The prime minister Lionel Jospin's Vél' d'Hiv' speech of 1997, in fact did this by conspicuously avoiding naming the nation with a singular noun, referring instead to particular sections of society which collaborated and which continued to exercise authority after the war under a republican government: "politicians, administrators, judges, the police and gendarmes".<sup>87</sup> Retrospectively, therefore, one may ask why participants in the debate over the Vél' d'Hiv' from 1992-95 insisted on naming the nation in such explicit terms, and why this resulted in a lack of consensus over the terminology of the nation? The act of naming the nation in relation to historical commemorations serves to lend a firm identity to the agents of history and thereby simplifies the task of remembering them as collectivities. During the debate over the Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration, however, historical terms such as "Resistance", "France", "Republic" and "French State", which had previously been taken for granted, were revealed to be contradictory, and therefore ceased to be categories which fostered consensual historical points of reference. The Vél' d'Hiv' debate brought into question the authority normally enjoyed by established historical terminology, and therefore triggered a crisis of French national "identity" on the basis of a crisis of the "power to name".<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Jospin, *Le Monde*, 22.7.97, p. 8.

<sup>88</sup> "Benennungsmacht" Cf. Dörner, *Politischer Mythos und symbolische Politik. Sinnstiftung durch symbolische Formen am Beispiel des Hermannsmythos*, p. 49.

*C. The Vél' d'Hiv' and the Discourse of National Integration in the 1990s*

The Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration speech of 1995 was the first act of state symbolics performed by Chirac in his role as head of state and occurred at the peak of his career after two previous attempts to become president. In anticipation of the commemoration, one month before the first round of the presidential election on 9 April 1995, Chirac gave a speech to a gathering of several thousand young people in Paris which underscored a deeply felt sense of history based on the idea that a new age would begin following the election and the end of the fiftieth anniversary commemorations of the Second World War. "En mai prochain, une époque se termine, une génération va passer la main à des hommes neufs. Le prochain Président français va prendre ses fonctions au lendemain de la commémoration du cinquantenaire de la fin de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. Un nouveau chapitre de notre histoire va s'ouvrir. Ce chapitre, nous allons l'écrire ensemble."<sup>89</sup>

This conscious link between the presidential election of 1995 and the commemorations of the Second World War offers a key to understanding the political intentions underlying the handling of the Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration. Chirac's pre-election speech drew on fundamental tenets of Gaullist doctrine: political personalism, skilful rhetorical appeals to the nation as a vocation and transcendental "idea", and to national renewal, described as "a new chapter". Evocations of the "social fracture" fuelled fears of an apparent national division and emphasised the need to voluntarily reassert national unity, conveyed by the Gaullist principle of *rassemblement*.<sup>90</sup> The Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration was thereby conceived and articulated within the context of the president's quest to secure national consensus following his election victory and to assure political legitimation by appropriating a symbol of one of the most controversial issues of contemporary French history.

Eric Conan and Henry Rousso interpret Chirac's speech of 1995 as a necessary tactical response to the prevailing public understanding of Vichy: "Malgré ses contradictions, le discours de Jacques Chirac est juste parce qu'il répond à une attente de son époque, comme la fiction juridique, inventée par de Gaulle, s'inscrivait, elle, toute entière dans le contexte du "renouveau" nécessaire de la France défaite. Un homme politique s'exprime dans et agit sur son temps."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Cf. Charlot, *Pourquoi Jacques Chirac?* Paris: Fallois, 1995, p. 144f.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280.

<sup>91</sup> Conan & Rousso, *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas* (2nd edition), p. 455.

Whereas de Gaulle responded to the profound division of public opinion in the turbulent post-war years by forging social cohesion around the myth of a nation united in Resistance, Chirac responded to a nation which has since rejected the Gaullist myth and resumed public incriminations of collaborators and in particular of war criminals operating in the non-occupied zone, in what Conan and Rouso describe as "l'obsession de Vichy [...] le triomphe de l'anachronisme".<sup>92</sup> Chirac parried this apparently unpatriotic public sentiment by acknowledging French war crimes while appealing to the restoration of republican tradition in a dual image of the nation - one guilty and therefore indebted to victims from the past, yet capable of hope in the future and belief in a common idea.

Although Chirac's speech provided a fitting "judicial fiction" to respond to the climate of public opinion surrounding the commemorations of Vichy, it should not be forgotten that the origin of this controversy was not public opinion itself, but particular interventions by pressure groups such as the Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42 which contributed to the formation of such public opinion. The political "fiction" presented in the speech must therefore be understood as a historical narrative conceived in response to demands made by identifiable political agents. In this case, the speech of 1995 was formulated with respect to demands of the Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42 and subsequent petitioners, who had all appealed primarily for the recognition and symbolic representation of the memories and experiences of Jewish deportees. If we assume that the dual narrative of Chirac's speech, depicting a hopeful nation emerging from a guilty, criminal nation, indeed served to placate the popular "obsessive" understanding of Vichy in the 1990s, it did so by appealing to a deeper sense of history and patriotism designed to bind society as a national community of values which transcends the criminal past and minority differences. In this case, the consensus achieved by Chirac was not, as Rouso suggests, based only on the historical accuracy of his speech, depicting a society divided between collaborators and resisters, between "une France soumise à Vichy" and "la patrie des droits de l'Homme".<sup>93</sup> Although we may applaud the relatively high degree of historical truth expressed by Chirac, it is more likely that public adhesion to this speech was founded on a spontaneous sense of allegiance to the collective values it evoked. As Conan and Rouso observe, the Vél' d'Hiv' debate was an anachronism, motivated by interests of the 1990s rather than those of the 1940s, which are reflected in the formulations of petitions demanding "rights" of the Jewish "community". Public acceptance of Chirac's speech of 1995 cannot be

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Rouso, in debate with N. Heinich, *Le Débat* 89, p. 200f.

imputed to historical accuracy alone, therefore, but to the skilful appeal to interests and values of the present-day via ritual and rhetorical representations. Explaining the consensus surrounding this speech as a response to an "obsession" with Vichy in the 1990s does not account for its success, since it is not proven to what extent French society was in fact collectively obsessed.<sup>94</sup> The speech in fact pursued a logic of historical relativism, mourning victims but also celebrating republican values.

Chirac appealed to social consensus and patriotism by negating Vichy and affirming common identification with a presidential leader, with a personified nation conceived as an organic whole harbouring collective memories, and with a transcendental or timeless sense of nationhood based on humanitarian values. Vichy therefore played a central role in a strategy of verbally acknowledging unpleasant memories in order to appeal anew to patriotic sentiment. By simultaneously evoking the anti-Semitism of Vichy and xenophobia of the 1990s in conjunction with timeless humanitarian values, Chirac used the commemoration to political ends by a process of association or *historical grafting*, whereby political issues from the past were raised as a model or warning for the present. According to the historian Robert Frank, "la mémoire collective refoule, transforme et avive certains aspects de la guerre civile larvée qui a divisé les Français entre 1940 et 1944, et elle les greffe sur les combats politiques de la IVème et de la Vème République".<sup>95</sup> Historical grafting of the past and present unfolded in the speech in the following sequence. First, after recalling the deportations of 1942, Chirac underscored the need of the Jewish community and the whole nation to remember the events in order to prevent their repetition. Second, switching into a vocabulary of the 1990s, he suggested that the memory of Vichy serves a directly pedagogical function in the present to combat "intégrisme, [...] la peur et l'exclusion" in general, and the Front National in particular, which was not named but referred to unmistakably as "certains groupuscules, certaines publications, certains enseignements, certains partis politiques, [...] les forces obscures sans cesse à l'oeuvre". Third, he proposed a solution to the conflicts of the 1940s and 1990s by praising the Resistance and ideal humanist values "qui fondent l'identité française et nous obligent pour l'avenir".

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<sup>94</sup> In contrast to Conan and Rousso, C. Flood and H. Frey question whether French society is in fact "obsessed" with or rather indifferent to the guilt of its parents' generation, basing their analysis on opinion polls conducted by *Le Figaro*: See Flood & Frey, "The Vichy Syndrome Revisited", *Contemporary French Civilisation* 2, 1995, pp. 231-249, p. 240f.

<sup>95</sup> Robert Frank, "A propos des commémorations françaises de la deuxième guerre mondiale", in Alfred Wahl (ed), *Mémoire de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*, proceedings of conference from 6-8 October 1983, Metz: Centre de Recherche Histoire et Civilisation de l'Europe Occidentale, 1984, pp. 281-290, p. 290.

The three elements of this speech - first a tribute to the memory of the French Jewish "community" (minority rights), second a warning against "integrationism" (extreme minority groups) and "obscure forces" (racism and the Front National) and, third, an appeal to national republican traditions - offer an account of history in which the dilemma of confrontations between minorities and forces of persecution, whether in 1942 or 1995, may be overcome by adhering to traditional republican values. In short, Chirac's speech conveys an appeal to national integration on the basis of republican values as a compromise between minority demands and racial persecution.

This affirmation of the policy of national integration as a negation of Vichy is a characteristic example of the interpretation of the past in light of present concerns, and of the use of memories of the past to legitimate policies in the present. In Chirac's speech, this instrumentalisation of the past was achieved in part by means of a rhetorical amalgam of policies of social and ethnic integration on the basis of the single word "exclusion". While "exclusion" in 1942 was a consequence of racial laws against Jews, Gypsies, or the mentally handicapped, for example, "exclusion" in 1995 referred primarily to the social exclusion resulting from unemployment. "Exclusion" was one of Chirac's main slogans in the presidential election campaign of 1995, used in conjunction with the slogans "fracture sociale" and "la France pour tous" to convey the issues on which the election of 1995 was fought.<sup>96</sup> At the same time, however, "exclusion" also describes the situation of immigrants living in France without a legal residence permit: the "sans papiers", essentially African asylum-seekers who were refused the right to acquire French nationality following new laws on naturalisation introduced in 1993.<sup>97</sup>

By simultaneously calling for the respect of minority identities and the rejection of both extremist minority movements ("intégrisme") and parties with racist programmes ("forces obscures"), Chirac links the racial tensions of the 1940s with those of the 1990s while appealing in both cases to the common alternative of universal Enlightenment values. However, this historical amalgam of racism of the 1940s and 1990s derives from a purely rhetorical allusion via the homonym "exclusion". In reality, the extent to which the racism of the 1940s against Jews can be related to the racism of the 1990s against Algerian and African immigrants is questionable insofar as the deportations of 1942 are historically unrelated to the immigration issue of the 1990s resulting from the nationality code of 1993. However, this rhetorically induced historical and political

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. Jean Charlot, *Pourquoi Jacques Chirac?* Paris: Fallois, 1995, pp. 54, 77-78.

<sup>97</sup> The debate over the "sans papiers" began in 1996 when a group of asylum-seekers occupied the St. Bernard Church in Paris. For details of the nationality code of 1993, see Danièle Lochak, "Usages et mésusages d'une notion polémique. La référence à l'identité nationale dans le débat sur la réforme du code de la nationalité 1985-1993", in C.R.I.S.P.A. & C.U.R.A.P.P. (eds.), *L'Identité politique*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994, pp. 306-323.

amalgam reinforced the emotional effect of the speech by equating indignation at the treatment of Jews in the past with indignation at the treatment of immigrants and unemployed people in the present.<sup>98</sup> The evocation of multiple meanings of the term "exclusion" in order to allude to two or three political issues in different historical periods is justified on moral grounds, but obscured historical distinctions between the issues. The use of this single term in order to simultaneously allude to both the xenophobia and racial laws of Vichy and to xenophobia and social exclusion of the present-day compounded the sense of moral indignation deriving from different sources and encouraged a sense of *general* indignation detached from its precise political and historical causes. For this reason, where the grafting of different histories of injustice by Chirac solicited a general moral response of indignation, spectators were made to be more receptive to a general and exclusively *ideal* (rather than complex political) solution like the one proposed in the speech. The force of this speech lies in its concise definition of a problem for which it offers an equally concise, albeit rhetorical, solution.

In the aftermath of the Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration, Chirac's speech took on a further political dimension insofar as the commemorations of Vichy became an object of dispute between major political parties, including the Front National, over the legitimacy of their respective claims to promote national heritage. Following Chirac's speech of 1995 Jean-Marie Le Pen, the leader of the Front National, accused the president of having sought to settle an "electoral debt" towards the Jewish community, and of having "soiled our nation and its memory".<sup>99</sup> Le Pen had previously attempted to undermine the authority of Chirac in 1995 by suggesting that his party is controlled by Jewish organisations.<sup>100</sup> He made a third attack on the Gaullist party in 1997 by condemning the trial of Maurice Papon and bringing into question the reputation of de Gaulle by insinuating that his wartime exile in London invalidated his status as a figurehead of the Resistance.<sup>101</sup> Though trivial in content, Le Pen's acts of verbal aggression were timed to undermine the credibility of the RPR following its failure to win a majority of seats in the parliamentary elections of July 1997.

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<sup>98</sup> Cf. Frank, "A propos des commémorations françaises de la deuxième guerre mondiale". One cannot underestimate the political implications of innuendo (e.g. "exclusion") in this speech, where Chirac rhetorically grafts racism against Jews in the 1940s onto racism against Muslims in the 1990s. According to Benjamin Stora, the debate over Vichy (in particular the Papon trial) intensified the issue of the rights of French Muslims, while Farhad Khosrokhavar suggests that Muslims have effectively substituted Jews in a process of "displacement of racism". See B. Stora, "Vergangenheit, die wiederkehrt", *Die Zeit*, 14.11.97, p. 13; F. Khosrokhavar, "L'universel abstrait, le politique et la construction de l'islamisme comme forme d'altérité", in Wieviorka (ed.), *Une société fragmentée? Le multiculturalisme en débat*, pp. 113-172, p. 148.

<sup>99</sup> Stéphane Trano, "Le Grand Pardon", *Tribune Juive*, 27.7.95, pp. 14-17, p. 16f.

<sup>100</sup> See interview with Le Pen in: Nicolas Domenach & Maurice Szafran, *Le Roman d'un président*, Paris: Plon, 1997, and report by Douglas Johnson, "French Anti-Semitism Revisited", *The Spectator*, 15.3.97, pp. 18-19.

<sup>101</sup> Le Pen was quoted in the media as having said that "il était plus confortable de résister à Londres que de résister à Paris". Cf. Pascale Robert-Diard, "Philippe Séguin se distingue de Jacques Chirac au sujet de Vichy", *Le Monde*, 21.10.97, p.6.

By condemning Chirac's Vél' d'Hiv' speech and the Papon trial as an affront to patriotic sentiment, the Front National presented itself as the genuinely national party, and even adopted the Gaullist campaign slogan "neither right, nor left, but French!".<sup>102</sup> Fears that the Front National would thus gain electoral advantage, by condemning official state recognitions of Vichy or the Papon trial, drove the president of the RPR Philippe Séguin to condemn the trial as "le prétexte à deux procès, celui du général de Gaulle et du gaullisme, et celui de la France".<sup>103</sup> Vichy therefore became a point of conflict between Right and extreme Right parties, and between factions of the Gaullist party itself, a conflict which Séguin dramatised as a threat to the stability of both Gaullist tradition and of the very nation. While Chirac distanced his party from the racist policies of the Front National by deploring xenophobia and racism in his Vél' d'Hiv' speech, Séguin attempted to distance the same party from Chirac's stance in order to avoid offering ideological ammunition to Le Pen with which he could condemn the president or the RPR as unpatriotic. On close inspection, however, the Gaullist precepts maintained in Chirac's speech suggest that the protests mounted by Gaullist colleagues like Séguin against Chirac's handling of Vichy were not entirely justified. The dispute provoked in 1997 by Séguin was a purely sectarian response to verbal attacks made by Le Pen on de Gaulle and Gaullist tradition. In reality, the Vél' d'Hiv' commemorations did not negate, but revised and restated Gaullist principles of nationhood.

The Vél' d'Hiv' commemorations were exploited as a strategic response to the "obsession" with Vichy crimes by reasserting the Gaullist vision of nationhood as a transcendental ideal, and as a response to the issue of minorities and immigration in the 1990s. Both issues fuelled party political dispute over claims to national heritage. The Vél' d'Hiv' was therefore a focal point for the "working up" of history which was immediately subordinated to the public negotiation of national political traditions, in particular Gaullism and republican integration, and to the claims of various parties to best represent these traditions. In this respect, the Vél' d'Hiv' was a catalyst for a far-reaching debate over the function of social memory and history with respect to national self-understanding in the present.

*D. "National Reconciliation"? The Shadow of the Gaullist Vision of History over Presidents Mitterrand and Chirac*

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<sup>102</sup> Quoted in Jonathan Marcus, "Advance or Consolidation? The French National Front and the 1995 Elections", *West European Politics* 2, 1996, pp. 303-320, p. 316.

<sup>103</sup> Quoted in *Le Figaro*, 21.10.97, p.6.

Although presidents Mitterrand and Chirac both advocated "national reconciliation" during the 50th and 53rd anniversary commemorations of the Vél' d'Hiv', Mitterrand was embroiled in controversy, while Chirac's handling of Vichy, just two months after being elected president, met with broad public approval. Within only a few years, the Vél' d'Hiv' became a "site of memory" of Vichy, a symbolic focal point for the national memory of this period. However, the close connection between this symbol, the presidential personalities and their historical statements, all of which were overshadowed by de Gaulle's vision of history, suggests that the national memory of Vichy associated with the Vél' d'Hiv' is largely a political construction founded on biographical, symbolic and rhetorical strategies. By analysing these strategies, I have attempted to explain the transition from controversy in 1992 to relative reconciliation in 1995.

Many observers of French politics agree that there have been few public figures more skilful in the art of political symbolics during the twentieth century than Charles de Gaulle. The common precepts of Gaullism - national sovereignty, a vague historical mission, national consensus, and the integrative symbolic function of the president<sup>104</sup> - were sustained in conjunction with a simple but strong image of French history whose origins extend back to Clovis, the ancient Gauls, and the Capetian dynasty.<sup>105</sup> De Gaulle also established new national symbols such as his radio appeal of 18 June 1940 to civil resistance within French territory. Since 1944, the public understanding or "syndrome" of Vichy has either been defined by Gaullist doctrine or, since the seventies, in reaction to de Gaulle.<sup>106</sup>

Having organised the Free French Forces in London during the occupation, de Gaulle was regarded as the successful alternative to both the Vichy regime and the politically fragmented Resistance of the *maquis*. However, he promoted a myth of the Resistance as a coherent nationwide movement, a myth now broken since the passing of de Gaulle himself and the proliferation of historical studies of this period revealing that fewer people than formerly assumed participated in Resistance activities, and that the Resistance was not a united movement, but composed of multiple factions.<sup>107</sup> Central to Gaullist historiography is the idea that the Vichy regime was illegal, and that it therefore represents an interruption or parenthesis in French history, disconnected from the

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<sup>104</sup> Cf. Jean-Christian Petitfils, *Le Gaullisme*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1977, Chapter I; Bernhard Schmidt et al (eds.), *Frankreich Lexikon*, Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1981, pp. 323-329.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Maurice Agulhon, "De Gaulle et l'histoire de France", *Vingtième Siècle* 53, January-March 1997, pp. 3-12, p. 6.

<sup>106</sup> The term "syndrome" of Vichy was coined by Henry Rousso in *Le Syndrome de Vichy 1944-198...*, a study of the evolution of representations of Vichy after 1945, including the progressive revision of Gaullist historiography from the mid-seventies onwards.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Jean-Pierre Azéma, "Des Résistances à la Résistance", in J.-P. Azéma & François Bédarida (eds.), *La France des années noires*, 2 vols., vol. 2: *De l'Occupation à la Libération*, Paris: Seuil, 1993, pp. 241-270, p. 242-247.

Third and Fourth Republics preceding and succeeding it. According to the Comité Français de Libération Nationale, Vichy was a "de facto authority" and its acts "null and void".<sup>108</sup> The political origins of the Fourth Republic were therefore assumed to lie in the Resistance and the Free French Forces in London. However, the dismissal of the political and historical legitimacy of Vichy as a parenthesis in history overlooks the extent to which elements of legislation, institutions as well as judicial and police personnel continued beyond the duration of the Vichy government. Not only did the National Assembly of the Third Republic legally accord full powers to Pétain in July 1940, but some Vichy officials, members of the judiciary and high civil servants, as well as some legislature introduced under Vichy, continued to operate under the Fourth Republic after 1944.<sup>109</sup>

In light of the preponderance of the Gaullist understanding of Vichy prior to the watershed of the 1970s, it is common for political representatives to refer to or play on Gaullist imagery even today. The relative continuity and discontinuity of the state before and after collaboration therefore remains a measure of the relevance of this period for French political traditions. For this reason, when Mitterrand justified his refusal to acknowledge responsibility for Vichy crimes in 1992 on the grounds that "en 1940 il y a eu un Etat français, c'était le régime de Vichy, ce n'était pas la République", he was criticised for adhering to de Gaulle's understanding of Vichy as a form of parenthesis, as a political system entirely detached from the republican traditions preceding and following it.<sup>110</sup> His refusal to accede to demands of the Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42 indeed partially adhered to de Gaulle's vision of the political illegitimacy of the Vichy regime. However, he cannot be accused of sustaining the Gaullist myth merely on the grounds that he refused to verbally acknowledge the Vichy regime on behalf of the Fifth Republic, for he also made significant symbolic gestures in recognition of the deportation of Jews in 1941-42 which went beyond those made by de Gaulle: by attending ceremonies, introducing the national day of commemoration, having the Vél' d'Hiv' monument erected, ceasing to lay a wreath at Pétain's grave, and by inaugurating the memorial to the internment camp at Izieu. Prior to the 1970s, commemorations in memory of Jewish victims were largely performed in traditional republican style.<sup>111</sup> Whereas de Gaulle inaugurated the Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation in Paris, for example, which

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<sup>108</sup> Quoted from an ordinance published on 9 August 1944. Cf. Paxton, *Vichy France*, p. 330.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter V.

<sup>110</sup> E.g. Edwy Plenel, "La République et l'oubli", *Le Monde*, 19-20.7.92, pp. 1, 6.

<sup>111</sup> See Annette Wieviorka's description of the republican style of Jewish commemorations of the 1950s, in *Mémoire et génocide. Entre la mémoire et l'oubli*, Paris: Plon, 1992, p. 356.

commemorates the deportations of the 1940s in general and names "French martyrs" as *victims*, Mitterrand instigated commemorations of crimes against Jews in particular, which inculcate the "French State" as *perpetrator*.

Chirac's speech of 1995, in contrast to Mitterrand's silence, was interpreted as a radical break with Gaullism. The public recognition of crimes, the declaration of "collective error" and "imprescriptible debt" evoked not only political, moral and historical continuity between Vichy and the Republic, but also implied moral accountability continuing into the present in 1995. The assertion that error and debt are inherited by successive generations constitutes a radical break with de Gaulle's understanding of Vichy. Nevertheless, Chirac did not abandon but reaffirmed the holistic notion of France as a community bound by common universal values, if not a myth of universalism.<sup>112</sup> By projecting the dual history of a nation first "soiled" by crime then redeemed in "ideal" values, referring to the topos of a single personified nation as if it were capable of rehabilitation, he even revived an archetypal Gaullist metaphor of national history, one which alternates between catastrophe and renewal,<sup>113</sup> and transposed this metaphor onto present-day commemorations of Vichy. This evocation of contradictory political traditions, of exclusionary or xenophobic versus Enlightenment values, sustained within the *same* nation appealed to a political culture based on the willful recognition and *negation* of Vichy. When Chirac made a verbal recognition of moral debt on behalf of the nation, therefore, he did not discredit the nation, since an expression of collective error and responsibility in the 1990s for events of the 1940s necessarily presupposes a personified notion of nationhood with a morality spanning fifty years - analogous to that of an individual, who may be forgiven after acts of remorse and confession. The metaphor of the nation as a single organism with an integral and relatively coherent memory like that of a human individual, presents the faults of the nation as *human* faults: while the nation is discredited with the crimes of Vichy, it is simultaneously credited with the faculty of overcoming these faults.

The speech of 1995 thus adopted Gaullist doctrine by appealing to the nation as an organic community whose members are bound by an abstract "certain idea", a sense of solidarity conveyed by the communitarian rhetoric of "we" and "you", common memories and a common future. Its location was not described in geographical or territorial terms, but as the "heart" of all French people, such that Frenchness was conceived as something exceptional and incommunicable: a

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<sup>112</sup> The notions of transcendence, voluntarism, historical action and social unity in a projected future are not unique to Gaullism, but occur in universalist ideologies elsewhere. Cf. Bernhard Giesen & Kay Junge, "Der Mythos des Universalismus", in Helmut Berding (ed.), *Mythos und Nation*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996, pp. 34-64, p. 40.

<sup>113</sup> Maurice Agulhon refers to a Gaullist "dialectic" of national history. See Agulhon, "De Gaulle et l'histoire de France", p. 7.

"certain", and therefore indescribable idea of the nation.<sup>114</sup> The sense of community was reinforced by the challenge of combating xenophobia on the basis of a collective voluntary reassertion of the ethical values of republicanism. By conveying a strong sense of nationhood and national continuity on the basis of these values, therefore, Chirac did not refute but restated the Gaullist doctrine of Vichy as a parenthesis in French history. Whereas de Gaulle is reputed to have denied the legitimacy of the Vichy state in legal terms ("nul et non avvenu"), Chirac denied Vichy in moral terms, where national traditions were momentarily "soiled" by Vichy.

Just as Mitterrand cannot be categorised as wholly "Gaullist", therefore, Chirac cannot be categorised as having wholly broken with Gaullist doctrine because, as indicated above, his Vél' d'Hiv' speeches (of 1986, 1995, as well as commentary on the Vél' d'Hiv' in 1992 and related commemorations in 1997) consistently reiterated the narrative of a nation progressing from the recognition of guilt to the reaffirmation of universal humanitarian values implied by "une certaine idée de la France".<sup>115</sup> Although the attitudes of presidents Mitterrand and Chirac were polarised by critics with regard to their differing receptions of popular Gaullist historiography during the Vél' d'Hiv' commemorations, it is essential to guard against equating Mitterrand's attitude with that of de Gaulle while interpreting Chirac's response as a form of emancipation from de Gaulle. In reality, Mitterrand appears to have partially revised the Gaullist vision of Vichy by promoting non-verbal symbols of the French State's responsibility for deportations, whereas Chirac conveyed a revision of de Gaulle's vision while upholding orthodox Gaullist rhetoric of the ideal nation. In both cases, the latent political tradition of Gaullism determined the ideological criteria in which the symbolic rituals of successive presidential leaders were measured. However, as already indicated, Mitterrand's interpretation only partially conformed to de Gaulle's interpretation. Likewise, Chirac's interpretation only partially revised it. In light of the general adherence to Gaullist historiography by both presidents, therefore, one may suppose that the polemicisation of the differences between their handling of the commemoration was founded not on historical arguments but on the political inclination to define or reinforce the binary opposition between the presidents and their parties. The controversy over the Vél' d'Hiv' commemorations was motivated not by memories of history (the events of July 1942) but by memories relating to the transmission of Gaullist tradition.

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<sup>114</sup> Cf. Gaffney, "Language and Politics: the Case of Neo-Gaullism", in J. Gaffney & E. Kolinsky (eds.), *Political Culture in France and Germany*, London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 91-129, p. 95.

<sup>115</sup> I do not aim to discredit Chirac's invocation of a political culture as the negation of dictatorship, but criticise the *form* his voluntarism takes in the Vél' d'Hiv' speech, based on a Gaullist ideal nation which appeals to Enlightenment values in abstract, and somewhat bombastic terms: the nation as person, as timeless and as an idea, a nation "une et indivisible, dans le coeur des Français".

We are faced here with two, if not three, notions of "national reconciliation", all of which crystallised and were transformed in relation to the debate over the Vél' d'Hiv' between 1992 and 1995, followed by echoes in 1997 relating to the Papon trial. Mitterrand practised the first Gaullist form by appealing to a strict distinction between Vichy and the Republic, albeit while recognising Jewish victims at the Vél' d'Hiv' from 1992, while Chirac devised a second form, an appeal for reparation via confession. By refusing to verbally associate the Republic with Vichy, Mitterrand effectively adhered to positions of de Gaulle and also Georges Pompidou, who pursued a policy of national reconciliation in 1972 by granting the chief of the Lyon militia, Paul Touvier, an official pardon. Moreover, Mitterrand continued the ritual, initiated by de Gaulle, of annually laying a wreath on Pétain's grave, a gesture which symbolically reconciled the hero of the 1918 armistice with the architect of the tragic 1940 armistice and with the Republic via the figure of de Gaulle, who had styled himself as the architect of the Liberation. However, by putting an end to this ritual in 1993, and by inaugurating the Vél' d'Hiv' annual ceremony, monument, and national day of commemoration, Mitterrand made a radical symbolic break with the previous presidents' treatments of Vichy. The broad consensus won by Chirac following his speech of 1995 was primarily due to his positive response to expectations raised by the repeated petitions of the Comité Vél' d'Hiv' 42, which insisted on a verbal proclamation of responsibility on behalf of the Republic. However, this consensus may also be imputed to the rhetorical force of his speech which, while apparently breaking with Gaullist doctrine of the illegality of Vichy, skilfully appealed to universal moral values in the name of republicanism, to the combined public indignation at the policies of "exclusion" of the 1940s and 1990s, and presented the nation as a person, one therefore capable of self-improvement.

Not only were reactions to the Vél' d'Hiv' commemorations conditioned by immediate political interests of the 1990s, but critiques of these commemorations were measured by standards set by de Gaulle: Mitterrand's refusal to make the speech in 1992 was interpreted as a Gaullist vision of the Vichy regime, as a parenthesis in French history; Chirac's inculpation of the "French State" in 1995 was interpreted as an abandonment of Gaullist historiography; and Philippe Séguin publicly condemned the trial of Maurice Papon in 1997 and Chirac's use of the notion of "imprescriptible debt" in the Vél' d'Hiv' speech as a "trial against Gaullism".<sup>116</sup> Finally, the questions raised by the initial commemoration culminated in 1997 when prime minister Jospin, responding to Séguin's public protest, contested Chirac's speech of 1995 by resorting to

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<sup>116</sup> Séguin, *Le Figaro*, 21.10.97, p. 6.

Mitterrand's interpretation of the relation between Vichy and the Republic: "il n'y a pas de culpabilité de la France parce que [...] Vichy était la négation de la France et en tout cas la négation de la République".<sup>117</sup> Jospin's speech before the National Assembly was greeted with an ovation. This sequence of commemorations of Vichy by political leaders thus traced a full circle: from Mitterrand's controversial negation of the identification of Vichy with the Republic, through Chirac's broadly celebrated affirmation of the identification of Vichy with the Republic, to Jospin's celebrated return to Mitterrand's interpretation.

The holistic understanding of the nation is based on the integrative power of the Gaullist movement, the symbolic leadership of the president, and a vaguely defined historical mission of the nation. In their handling of national history and social memory during the commemorations of the Vél' d'Hiv', both Mitterrand and Chirac upheld a revised Gaullist vision of the French nation. The polemic polarisation of the positions of Mitterrand and Chirac towards Gaullist doctrine - as the adhesion of the former and the emancipation of the latter - may *not* be deduced from the commemorative strategies pursued by the two presidents. The polemic appears rather to have been motivated by contemporary political concerns: dissatisfaction with Mitterrand's personal involvement in Vichy prior to his Resistance activities from 1943; indignation over his belated and ambiguous verbal statements concerning this involvement, particularly during the historic television interview in September 1994;<sup>118</sup> and a concern to take a clear public stance against the racist discourse of the Front National. In reality, however, both presidents appealed to national reconciliation by adhering to Gaullist historiography and universal republican values.

The quest for national reconciliation is a symptom of political uncertainties about national identity, which have been reflected in the increased public support for the Front National since 1983. In this respect, the debate surrounding the Vél' d'Hiv', which crystallised a number of moral and political issues relating to the interpretation of Vichy history in the 1990s, shows how controversy resulting from the "difficult" memories of this period was effectively instrumentalised in order to reassert republican tradition. The Vél' d'Hiv', initially a symbol of a specifically Jewish social memory, was thus integrated as a national form of commemoration. Both Mitterrand and Chirac used this single monument or "site of memory" in their pursuit of national reconciliation by appealing to a groundswell of consensus over republican ideals, reinforced by first exposing then deploring Vichy as a negative ideal.

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<sup>117</sup> Cf. De Montvalon, *Le Monde*, 23.10.97, p. 6.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Conan & Rouso, *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas* (2nd ed.), pp. 440-443.

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In this section, I have attempted to analyse four aspects of the process in which the Vél' d'Hiv' commemorations and monument constitute a discursive "site of memory" fostering the reconciliation of official state memory to the traumatic history of collaboration and deportations. 1. The way in which this urban site redresses an imbalance by emphasising the religion of victims instead of their nationality, as in existing Gaullist monuments. 2. The narrative interpretations of the legacy of Vichy in petitions and speeches held in response to them. 3. The rhetorical "grafting" of issues of the 1990s onto those of 1940-44. 4. The persistence of the Gaullist vision of history underlying both presidents' interpretations of the deportations of 1942. I have tried to prove that the Vél' d'Hiv' emerged from a debate over concepts, symbols and interpretations of the means by which knowledge of the past is transmitted in the present and future. The relative success and failure of Chirac and Mitterrand in promoting reconciliation may only partially be imputed to the generation gap between the two presidents (Mitterrand born in 1916, Chirac in 1932). Although Mitterrand, unlike Chirac, was directly involved in positions of political responsibility during the years of occupation, an explanation of each president's response to petitions on the basis of biographical experience alone would suggest that their historical interpretations were determined, and therefore detract from the deliberate commemorative strategies undertaken by each president with respect to rhetoric and symbols. Just as this conflict resulted primarily from their divergent understandings and rhetorical renderings of the continuity of state before, during and after collaboration, its resolution lay in Chirac's rhetorical astuteness in relativising positive and negative traditions.

"National reconciliation" is a paradigm of French political culture which emerged during conflict between Left and Right as early as the Dreyfus affair. During the 1950s and 1970s, adherents of Philippe Pétain attempted to rehabilitate the conflicting images of the hero of Verdun and architect of the armistice with Germany in 1940 by having his ashes transferred from the island of Yeu to Douaumont, that is, from the sanctuary of the prison where he spent the last years of his life to the cemetery for fallen soldiers of the First World War.<sup>119</sup> Mitterrand even continued the tradition of laying a wreath on Pétain's grave until 1992. Georges Pompidou likewise proposed national reconciliation in 1972 by granting a legal pardon to Paul Touvier, former head of the

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<sup>119</sup> Cf. *Le Syndrome de Vichy 1944-198...*, pp. 54-61.

militia in Lyon. In the 1990s, the Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration was initiated with the promise of establishing moral reconciliation of the nation and the absolution of French "collective memory" - not by means of amnesty, however, but by explicitly recognising fault, as demanded in the petitions of citizens' action groups from 1992.

This campaign to urge reconciliation between the French republican state and Jewish victims of the French State must be interpreted within the context of prevailing political interests of the 1990s. It was not only a traditional conflict between Left and Right, however, but between the broader issues of inclusion in and exclusion from public life. One could even read this monument as the embodiment of two opposed interpretations of French political culture since the end of the economic and social upheavals known as the *trente glorieuses* in the 1970s. On the one hand, the monument and commemorative day testify to the recognition of "exclusion" in both the 1940s and 1990s. In this case, the Vél' d'Hiv' could be said to symbolise the partial "fragmentation"<sup>120</sup> of French society in the face of ethnic or regional movements, for example, heralding the dissolution of consensus based on the classical model of republican integration. On the other hand, the explicit verbal negation of "exclusion" by the presidents during the inauguration and commemorations of the Vél' d'Hiv' testifies to the voluntary reassertion of national unity or *rassemblement* on the basis of consensual republican values.<sup>121</sup> These two interpretations of contemporary French political culture - one sceptical, the other faithful towards the continuing validity of republicanism - underpinned the ideological conflict over the Vél' d'Hiv'.

The suspension of debate after the speech by Chirac in 1995 suggests that the Vél' d'Hiv' effectively fulfilled the function of a site of memory as the "regulation of conflicts". However, this process of historicisation did not result merely from the passage of time, as Nora's selection of already "regulated" sites from the nineteenth century in *Les Lieux de mémoire* implies. It would be similarly misleading to suppose that the Vél' d'Hiv' marked the transition of Vichy from the realm of "real" to "mythic" memory, terms used by Benedict Anderson to explain how the memory of distant crimes, such as the Saint Barthélémy massacres of Huguenots in 1572, was integrated as "French" or "our own".<sup>122</sup> In contrast, the preliminary historicisation of Vichy experienced during the 1990s was only partially a result of structural changes such as the passage of time and generations, or the transition to myth; the Vél' d'Hiv' served primarily as a backdrop for the

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<sup>120</sup> Michel Wieviorka (ed), *Une société fragmentée? Le multiculturalisme en débat*, Paris: La Découverte, 1996.

<sup>121</sup> The political scientist Serge Bernstein directly opposes Michel Wieviorka by arguing that a "renaissance of republican culture" has occurred in France since the 1980s. Cf. Bernstein, "Le retour de la culture républicaine", *Vingtième Siècle*, 44, Oct-Dec 1994, pp. 113-120, p. 117.

politically motivated reinterpretation of deportations in the form of an architectural symbol and speeches appealing to the historical "grafting" of the issue of exclusion and the rehabilitation of Gaullist ideals.

Since no positive identification with the crimes of the Vichy regime is possible, and since these crimes cannot be integrated into a coherent narrative of the nation or canon of national symbols or sites of memory, Chirac solemnised the nation's crimes as a negative example in order to persuasively reaffirm alternative positive traditions. He thus reasserted republican values and the myth of the nation's origin in 1789 as the negation of the violation of these values in 1942. By further defining the presidential election of May 1995 as the end of an "era" and the beginning of a "new generation",<sup>123</sup> he interpreted 1995 as a historic moment: as the end of the fiftieth anniversary commemorations, as the arrival of a generation of political leaders too young to have been personally involved in the Vichy regime, and therefore as a signal to turn attention away from the Vichy past. The Vél' d'Hiv' nevertheless remains an ambivalent site of memory. Today, the annual wreath-laying ceremony at the Vél' d'Hiv' monument on the first Sunday following 16/17 July occurs immediately after the celebrations of 14 July. This ritual juxtaposition of two of the most memorable historical origins of the French nation - one positive and celebratory (the storming of the Bastille on 14 July 1789), the other negative and grievous (the round-up and deportation of Jews from occupied Paris on 16/17 July 1942) - poignantly recalls the debate over the Vél' d'Hiv' as a memorial process of reconciliation in its own right.

## 2. National "Consensus"?

### *The "Monument for the Murdered Jews of Europe" in Berlin, 1988-99*

Plans for a "Monument for the Murdered Jews of Europe" or "Holocaust Monument"<sup>124</sup> in Berlin gave rise to one of the most intense and prolonged debates over the memorial legacy and representations of the Second World War in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany. Following the renaming of streets and the removal or modification of monuments in the eastern sector of the city since 1989, and parallel to negotiations over the possible reconstruction of the Hohenzollern Palace, the debate over the planned Holocaust Monument exemplified the

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<sup>122</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition, London & New York: Verso, 1991, pp. 199-201.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Charlot, *Pourquoi Jacques Chirac?* p. 144.

<sup>124</sup> This monument has two names. The parallel usage of the official title and the shorter and more common term "Holocaust Denkmal" demonstrates the discrepancy between the organisers' intentions and the popular understanding of the monument. Cf. Salomon Korn, "Mit falschem Etikett", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 4.9.97, p. 6.

problematical cultural and symbolic transformation of this city prior to its reinstatement as the seat of government in 1999.

The campaign was marked by two issues. What is the most adequate form of monument? And is the monument as a "genre" (in contrast to other forms of ritual commemoration such as wreath-laying, demonstrations, public speeches or national holidays, for example) an effective medium of commemoration? Confusion and prolonged debate over the first issue of *form* led immediately to the second issue of the very *desirability* of such a monument. These issues suggest that the various designs proposed for this monument should be systematically analysed in relation to their specific social context - in relation to the origins of the project following the campaign of the citizens' action group Perspektive Berlin from 1988, the role of intellectuals and politicians involved in the debate, the arguments of artists and architects expressed in public forums and conferences, as well as the political mechanisms employed in the process of decision-making. At no time did critics suggest that this monument should "represent" the theme of genocide indicated in its title. Its form and desirability were consistently judged in relation to its contemporary function. If we therefore recognise the Holocaust Monument as a product of its social function, we must also ask: for whom was the monument built, and what understanding of history does it underpin? The architect Robert Kudielka has defined the dual function of this monument as the rendering of information from the past on the one hand ("bearing witness") and serving the memorial needs of the present and future on the other ("maintaining consciousness").<sup>125</sup>

The search for an artistic architectural form of memorial and the ensuing debate reflect less the significance of the Second World War genocide for a truly *national* self-understanding in contemporary Germany than the multiplicity of memories and interpretations of the forms in which they are represented in public. This monument is therefore not a direct *reflection* of national self-understanding, as claimed by Helmut Kohl.<sup>126</sup> Political strategies undertaken to appropriate this allegedly national symbol, which are the object of this chapter, were rather an attempt to forge consensus against a climate of dissent. As a result of prolonged controversy, the project for this monument has a history of its own. It is even possible that it will stand less as testimony to the victims of genocide than as testimony to the difficulty of selecting and agreeing upon an adequate form with which to commemorate them. The project for this monument gave rise not only to a large number of architectural and artistic blueprints, but also to a wealth of highly politicised

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<sup>125</sup> Robert Kudielka, "Das falsche Gewicht der Betroffenheit", *Freitag* 37, 5.9.97, p. 13.

discourse on contemporary history and the role of commemoration. By examining prize-winning models, but also initial petitions, instructions briefing artists on how to submit a model, conferences, press reports, interviews documenting responses of artists, architects and their critics, as well as political statements and the Bundestag debates of 9 May 1996 and 25 June 1999, we may better understand the way in which the Holocaust Monument became a focal point of contentions over Germany's "memory culture" since unification in 1989.

In this chapter, I will attempt to explain the problems arising from this project, in comparison to the debate over the Vél' d'Hiv' in France, by examining the conditions established for the monument, the responses of artists, politicians and intellectuals, and the political consequences of the project. The four sections focus on: (1) the site and emergence of the Holocaust Monument as a focus of political controversy from 1988, (2) the proposed monuments and discourse of artists and political leaders, (3) the relation of the monument to current political issues (the reinstatement of Berlin as the capital city, and the parliamentary election campaign of 1998), and (4) the extent to which the quest to achieve national "consensus", analogous to the quest in France to achieve "reconciliation", was fulfilled during the process of selecting a monument.

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<sup>126</sup> Kohl described the monument as a matter concerning "den Kern unseres Selbstverständnisses als Nation". Quoted in "Helmut Kohl schließt Verzicht aus", *Berliner Zeitung*, 18.9.98, p. 10.

*A. The Emergence of the Holocaust Monument as a "Site of Memory", 1988-99*

*a. The site and its urban context*

The planned Monument for the Murdered Jews of Europe differs in several respects from the large number of existing sites in Berlin recalling the National Socialist dictatorship and its victims,<sup>127</sup> and therefore breaks with a tradition of commemorative forms used in both former East and West Germany. It is not designed to mark and trace the history of a specific authentic site, for example, but recalls the genocide as a whole. It is larger than any previous monument (on a site of 20000 square metres). And unlike most memorials and documentation centres, this monument consists primarily of an artistic sculpture, complemented, according to the parliamentary resolution of 25 June 1999, with an information centre.<sup>128</sup> Its symbolic significance is heightened by immediate urban surroundings: the new governmental zone, Reichstag and Brandenburg Gate to the north, the Potsdamer Platz, Leipziger Platz and the documentation centre "Topographie des Terrors" to the south. By occupying a location on the former no-man's land between East and West Berlin close to these existing sites, it acquired national symbolic significance which radically counteracts the policy of decentral, local commemorative projects in the "old" Federal Republic,<sup>129</sup> and thereby neutralises discrepancies between commemorative traditions of the eastern and western zones, between "anti-fascist" memorials in East Germany and the pluralist range of memorials relating to particular authentic historical sites in West Germany. The tradition of central memorials was foreign to the Federal Republic which, despite plans for a monument in Bonn initiated in the early 1980s,<sup>130</sup> possessed no central memorial to the Second World War, whereas the German Democratic Republic inaugurated the Neue Wache in Berlin as a "memorial for victims of fascism" in 1956 and a national memorial in Buchenwald in 1958. The Holocaust Monument also complements existent central memorials, for it consists of an essentially artistic, abstract sculpture dedicated specifically to Jewish victims in contrast to the documentary exhibits

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<sup>127</sup> For a comprehensive account of Berlin monuments, see Stefanie Endlich & Thomas Lutz (eds.), *Gedenken und Lernen an historischen Orten. Ein Wegweiser zu Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus in Berlin*, Berlin: Edition Hentrich 1995; Martin Schönfeld, *Gedenktafeln in West-Berlin* (Schriftenreihe Aktives Museum, Vol. 6), Berlin: Aktives Museum, 1993; Schönfeld, *Gedenktafeln in Ost-Berlin* (Vol. 4), Berlin: Aktives Museum, 1991.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Stefanie Endlich, "Überlegungen zur Kunst im öffentlichen Raum", *Berlin Stadtforum. Programm für die 21. Sitzung des Stadtforums am 19/20.6.1992*.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Reinhard Rürup, "Lebendige Erinnerungskultur in der Demokratie: Gedanken und Erwartungen" (Enquete-Kommission des Deutschen Bundestages, Berlin, 10.11.97) p. 9; Gall, Lothar, "Brauchen wir eine Mitte?", in Engel, H. & Ribbe, W. (Hrsg.), *Hauptstadt Berlin - Wohin mit der Mitte? Historische, städtebauliche und architektonische Wurzeln des Stadtzentrums*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag 1993, pp. 229-236.

of the Topographie des Terrors and the unspecific dedication "to victims of war and tyranny"<sup>131</sup> of the Neue Wache memorial.

The monument consists of a trapezium field of 2700 concrete steles between one and four metres in height which are arranged in straight rows, albeit slightly tilted at irregular angles. A small information centre is designed to provide historical documentation relating to the site and details of other memorials in Berlin. The floor of the monument sinks towards the centre such that, despite the increasing height of the steles, the monument rises only slightly above ground level. Some critics have likened this design to a Jewish cemetery, although its designers, the American architect Peter Eisenman and artist Richard Serra (who withdrew from the project in March 1998), deny any symbolic content, interpreting their work instead in purely abstract terms as a "zone of instability"<sup>132</sup> acting on the subjective perception of visitors as they walk into the narrow 90cm-wide passageways and find themselves symbolically engulfed by the steles. According to the original plan, this monument was to have contained 4000 steles. Following the visit of Chancellor Kohl to the exhibition of shortlisted models, however, the designers were requested to reduce the size of the field of steles and integrate trees into the border between the monument and surrounding streets. The visitor therefore encounters a monument in the city centre which is very broad, low, and framed by trees and a constant stream of traffic on three of its four sides.

The monument is integrated into its urban surroundings as an extension of the public space of the Tiergarten park in the west, and as an extension of the urban grid structure of apartment and office blocks, embassies and governmental buildings in the east. By linking the park in the west and the urban grid in the east, it also links the two halves of the formerly divided city. In contrast to most existent monuments and memorials commemorating the Second World War in Europe, the site of the Holocaust Monument in Berlin was not determined from the outset by its historical significance. Unlike the Vél' d'Hiv', for example, which was established as a site for small-scale public commemorations of a precise historical event of 16/17 July 1942 before it acquired national political significance in the 1980s, the significance of the site of the Berlin monument was consistently perceived in general and imprecise terms. On the one hand, its dedication - either to Jewish victims of the genocide in particular, or to all victim groups - was a constant source of dispute. Moreover, its publicly accepted name, "Holocaust Monument", understood as a

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<sup>130</sup> Cf. Freimut Duve (ed.), *Mahnmal für die Opfer des Krieges und der Gewaltherrschaft in Bonn*, Bonn: SPD Bundestagsfraktion, 1985 (brochure).

<sup>131</sup> Inscription which created a furore in 1993 for surpressing distinctions between victims.

<sup>132</sup> Peter Eisenman & Richard Serra, *Materialien für die erste Berurteilungssitzung* (press release, November 1997).

commemoration of the "holocaust" in general, detracted from historical detail. And although references to the site employed during the debate - "Ministergärten", "Mauerstreifen", "Preußisches Ministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft", near to the "ehemalige Reichskanzlei" and "Führerbunker" - accurately described the past use of the site, the multiplicity of terms reflected different perceptions of its historical significance. The form of a memorial on an "authentic" historical site like that of the Vél' d'Hiv' is partially determined by the significance of the site itself. The perceived historical insignificance of the Berlin site therefore accentuated the anticipated universality of the monument - a universality accentuated yet further by the public's espousal of it as a monument dedicated to all victims of the "holocaust" rather (as its official name indicates) than to Jews alone. The decision of petitioners to disregard the specific historical significance of the site and to claim that it should have "national" appeal was therefore coherent with the unspecific dedication of the monument. The fact that the *idea* to build a monument pre-existed any agreement on *what* to build and precisely *where* and *why* to build it (for whom and in the name of what), suggests that the intentions of the organisers were primarily political, and that their preconceptions about Germany's memory culture prevailed over the concern to explore and interpret the history of the site and people's memories relating to it. Motivations for the construction of this monument therefore contrasted starkly with the guiding principle underlying memorials on sites like the Topographie des Terrors or the Vél' d'Hiv'.

The Holocaust Monument was therefore characterised from the start by historical indeterminacy resulting from its organisers' pretension to universality: the attempt to bear witness to the genocide of the Second World War in a single symbol. Although the site of the Holocaust Monument does possess historical value, this was underplayed during the debate. By giving priority to a general symbolic rather than specific historical significance of the site, organisers exacerbated the difficulty of deciding what monument to build. A monument designed to represent "eine Verpflichtung für alle Deutschen in Ost und West"<sup>133</sup> and a "gesamtdeutsche Tat"<sup>134</sup> inevitably reduced the possibility of realising the conditions for this commemoration in a single monument.

### *b. Phases of the commemorative debate*

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<sup>133</sup> First petition published by the association Perspektive Berlin, "Aufruf", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 30.1.89, p. 4.

<sup>134</sup> Lea Rosh, quoted in a letter of the "Initiative zum Umgang mit dem 'Gestapo-Gelände'" (6.11.89), in: Bürgerinitiative Perspektive Berlin (ed.), *Ein Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas. Dokumentation 1988-1995*, Berlin (brochure), pp. 90-93.

The emotive nature of issues concerning memories of genocide led participants to argue from different standpoints at different moments in the course of the ten-year long debate. In order to clarify the multiple issues associated with the monument, I propose to briefly outline chronological phases of the commemorative debate associated with the monument. The origins of the project may be traced back to negotiations undertaken by the "Initiative zum Umgang mit dem Gestapo-Gelände" in 1980 to build a memorial on the site of the Prince-Albrecht Palace, the location of the Gestapo headquarters from 1933. Perspektive Berlin, a citizens' action group founded by the journalist Lea Rosh and historian Eberhard Jäckel, joined in the quest to design a permanent memorial for this site in 1988 following the opening of the provisional documentation centre (Topographie des Terrors) there in 1987.

This project was controversial from its inception. It intervened in the existing project to construct a memorial, and aroused media interest by polemicising the necessity of a monument as a form of moral reparation to Jewish victims. An open statement of the association Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand in Berlin, which had participated in the search for an adequate commemorative usage of the Prince-Albrecht site throughout the 1980s, even criticised the association Perspektive Berlin for attempting to usurp the existing project. According to the statement, Perspektive Berlin were practising a "Form des Lobbyismus, durch teure Anzeigen eine über den Diskussionsstand nicht aufgeklärte Öffentlichkeit für sich einzunehmen".<sup>135</sup> Hans Dingel, also of the association Aktives Museum, accused Perspektive Berlin, which had solicited the support of local politicians, of bypassing measures previously taken by associations to develop the site.<sup>136</sup> A key point of contention was the type of memorial. The Aktives Museum association had been campaigning for a pedagogical rather than aesthetic memorial, one in which "über die Täter nachgedacht werden kann, über die Strukturen, in denen sie arbeiteten und über das Weiterwirken dieser Strukturen bis heute".<sup>137</sup>

In March 1990, however, the commission debating the future use of this site ("Fachkommission zur Erarbeitung von Vorschlägen für die künftige Nutzung des 'Prinz-Albrecht-Geländes'") decided to accept the proposal of the association Aktives Museum to build a documentation centre rather than a monument. Perspektive Berlin (renamed "Förderkreis zur Errichtung eines Denkmals für die ermordeten Juden Europas" in 1989) then sought a new site for

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<sup>135</sup> Statement by the association "Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand in Berlin", in: Bürgerinitiative Perspektive Berlin (ed.), *Ein Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas. Dokumentation 1988-1995*, Berlin (brochure), pp. 55-58, p. 56.

<sup>136</sup> Interview with Hans Dingel, "Der Tod jedes einzelnen ist singular!", *Die Tageszeitung*, 29.4.89.

<sup>137</sup> Statement by the association "Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand in Berlin", p. 56.

a separate Monument for the Murdered Jews of Europe. In November 1992, the Berlin Senate finally approved the site between the Brandenburg Gate and Leipziger Platz, which had been previously occupied by the ministerial gardens behind the Prussian Ministry for Food and Agriculture and the presidential residence and, after 1945, by the no-man's land of the Berlin wall.

The second phase of the debate occurred in 1991/92 when representatives of the Romani and Sinti community campaigned for the representation of other victim groups in an ecumenical monument. This provoked the response of the Jewish community and historians who insisted on the specificity of the genocide against Jews and therefore excluded the possibility of a monument mentioning Jews together with other victim groups. This issue was settled provisionally by proposing separate monuments for each group, although precise plans for the location, size and form of these monuments were left unresolved.<sup>138</sup>

Next followed two architectural competitions, which focused public interest on the artistic form of the monument. Reputed artists familiar with the problem of memory and memorial representation were invited to submit proposals, including Christian Boltanski, Gerhard Merz, Richard Serra in 1995; followed by Jochen Gerz, Rachel Whitehead and the architects Daniel Libeskind and Peter Eisenman in the second competition of 1997. 528 models were submitted in 1995 and 28 models (by invitation only) in 1997, which led to the selection of two winners in 1995 and four in 1997. A large number of intellectuals, including architects, artists, art critics, historians, journalists and political scientists, joined in the debate on the feuilleton pages of daily newspapers, but no agreement was reached over a single model. The shortlisting of multiple prizewinners, followed by exhibitions and conferences, both prolonged the debate and thus offered the public an opportunity to become informed about, if not involved in the selection process. However, hopes that public involvement would lead to the negotiation of a more broadly based social consensus were not fulfilled, for the debate promoted conflict rather than consensus.

The cancellation of the first competition in 1995, allegedly due to a lack of consensus over the winning models, was a turning point in the debate insofar as it led to the introduction of institutional measures to build social consensus: a parliamentary committee was established, a Bundestag debate staged in May 1996, and three conferences each involving over ninety experts and politicians were organised, followed by exhibitions of the proposals submitted in each

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<sup>138</sup> Cf. Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma, "Aufruf", *Tagesspiegel*, 11.4.89. See correspondence between the Central Council of Romani and Sinti and the Central Council of Jews in Germany, in: Bürgerinitiative Perspektive Berlin (ed.), *Ein Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas. Dokumentation 1988-1995*, pp. 113-116. In 1990, Heinz Galinski, chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, had called for a memorial on a "site steeped in Jewish history", quoted in Stephanie Endlich, *Die Zukunft des Berliner 'Prinz-Albrecht-Geländes' ('Gestapo-Geländes')*, Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Kulturelle Angelegenheiten & Berliner Festspiele, 1990, p. 15.

competition, a series of six public hearings of the artists and architects early in 1998, meetings organised by church and political associations, as well as a series of hearings of the Bundestag cultural committee in 1999. State measures taken to precipitate a decision culminated in the Bundestag ballot on 25 June 1999, in which members of parliament approved the model by Eisenman - the second version with 2700 steles, modified with an information centre and dedicated exclusively to the "murdered Jews of Europe".<sup>139</sup>

The second exhibition gave rise to even more controversy when a number of intellectuals, including Walter Jens and György Konrad, and politicians, including Berlin's governing mayor Eberhard Diepgen, called for a halt to the project in February 1998. Richard Serra resigned from his cooperation with Peter Eisenman, and Jochen Gerz withdrew his model from competition. The direct intervention of Chancellor Helmut Kohl from 1995 and Michael Naumann, nominated as Social Democrat representative for cultural affairs prior to the parliamentary elections in September 1998, even turned the search for an adequate monument into an affair of state. Prior to the elections of September 1998, the competition was postponed in order to avoid turning the monument into a party political issue during election campaigning. Following the election, however, which led to the formation of a Social Democrat/Greens coalition government, debate not only intensified but became increasingly political and legal in character. The new State Minister for Culture in the Chancellor's Office (*Staatsminister für Kultur im Kanzleramt*) ceased to appeal for the cancellation of the project and suggested alternative monuments: the modification of Eisenman's project by integrating video screens into the steles showing recording of witnesses from Steven Spielberg's "Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation"; the substitution of the monument with a building containing the same video collection; or its substitution with a Holocaust museum. Andreas Nachama, director of the Berlin Jewish community, also proposed a "University for Jewish Studies" including an ecumenical programme of Catholic, Protestant and Islamic theology. These proposals were systematically criticised in the press. Naumann finally negotiated a fourth project in collaboration with Eisenman, who agreed to integrate into his original model an institutional building containing a library, a branch of the Leo Baeck Institute, a research centre and Shoah Foundation videos, thus further reducing the number of steles from 2700 to 1500. This proposal, presented at a parliamentary press conference on 18 December 1998, was sanctioned by the media and two of the organising bodies: Naumann on behalf of the federal government, and

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<sup>139</sup> Ballots were cast in the following manner: 439 out of 559 MPs present at the sitting voted in favour of the basic motion to build the monument; 325 voted in favour of a monument dedicated exclusively to Jewish victims rather than to all victim groups collectively; 314 voted for

Lea Rosh on behalf of the association. Apparent consensus was therefore reached momentarily in a compromise model combining art with a pedagogical institute. However, this decision was not endorsed by artists or politicians. The artist Jochen Gerz and architect Daniel Libeskind accused Eisenman of plagiarism, because the revised model contained an information centre similar to the one in Gerz's proposal shortlisted in the competition of 1997, and a field of steles similar to those in the grounds of Libeskind's Jewish Museum. Moreover, members of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU) parliamentary groups in both Bonn and Berlin rallied against the decision reached by Naumann.

The final phase of the debate was heralded by the coalition agreement of the new federal government agreeing to Lea Rosh's plan to delegate the responsibility for selecting a monument to the Bundestag, as expressed in a press conference on 9 September 1998. This plan was ultimately realised on 25 June 1999, after the competition procedure had collapsed. The competition was effectively invalidated on three occasions. First, when Naumann presented the modified Eisenman model, or "Eisenman III", in December 1998 without consulting the three decision-making authorities including the association, Berlin Senate and federal government, in conjunction with the commission of experts. Second, when wide public attention was devoted to a proposal which had received no credit during the official competitions: a proposal by the theologian Richard Schröder to erect a simple monument bearing the inscription "Du sollst nicht morden". Third, when the Berlin Senate voted in favour of a motion put forward by the mayor of Berlin, Eberhard Diepgen, to postpone the competition on 16 March 1999.

By bypassing the rules of the competition, Naumann's compromise proposal in particular triggered protest from artists, representatives of existing memorials in Berlin, and from members of the CDU, CSU and Free Democratic Party (FDP) in local and national parliaments, transforming the monument project into a party political issue and an issue over rules of procedure required to reach a decision. Parties had previously been divided over the monument issue. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) in Berlin and CDU in Bonn had largely favoured the project, while the CDU in Berlin and SPD in Bonn opposed it. Following the elections of September 1998 and Naumann's undiplomatic intervention in the competition procedure, however, and despite the insistence that Bundestag party groups should not be required to vote in accordance with party policy, a degree of party cohesion between local and national governments did evolve. The CDU parliamentary group in Berlin invited directors of existing memorials there to a hearing on 8

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the modified model by Peter Eisenman, 209 for the proposal of Richard Schröder for a simple monument bearing the inscription "Du sollst nicht

February 1999 in order to articulate protest against the combined monument and institution on the grounds that costs, estimated at 180 million DM, were unjustified at a time when existing memorials were underfunded, and in order to give priority to memorials on "authentic" historical sites, such as the Topographie des Terrors or the Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand.<sup>140</sup> The three Bundestag group motions put forward on 1 April therefore revealed distinct party bias. A majority of CDU MPs favoured the model by Richard Schröder, a majority of SPD MPs favoured the hybrid "Eisenman III" model combining a sculpture and information centre, while members of all groups recommended the model by Eisenman without an information centre.<sup>141</sup> In the final Bundestag vote, the motion for a complete abandonment of the project was put forward by fifty-eight members of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group.

Confusion over the number and complexity of issues under consideration, and the repeated disregard of established competition procedure, finally legitimated the recourse to purely institutional decision-making measures. Following a series of hearings organised by the Bundestag cultural committee and the formulation of group motions to be voted on in 1999, authority for selecting a monument was transferred from the three organisers to the Bundestag alone then, following the resolution of 25 June 1999, to a new foundation designed to implement and administrate the memorial.

### *B. The Rhetorical and Artistic Construction of the Holocaust Monument*

In this section, I aim to examine in detail the process by which the Holocaust Monument became the object of heated public debate. The conditions for a monument established in the series of petitions and media campaign from 1988 were followed by responses in the form of blueprints of monuments, and public and political debate over these responses. Knowledge about the planned monument was therefore transmitted by a complex discursive system based on rhetorical demands of the organisers, sculptural responses of artists and architects ("discourse *of* art"), and rhetorical responses in the form of artists' and architects' justifications of their works and subsequent interpretations and critiques by intellectuals and politicians ("discourse *on* art"). This system relied on a network of supports in the form of press reports, exhibitions, conferences and panel

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morden".

<sup>140</sup> Cf. "Künstliches Gebilde", *Berliner Zeitung*, 9.2.99.

<sup>141</sup> According to a report in *Der Tagesspiegel*, 1.4.99, p. 33.

discussions. From the beginning, this debate or "discursive event"<sup>142</sup> was characterised by the remarkable incongruity, expressed in petitions and instructions to participants in the competitions of 1995 and 1997, between the distinct political purpose of the monument and the entirely open formal solutions expected of artists and architects. The discrepancy between the prescribed purpose and open form or means with which to realise this purpose was the prime cause of confusion and controversy over the project.

*a. The petitions: conditions for the monument*

The controversies over the Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration and Holocaust Monument owe their existence to citizens' action groups. In both cases, petitions were published repeatedly in national newspapers and widely discussed, and therefore created a broad public expectation that the demands of the petitions be fulfilled. The type of *response* demanded by the petitions nevertheless differed in each country. Debate in France was about political rhetoric, in Germany over political art. Those published in France between 1992 and 1994 called for the president to make a verbal declaration at the Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration, and therefore created a direct rhetorical link between the conditions laid down in the petition and the terms of the presidential speeches. In Germany, however, they called for a response in the form of a monument: an artistic or architectural object with "central" and "national" symbolic significance.<sup>143</sup>

Although the political expediency of both sites may be imputed to active petitioning, the intervention of state leaders, parliamentary elections and the symbolic attraction of capital cities, and although each project triggered analogous public disputes over national memory cultures, the formal object of dispute differed in each country. In short, although the Berlin monument differs from the Paris monument with respect to (i) the political community projected in the petitions, (ii) the priority given to either the artistic form of the monument or accompanying ritual, the end product of these controversies was in each case a monument. Yet the monuments themselves are mute, for they offer only partial insight into the events they commemorate, and almost no insight into their origins.

*i. The projected community*

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<sup>142</sup> Siegfried Jäger, *Kritische Diskursanalyse. Eine Einführung*, Duisburg: Duisburger Institut für Sprach- und Sozialforschung, 1993, p. 156.

The petitions of the association Perspektive Berlin contained presumptions about the identity of people to whom the petition was addressed and for whom the monument was intended. The written guidelines for the architectural competition similarly stipulated the identity of those who gave the commission, of the commissioned artists and architects, and of the public for whom the monument was commissioned. This debate therefore adopted a structure similar to that over the Vél' d'Hiv', where presidents were summoned to define *who* commemorated *what* (historical event) *how* (with a speech or monument) and *in the name of* what (political community). In contrast to the Vél' d'Hiv', however, where the president was summoned to commemorate a specific event of 1942 with a speech in the name of the nation, conditions for the Holocaust Monument were more complex. In this case, petitions were formulated in the passive mode and thus named no specific agent ("who") to perform the commemoration: "Deshalb fordern wir, [...] ein unübersehbares Mahnmahl in Berlin zu errichten".<sup>144</sup> The event to be commemorated - the Second World War genocide against Jews in general - was also somewhat unspecific. And the means of commemoration were not prescribed in petitions as a verbal recognition of state responsibility, but defined as a monument or memorial, leaving the significance of the commemoration to equivocal aesthetic form. When comparing the campaigns in Paris and Berlin, only the political purpose of the commemorations were both defined specifically as the nation. The fact that questions of "who", "what" and "how" were specified for the Vél' d'Hiv' and unspecified for the Holocaust Monument was perhaps the cause of the relative brevity of the first debate, and the long duration and complexity of the second. Although the object and degree of specificity of the two petitions differed, the conditions of both campaigns focused on the analogous political intentions of the organisers of each project: the national scope of the political community, and the primacy of the memory of deportation and genocide as a foundation of moral values for each community.

The petitions of 1989 referred to the monument in political and moral terms as "central" and as a "Verpflichtung für alle Deutschen in Ost und West".<sup>145</sup> Instructions to artists described the goal of the competition of 1995 in similarly moral terms. The nation is mentioned five times as "Germany", "the Germans" and "German" in conjunction with the monument as a "Verpflichtung",

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<sup>143</sup> Cf. Perspektive Berlin, "Aufruf", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 30.1.89, p. 4, and instructions briefing artists, in: Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen (ed.), *Künstlersicher Wettbewerb - Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*, Berlin: 1995.

<sup>144</sup> Perspektive Berlin, "Aufruf", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 30.1.89, p. 4.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

twice as the symbol of a historical "Last", and once as a location linking "beiden Stadthälften Berlins".<sup>146</sup>

Instructions for participants in the second competition of 1997 described the purpose of the monument in less moral terms, reverting instead to jargon of a personified nation which expresses "experiences" and "self-idealisation", and where each nation harbours particular "aesthetic traditions":

"Die Denkmäler jedes Landes verkörpern die Erfahrungen dieser Nation, die Selbst-Idealisierung, die politischen Notwendigkeiten und die ästhetischen Traditionen. Aus diesem Grund unterscheiden sich die Formen, die Denkmäler in Amerika, in Polen, Israel oder Holland bekommen haben, so merklich voneinander. [...] Deutschlands nationales Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas wird notwendigerweise Deutschlands eigene gegenwärtige Erinnerung an den Holocaust definieren, eine komplexe und schwierige Erinnerung."<sup>147</sup>

By establishing conditions for a monument which should have "central" symbolic significance for Germany and express essential ideals, experiences and traditions, these petitions and briefings ensured that the designs, their authors' justifications and critical responses were accompanied by controversy not only over the form, but also over the very necessity of such a monument, and over the political means required in order to reach a decision. These conditions were exacerbated following the annulment of the first competition in July 1995, when Chancellor Kohl expressed disapproval of the prizewinning model on the grounds that social consensus was lacking. From this moment, consensus was projected as the sole condition for a conclusion to the debate over the monument. "Die eigentliche bereits abgeschlossene Diskussion über die Gestaltung des zentralen deutschen Holocaust-Denkmal in der Hauptstadt" should, according to the chancellor's spokesman, be pursued "'mit dem Ziel, einen breiten Konsens aller Beteiligten zu erreichen'".<sup>148</sup> Hence the almost oppressively consensual terms in which the invitation to participants in the second official competition of 1997 were formulated.

The competition of 1997 was therefore handicapped from the start by an ideological burden: the demand that a single monument embody the whole nation's memory of genocide against Jews, and the insistence on the need for consensus. In both cases, the *scope* of the group of people presumed to identify with the monument and therefore to engage in communal "consent" was

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<sup>146</sup> Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen (ed.), *Künstlersicher Wettbewerb - Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas* ("Anlaß und Ziel"), Berlin: 1995.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur (ed.), *Künstlerischer Wettbewerb 'Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas'* (briefing for participants in the competition of 1997), Berlin 1997.

<sup>148</sup> "Kanzler Kohl lehnt Berliner Entwurf ab", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 1.7.95, p. 1.

described not as members of the commissioning body, the jury of specialists, the local community or a specific generation, for example, but as the *nation*. The petitions highlighted the indeterminate and therefore problematic social appeal of this political symbol. Can a nation be conceived as a coherent community which "identifies" with or engages in a sense of emotional allegiance with a single central symbol? And are monuments politically legitimate forms of cultural expression which reflect the positive values or tastes of a national community in the 1990s?

*ii. Document or monument?*

Monuments situated in public places are necessarily works of architecture which possess both aesthetic values and political functions. "Werke der Architektur," according to Albrecht Wellmer, "sind nur insoweit Kunstwerke, als sie *auch* 'wirkliche' Objekte sind, Objekte des Gebrauchs, Objekte, die als ästhetische zugleich einem bestimmten sozialen, historischen und praktischen Kontext zugehören."<sup>149</sup> The Holocaust Monument exemplifies this formal and practical ambiguity of monuments. Petitions published by Perspektive Berlin referred to the monument both in aesthetic terms and in highly political terms as a "national" site. Whereas the initial petition of January 1989 called for a "zentrale Gedenkstätte",<sup>150</sup> the second petition of April 1989 called for a "unübersehbares Mahnmal",<sup>151</sup> and the third, in 1990, for a "Denkmal".<sup>152</sup> Although these terms are often interchangeable in practice, their precise meanings reflect the dual documentary and aesthetic functions of memorials in general. The term "Gedenkstätte" generally refers to a memorial museum exhibiting historical documentation, characterised by its "arranged"<sup>153</sup> character. A "Mahnmal" often conveys a moral message urging remembrance as a guide for future action, a monument "das etwas im Gedächtnis halten soll, von dem man hofft, daß es sich nicht wieder ereignet".<sup>154</sup> "Denkmal" refers more generally to representations of a historical event or person.

In contrast to the intentions expressed in these early petitions, subsequent statements made by the organisers were less ambiguous, and explicitly demanded a sculptural model. The official

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<sup>149</sup> Albrecht Wellmer, "Architektur und Territorium", in: *Endspiele: Die unveröhnliche Moderne*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993, pp. 257-278, p. 269.

<sup>150</sup> Perspektive Berlin, "Aufruf", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 30.1.89, p. 4.

<sup>151</sup> Perspektive Berlin, "2. Aufruf", *Die Tageszeitung*, 2.4.89.

<sup>152</sup> Förderkreis zur Errichtung eines Denkmals für die ermordeten Juden Europas, "Aufruf", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 2/3/4. 6.90, p. 20.

<sup>153</sup> "Eingerichtet"; "angelegt". Cf. *Duden* (8 vols.), Mannheim, Leipzig, Vienna, Zürich: Duden Verlag, 1994.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

invitation to participants of the first competition of 1994 was entitled "künstlerischer Wettbewerb", which offered "die Möglichkeit der Verbindung von Skulptur mit gebautem Raum", yet where "die Kunst ihre Form der Auseinandersetzung selbst bestimmen [soll]".<sup>155</sup> In a statement of the aims of the association, Joachim Braun referred to the "künstlerische Aufgabe" and the obligation to invite "die besten Künstler der Gegenwart" to submit designs.<sup>156</sup> Eligible to take part, as defined in the invitation of 1994, were "bildende Künstlerinnen und Künstler sowie Künstler verwandter Sparten",<sup>157</sup> although they were recommended to collaborate with writers, historians, architects and urban planners.

The two main issues governing the decision-making process - the question of what form the monument should take, and whether it should be built at all - were a direct consequence of the incompatible open aesthetic and closed political conditions described in the petitions of 1989 and reiterated in guidelines for the competitions of 1994 and 1997. The expectation that one monument should fulfil a "central" and "national" function of identification invested the site with an intense symbolic significance that no single monument or memorial could realistically fulfil. According to Peter Steinbach, these conditions provoked "eine Debatte um das absolute Denkmal. Und das mußte schiefgehen. Denn jeder weiß: dieses Denkmal gibt es nicht".<sup>158</sup> Public acceptance of the monument could only be achieved, claimed Steinbach, by additional forms of *translation*,<sup>159</sup> that is, historical information not inherent to the monument itself but about people and their primarily political motivations for instigating the commemoration in the present-day. Such forms of translation or mediation between the monumental object and the public indeed occurred in the institutional forms of conferences, exhibitions, political hearings and media debate. Prior to its inauguration, this monument was not an inert artefact, but the focus of discussion on public symbols and their aesthetic, historical and political functions. In this way, verbal "translation" lent the monument documentary value as a reflection of the public reception and understanding of national symbols in the 1990s.

### *b. Art as a political issue*

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<sup>155</sup> Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen (ed.), *Künstlersicher Wettbewerb - Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas* ("Aufgabenstellung"), Berlin: 1995.

<sup>156</sup> Idem., ("Anhang").

<sup>157</sup> Idem., ("Teilnahmeberechtigung").

<sup>158</sup> Interview with Peter Steinbach, "Denkmäler laufen Gefahr, Kranzabwurfstellen zu werden", *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 4.4.98, p. 5.

When members of the association Perspektive Berlin campaigned for a Holocaust monument, they claimed to be conforming to the example of other nations, in particular Yad Vashem in Jerusalem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.<sup>160</sup> The justification of the monument by its organisers Lea Rosh and Eberhard Jäckel on the grounds that Germany would suffer "disgrace" so long as it did not possess a central memorial comparable to those in Jerusalem or Washington<sup>161</sup> suggests that their exclusive focus on the need for a monument was not based on political or cultural necessity, but on *convention*, sustained by the conviction that nations require stone memorials, and that different nations should possess similar modes of cultural representation. Petitions and competitions for the Berlin site called not for a museum like those in Jerusalem and Washington, however, but for a monument, a means of expression characteristic of national movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The inherent anachronism of the chosen mode of commemoration is an additional cause of the controversy and sluggish selection procedure. Why did organisers insist on a monument rather than on numerous alternative forms of historical commemoration: state speeches, ritual wreath-laying ceremonies, demonstrations, annual commemorative days, the renaming of streets or a museum, for example? And why were appeals for other forms of commemoration not given serious consideration? Several critics called for a smaller monument, the setting up of a charity foundation for survivors, or the transfer of funds to underfunded existing memorials on the sites of concentration camps.<sup>162</sup>

The insistence on an artistic monumental form of commemoration accorded political responsibility to artists and architects to fulfil the stated conditions. At the Bundestag debate of May 1996, members of parliament readily spoke of the moral purpose of art, but refrained from describing how this should be implemented. Rupert Scholz of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) pleaded for a monument which would expose and make people aware of "die primären Ursachen des Verbrechens am jüdischen Volk",<sup>163</sup> and Anton Pfeifer (CDU) supported the project as a symbolic reinforcement of "Grundwerte der Freiheit, der Gerechtigkeit, der Solidarität".<sup>164</sup> Moreover, six out of the ten participants in this debate emphasised the necessity of an artistic

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Lea Rosh, "Ein Denkmal im Lande der Täter", in: Bürgerinitiative Perspektive Berlin (ed.), *Ein Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas. Dokumentation 1988-1995*, pp. 3-7, p. 3.

<sup>161</sup> This is the "basic idea" behind the monument, according to Jäckel. See E. Jäckel, "An alle und jeden erinnern", *Die Zeit*, 7.4.89.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Peter Michalzik, "Das Gedenken ist frei", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 9.12.97, p. 16.

<sup>163</sup> *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages. Stenographischer Bericht - 13. Wahlperiode - 104. Sitzung*, Bonn, 9.5.96, p. 9063.

<sup>164</sup> Idem., p. 9073.

monument while simultaneously denying their personal competence in aesthetic matters. Scholz insisted on the "künstlerische Autonomie der Jury",<sup>165</sup> Burkhard Hirsch of the Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP) disclaimed any "staatlich angeordnete Gestaltung",<sup>166</sup> and Ludwig Elm, Thomas Krüger, Anton Pfeifer and Cornelia Schmalz-Jacobsen underscored the necessity of art in spite of their incapacity to judge or prescribe the final model. The instigators Lea Rosh and Eberhard Jäckel likewise called explicitly for a monument while denying their personal competence in the field of art.<sup>167</sup>

On the one hand, the reserve of the politicians and organisers responsible for implementing this project, reflected in their reluctance in 1996 to put this issue to a vote in the Bundestag, was politically motivated; the three-member commission, and the public competitions, conferences and exhibitions were the result of a political effort to maintain the *plebiscitary* nature of the decision-making procedure. On the other hand, the emphasis laid on the necessity of an artistic monument, combined with the delegation to artists and architects of the entire decision over the form of the monument, fuelled a misunderstanding of art as a field of practice inaccessible to ordinary people or politicians. Why, if they genuinely possessed no competence in the field of art and monumental form, did organisers adhere to the convention of a monument and refuse to yield to public demands for alternative forms of commemoration? Their conventionality consisted in the delegation of responsibility for the design of the monument to artists and architects, based on the strict division of labour between art and politics. The simultaneous insistence on the interconnectedness of art and politics, and the refusal to acknowledge overlapping competences in each field, testifies to politicians' reluctance to bear direct responsibility for the controversial project and the mystification of the task of transmitting historical facts of the genocide. "Wir sollten vor allem gemeinsam darauf achten," declared Hirsch, "daß dieses Denkmal nicht zum Gegenstand politischer Auseinandersetzung, nicht zum Gegenstand von Streit [...] wird."<sup>168</sup>

Efforts to neutralise the explosive political nature of this project by relegating it to the apparently unpolitical sphere of art nevertheless served precisely to politicise the role of art as a medium for the transmission of historical knowledge and values. Prior to the final Bundestag vote in June 1999, scrupulous care was taken by the parliamentary cultural committee to ensure that

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<sup>165</sup> Idem., p. 9063.

<sup>166</sup> Idem., p. 9069.

<sup>167</sup> Rosh in a panel discussion of proposed models in the Marstall Gallery, Berlin, 20.1.98; Jäckel in a telephone debate on *Deutschlandfunk* radio, 3.8.98.

<sup>168</sup> *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages. Stenographischer Bericht - 13. Wahlperiode - 104. Sitzung*, p. 9069.

MPs would not have to vote on a question of aesthetics. The five group motions were formulated with respect to the following questions: the cancellation of the project to build a monument, the construction of the model proposed by Richard Schröder to build a monument bearing the inscription "Du sollst nicht morden", the construction of the revised model proposed by Peter Eisenman combined with an information centre or "house of memory", a dedication either to Jewish victims alone or to all victim groups, and the setting up of a foundation to control the construction and administration of the monument. Speakers at the Bundestag debate indeed generally evaded the subject of sculptural forms and addressed instead the topics of civil responsibilities with respect to national history (Wolfgang Thierse, SPD), the necessity of an artistic monuments in general as a "Kunst des Hervorbringens" (Wolfgang Gerhardt, FDP),<sup>169</sup> or the need to annul the project out of respect for existent national memorials such as the Neue Wache (Martin Hohmann, CDU). Those who discussed the merits of the model proposed by Richard Schröder, including Eberhard Diepgen (CDU), Annette Fugmann-Heesing (SPD) or Hartmut Koschyk (CSU), turned their attention towards the sense of the inscribed fifth commandment and relations between Judaism and Christianity. Only Diepgen cautiously broached the relative merits of Eisenman's artistic sculpture and Schröder's rhetorical inscription, arguing against "mass" and the "simulation of horror", "daß Masse und Größe nicht zwangsläufig die Wirkung steigern, sondern eher zu einer Blockade der Empfindung führen, eher abstumpfen als sensibilisieren".<sup>170</sup> However, the blatant political interest underlying Diepgen's engagement against Eisenman's model in light of the approaching local parliamentary election in Berlin on 10 October 1999 lent little credibility to the politician's aesthetic argumentation.

The Bundestag vote was the final stage in a cumulative decision-making process involving the Bundestag cultural committee, parliamentary groups at national and local levels, but also the official competition jury, the organisers, and in particular the intervention of Helmut Kohl and Michael Naumann in the competition procedure. Although formal questions were deliberated extensively in the press and by the jury, which led to the shortlisting of two models in 1995 and four models in 1997, the selection of the model by Eisenman and Serra was determined by the personal taste of Chancellor Kohl. The addition of an information centre was determined by the political strategy of politicians and lobbying directors of existent memorials in Berlin, whose judgments were guided not by the aesthetic form of the monument but by finance and by their

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<sup>169</sup> Quoted in: "Scham ist ein Moment menschlicher Würde", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 26.6.99, p. 2.

<sup>170</sup> Quoted in: "Das Wort steht gegen die Masse", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 26.6.99.

evaluation of the utility of *types* of monument: whether a purely sculptural model, a purely rhetorical one or one combining sculpture and documentation. No consideration was given here to formal questions or to the way in which various art forms transmit historical understanding. Formal criteria were excluded from petitions and political debate marking the beginning and end of the project, but were nevertheless elaborately developed by artists and architects participating in the two competitions. According to Hermann Rudolf, editor of *Der Tagesspiegel*, the selection of the "Eisenman II" model combining a sculpture and information centre testified to the continuing social utility of monuments in the 1990s, but also to a lack of public trust in the "silent message" of art alone.<sup>171</sup> Other critics of this compromise decision similarly claimed that only a purely sculptural monument open to multiple interpretations would have been free of dogma and thus "democratic".<sup>172</sup> Wolfgang Gerhardt argued in his speech that the aesthetic principle of Eisenman's model would be neutralised if combined with an information centre, that is, if the expressive language of plastic form was superseded by explanatory rhetoric.<sup>173</sup> The political discourse on art during this debate therefore testifies to a fascination with artistic symbols and the continuing political legitimacy of historical monuments as a genre, but also to a misunderstanding and mistrust of the pedagogical function of art itself.

*c. Discourse of art: blueprints submitted by artists and architects in official competitions, 1995 & 1997*

*i. Competition results*

The conditions of centrality, national appeal and consensus established in the petitions, competitions and conferences determined the issues of debate over the monument from 1995. The following analysis of some of the models submitted in the competition explores the extent to which the monuments and their authors' verbal justifications were conceived in direct response to appeals for consensus from 1995. Although the debate often appeared to focus less on the monument itself than on the means required to secure a decision on its behalf (following Helmut Kohl's

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<sup>171</sup> Hermann Rudolf, "Ein Kraftakt ohne Kraft", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 26.6.99, p. 1.

<sup>172</sup> Volker Beck (Greens/Bündnis 90), quoted in "Bundestag bekennt sich zum Mahnmal", *Die Tageszeitung*, 26/28.6.99, p. 1.

<sup>173</sup> Wolfgang Gerhardt, *ibid.*

interventions in 1995 and 1997, and calls to delegate the decision to the Bundestag, for example), the adequacy of the monumental form was consistently cited as a condition for realising the project. The question of "what monument?" was therefore inseparable from the question of "whether" a monument should be built.

The first architectural competition in 1994 attracted 528 entries, from which two joint winners were selected. For the second competition in 1997, 25 artists and architects were invited to submit a model, of which four were shortlisted and exhibited along with the other models. Although it is not possible to examine all 551 official designs or additional unofficial proposals individually, it is worthwhile looking more closely at the shortlisted models in order to identify formal characteristics and motifs, the verbal justifications of their authors, and the critical responses of the public, all of which may be read as contributions to the quest to establish social consensus on the basis of the monument following the cancellation of the first competition in 1995.

In this section, I will briefly describe the prizewinning models in the official competitions of 1995 and 1997, then inventory some common monumental motifs which reflect a degree of formal unity between them. Although no single model provided a basis for the identification of a cohesive community of memory, the intentions expressed by artists and architects revealed an implicit consensus over the general purpose of commemoration: as a link between individual memory and public commemoration; as a support or obstacle to state representation rather than subjective contemplation; and as a medium of historical significance based on quotations of other monuments and symbolic types.

My intention is not to argue for or against particular models, but to analyse those selected by the juries as well as the accompanying discourse of artists, architects and their critics. Designs which were not shortlisted received minimal public attention and therefore did not trigger debate contributing to the construction of a memory culture. However, it is worthwhile acknowledging some of the remaining 545 proposals from the first and second competitions, as well as the countless alternative designs suggested throughout the course of the ten-year long debate, for they testify to the extensive creative impulse triggered by the search for the monument. Among the most remarkable of these suggestions include: a monumental bus-stop where visitors would be taken to local historical memorials (Renate Stih & Friedrich Schnock); the substitution of a kilometre-long section of the A7 motorway near Kassel with cobblestones and the use of funds raised from the sale of the plot of land in Berlin to create a foundation for persecuted minorities (Rudolf Herz and Reinhard Matz, a model which was favoured by visitors to the exhibition of the competition of

1997);<sup>174</sup> the mock sale of the plot of land in a newspaper advertisement in May 1998 (this enterprise, by Horst Hoheisel and Andreas Knitz, effectively attracted potential buyers);<sup>175</sup> the substitution of one of the pillars of the Brandenburg Gate with an artificial pillar (Samuel Korn);<sup>176</sup> the erection of four billboards on each side of the plot, bearing a short text referring to the failure of efforts to erect a monument on the site (by the SCALA group, Rolf Storz and Hans-Jörg Wöhrle); the annulment of the project altogether and the use of funds for a scientific foundation similar to the Nobel Prize (Christina von Braun);<sup>177</sup> or even the declaration of the visitors' book from the exhibition of projects in 1998 as a monumental testimony to the public response to the commemorative process in its own right.<sup>178</sup>

The large number and variety of unofficial suggestions for this monument almost all subverted or dispensed with the traditional stone monument, revealing a broad and vibrant social interest in the exploration of alternative methods of commemoration. The insistence of organisers and politicians on the need to mark the site with a monumental object won mitigated public support and therefore exacerbated the debate. A revocation of these strict conditions (of a central national monument), imposed by the association in petitions and press reports, might possibly have opened a new opportunity for an entirely different, non-sculptural, form of commemoration.

In light of the highly politicised context in which the Holocaust Monument project evolved, we should examine the models selected during the competitions of 1995 and 1997 in relation to both their form and function. How did the artists and architects justify their designs? And how did critics respond to the designs and to their creators' arguments in light of the insistent demands for consensus and a rapid end to the debate?<sup>179</sup> The political conditions established in petitions and official instructions to artists during the ten-year long debate suggest that the source of controversy lay not in the proposed monuments themselves but in the incommensurable relation between the conditions, which created a fixed idea of the anticipated function of the monument, and the medium chosen to fulfil them. In practice, some consistencies in the motifs shared by different shortlisted monuments nevertheless suggest that the artistic proposals did in fact provide a potential

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<sup>174</sup> Cf. Andreas Schäfer, "'Vielen Dank für die großzügige Einladung'", *Berliner Zeitung*, 13.1.98, p. 11.

<sup>175</sup> In response to an advertisement in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 8.5.98, p. 60. Cf. Jan Hendrik Neumann, "Mahnmalheur", *Künstlerzeitung*, 23.7.98, p. 4.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. Thomas Lackmann, "Die Säule der Nation", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 2/3.10.97, p. 37.

<sup>177</sup> Christina von Braun, "Würdigen statt mahnen", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 23.1.98, p. 13. Professor von Braun is a prominent member of the liberal party FDP (Freie Demokratische Partei).

<sup>178</sup> Cf. Andreas Schäfer, "'Vielen Dank für die großzügige Einladung'", p. 11.

<sup>179</sup> Supporters of the monument warned of a political "loss of face" in the event of a cancellation of the project after the elaborate competition procedure. Cf. Christian Meier, "Stachel im Fleisch", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 23.1.98, p. 23.

formal consensus over the means of commemorating the genocide in stone. The reluctance of the jury, political representatives, critics and the wider public to rally to any of the common motifs of the prizewinning models, however, may be imputed to the difficult task of "doing justice to *all* dimensions of the mass murder with a *single* monument",<sup>180</sup> one whose thematic generality called for an abstract monument and a vague form of remembrance.

The first competition resulted in a joint first prize, awarded in March 1995 for the designs submitted by the team led by Christine Jakob-Marks and by Simon Ungers. The model by Ungers (fig. 1) consists of four 100m-long, 6m-high steel girders (evoking railway lines) arranged in a square and supported at the corners by concrete blocks. The girders are perforated with the names of concentration camps in 5m-high letters which can be read from the inside of the square, and which are projected by sunlight onto the ground - either positively inside the square, or negatively outside it - onto the surrounding streets and buildings. The centre of the square contains a 2.5m high plateau from which visitors can read the names. The jury is reported to have favoured its suitability for both private remembrance and official commemorative ceremonies, and its unambiguous meaning, where no external verbal or written explanations are required to complete its meaning.<sup>181</sup>

The model by Jakob-Marks (fig. 2) was selected as the overall winner in June 1995, but met with continued public controversy and was finally overruled by Chancellor Kohl in July 1995. This model consists of an 85m x 85m concrete panel tilted to a height of 11m on the south side, and on which the 4.5 million names of known Jewish victims are engraved, while space for the remaining 1.5 million unknown names is left empty. The cost of engraving the names would require ongoing public participation in the form of additional sponsorship - a process intended to engage the public in a process that "would never be completed".<sup>182</sup> Eighteen stones from Masada are placed in irregular positions on the panel to represent the countries from which Jews were deported. Like Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, the engraving of each victim's name individually is intended to neutralise their anonymity. Unlike the Vietnam memorial, however, which serves the community of survivors to honour their dead relatives, the Holocaust Monument evokes not the honour of known soldiers of one's own country but shame towards entirely unknown civilian victims of a persecuted community. The formal similarity between this

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<sup>180</sup> Klaus Hartung, "Gedenken — aber wie?", *Die Zeit*, 24.3.95, p. 8 [my italics].

<sup>181</sup> Cf. "Stahlträger vermitteln eine unheimliche Last", *Berliner Zeitung*, 18.3.95, p. 2.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Walter Jens, quoted in "Opfer werden aus der Anonymität herausgeholt", *Berliner Zeitung*, 18.3.95, p. 2.

model and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial therefore veils their historical discrepancy. Salomon Korn suggests that, in the case of the Holocaust Monument, the inscription of each individual's name would in fact entrench the anonymity of victims by symbolically evoking a false solidarity between victims: "als ob die Ermordeten - Soldaten gleich - für eine gemeinsame Sache, einen höheren Zweck gestorben seien".<sup>183</sup>

The competition was formally postponed in July 1995 due to controversy over the form of Jakob-Marks's model: over the technique of naming all victims, its ambiguous historical significance, and high costs. The rejection of this prize-winning model led supporters and critics of the project to either justify or question new measures to establish consensus over the monument. Subsequent discussions were devoted not only to the question of form but also to size, the suitability of the site, the method of decision-making (leading to the resignation of some members of the panel at the conferences in 1997), and the very legitimacy of the project. Some feared that a monument dedicated solely to victims could encourage excessive identification with victims instead of an awareness of the historical means of perpetration, as promoted in the exhibition of *Topographie des Terrors*.<sup>184</sup> Others feared that it may represent a symbolic "final stroke" ("Schlußstrich") ending the West German tradition of critically appropriating the history of the Second World War.<sup>185</sup>

Following the second competition, four joint prize-winners were announced in November 1997: for the proposal by the architect Peter Eisenman and artist Richard Serra, and proposals by the artist Jochen Gerz and the architects Daniel Libeskind and Gesine Weinmiller respectively. One single model had to be selected. The form and intentions of these projects may be summarised as follows:

*Peter Eisenman and Richard Serra* (fig. 3): a field of 2700 concrete steles (0.92m x 2.3m) slightly tilted at irregular angles and arranged in regular rows 0.92m apart, the heights of which rise and fall between 0m and 7.5m. The base of the monument descends towards the centre, so that the tops of the steles rise only slightly above ground level. When Chancellor Kohl requested the artists to modify their design in 1998, the number of steles was reduced to 2500 and trees and bushes added as a frame. At the public hearing of the artists in January 1998, Serra defined the monument as "sacred" and "open", one which may be experienced similarly by visitors regardless of their

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<sup>183</sup> Salomon Korn, "Holocaust-Gedenken: Ein deutsches Dilemma", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 4, 1997, pp. 23-30, p. 28. Details of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial comparable to those of the Holocaust Monument are described in: Daniel Abramson, "Maya Lin and the 1960s: Monuments, Time Lines, and Minimalism", *Critical Inquiry* 4, 1996, pp. 679-709.

<sup>184</sup> Korn, quoted in Stefanie Flamm, "Das Holocaust-Denkmal als Erfolgsgeschichte", *Berliner Zeitung*, 11.5.98, p. 11.

nationality, race or religion.<sup>186</sup> Although the form of this monument has often been compared to that of a Jewish cemetery, Eisenman and Serra deny such symbolic allusions, and insist on the universal nature of the monument's emotional appeal. They describe the formal effect of their design as the "search for instability in an apparently stable system", "the destruction of the illusion of security given by the order of the grid and the surrounding framework of streets".<sup>187</sup> This model therefore bears comparison with "experiential"<sup>188</sup> or "folk-life"<sup>189</sup> museums designed to plunge visitors into reconstructed scenes of the past, and which regained popularity in the 1980s. In this monument, however, the visitor's empathy with the past is not fostered by life-like reconstructions of scenes with "authentic" objects, smells and sounds, but by arousing a physical sense of oppression in an unfamiliar enclosed space. A Japanese tourist, claims Eisenman, "would perhaps feel what it is like to go into a gas chamber".<sup>190</sup>

Two architectural principles underlie this attempt to "destabilise" the visitor. First, the structure is intended to evoke "incomprehensibility"<sup>191</sup> by the following means: the apparent order of the grid of steles is incompatible with the actual sense of disorder which overcomes the individual once inside the grid. The visitor is forcibly isolated; the linear axes do not, as in functional buildings, lead anywhere, nor does the grid have a centre; the grid echoes that of the surrounding urban housing and office blocks, but with radically different and irregular proportions; and the organisation of space - the relative disproportion between the regularly spaced steles and their varying heights - is intended to evoke an incongruent experience of time as one walks into the grid. Second, Eisenman and Serra's model is intended to evoke what they call a "new idea of memory"<sup>192</sup> by commemorating the past without recourse to symbols. In this way, they intend to dispense with the simultaneity of experience and understanding customary in traditional symbolic monuments: like a maze without a centre and without the purpose of getting out again, this grid is designed to arouse a sense of instability by "providing no complete understanding".<sup>193</sup> By

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<sup>185</sup> Hartung, "Gedenken — aber wie?".

<sup>186</sup> Richard Serra, at public presentation of proposed monument at Marstall Gallery, Berlin, 13.1.98.

<sup>187</sup> Peter Eisenman & Richard Serra, *Materialien für die erste Berurteilungssitzung* (press release, November 1997).

<sup>188</sup> Alison Landsberg, "America, the Holocaust, and the Mass Culture of Memory: Towards a Radical Politics of Empathy", *New German Critique* 71, 1997, pp. 63-86, p. 74.

<sup>189</sup> Kevin Walsh, *The Representation of the Past. Museums and Heritage in the Post-modern World*, London: Routledge 1992, p. 121.

<sup>190</sup> Quoted in Robert von Rimscha, "'Ich will einen Kunden!'", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 14.6.98, p. 3.

<sup>191</sup> Eisenman & Serra, *Materialien für die erste Berurteilungssitzung*, 1997.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

allusion, therefore, the incomprehensibility induced by the structure of the monument may be compared to the incomprehensibility of genocide.

Serra withdrew from the competition when Eisenman agreed, on the advice of Helmut Kohl, to reduce the number of steles to 2700 and to add trees. The vote by the Bundestag in June 1999 in favour of this model with the addition of a small information centre or "house of memory" in order to supply documentation about the site thus complemented but also contradicted the original intention of the artists.

*Jochen Gerz* (fig. 4): a flat smooth concrete field containing 39 lampposts bearing the word "why?" in the thirty-one languages spoken by persecuted Jews. The site includes a building called "The Ear" containing three rooms: the "room of memory" in which Steven Spielberg's planned collection of 30000 video recordings of Holocaust survivors may be viewed; the "room of answers" in which visitors are invited to discuss and write down their responses to the question "why did it happen?" in a short sentence, which is then inscribed into the concrete ground of the site over a period of thirty years or more to form a collective text; the "room of silence" in which visitors may meditate while listening to the music "eternal e" by La Monte Young. On the north side, a glass bridge enables visitors to view the site from above. Eighteen signs carry information about the monument. A memorial foundation would be launched to employ researchers and monitors to explain the purpose of the monument to visitors. This monument draws on Gerz's previous concept of the counter-monument by largely dispensing with symbolism and inviting passers-by to participate actively in its construction. According to Gerz, "das Denk- und Mahnmal muß der Diskussion dienen und sich deshalb als ein Teil davon verstehen ... Die 'zentrale' Arbeit kann nur des Besuchers eigener Beitrag, seine eigene Antwort sein. Nichts kann das stellvertretend repräsentieren ... Das eigene Leben wird zur eigenen Antwort. Allein so wird der Verbannung der Opfer in Rituale des Vergessens Einhalt geboten."<sup>194</sup> The function of Gerz's monument is not to render the past in a symbol, but to trigger memory in conjunction with reflection on the process of commemoration in relation to the present. "Die Menschen sind die Erinnerung und nicht die Objekte",<sup>195</sup> claims Gerz. He proposes a radical notion of monumentality, according to which "der Besucher wird Mahnmal."<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Jochen Gerz, *Materialien für die erste Beurteilungssitzung* (press release, November 1997).

<sup>195</sup> Gerz, interview with Detlev Lücke, "Wir müssen zur Skulptur werden", *Freitag* 17, 6.3.98, p. 17.

<sup>196</sup> Gerz, *Erläuterungsbericht des Verfassers*, 1997.

*Daniel Libeskind* (fig. 5): Libeskind's model, called "stonebreath",<sup>197</sup> consists in a row of fragmented concrete wall segments 21m high and 115m long which are perforated and represent a solid casting of the so-called "voids" (inaccessible empty enclosed sections) of the Jewish museum, also situated in central Berlin. The wall cuts diagonally across the base of the site, which is defined by white concrete, and which extends beyond the designated area of the monument across the adjacent Ebertstrasse. Libeskind conceived his monument as a space integrated architecturally into its urban surroundings, and integrated symbolically by multiple references to historical sites elsewhere in Berlin: the white concrete base corresponds exactly to the surface area of the Reichstag; an inscribed stone referring to the monument is installed in front of the Reichstag in order to evoke a link between parliament and history; passing traffic and the adjacent Goethe memorial are incorporated into the site; the wall segments point in the direction of the villa in which the Wannsee conference on the genocide against Jews took place in 1942; and their height corresponds closely to the facades of surrounding buildings. The wall segments are intended to reflect, according to Libeskind, "the obliterated and submerged aspect of Berlin", the horizontal holes "draw the sky and air into the surrounding urban space",<sup>198</sup> while their sculptural character and surrounding trees create "an important urban meeting place",<sup>199</sup> an agreeable environment where, according to Richard Posner, "people can meet and communicate".<sup>200</sup> Libeskind's model therefore employs a traditional architectural language of vertical planes and symbolic quotations which are gently subverted by the oblique angle of the wall with respect to the surrounding urban grid, and by the irregular holes in its facade.

*Gesine Weinmiller* (fig. 6): a broken Star of David made of eighteen panels between 2m and 7m high situated on a concrete incline such that the tops of the panels are horizontal and level with the stepped platform on the north, south and east sides of the monument. Each panel is made of a different type of stone from the regions from which Jews were deported. The visitor approaches the monument down the incline and can leave via steps situated at the bottom from an opening in the wall enclosed by a row of columns. Weinmiller describes the broken star as "an image of the scattered and murdered people", and intends the site to be used as a "place of quiet in which each

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<sup>197</sup> A direct reference to a poem by Paul Celan: "Das aufwärtsstehende Land,/ rissig,/ mit der Flugwurzel, der/ Steinatem zuwächst/ Auch hier/ stürzen die Meere hinzu, aus der Steilschlucht,/ und dein sprach-/ pockiger, panischer/ Ketzer/ kreuzt., in: *Atemwende*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1967, p. 66.

<sup>198</sup> Daniel Libeskind, *Materialien für die erste Beurteilungssitzung* (press release, November 1997).

<sup>199</sup> Libeskind, interview with H. Fricke & A. Goldberg, "Schaun wir mal, was fliegt und was nicht fliegt", *Die Tageszeitung* (Magazin), 17/18.1.98, pp. ii-iv, p. iv.

<sup>200</sup> Richard Posner, interview, "Nicht populär, aber öffentlich", *Berliner Zeitung* 12.12.97, p. 14.

visitor can find associations and images in order to commemorate in a personal way",<sup>201</sup> one where stones, candles but also (on official occasions) wreaths may be laid. Weinmiller's use of an explicit symbol of Judaism was criticised because it excludes commemoration of other victim groups, whether those of political discrimination, euthanasia victims, Romani and Sinti or homosexuals, for example, and also because this reversal of a symbol of victimisation stigmatised by the National Socialists implicitly sustains the reductive symbolic language established at that time while obscuring the multiple meanings of this symbol throughout history.<sup>202</sup>

*ii. Conflicting uses or consensual motifs?*

In a conference debate at the Berlin Akademie der Künste in November 1998, the architect Florian von Buttlar defined three semiotic categories into which the models for the Holocaust Monument fell: pictorial (Weinmiller), affective (Eisenman, Serra and Libeskind) and conceptual (Gerz).<sup>203</sup> These categories serve as an enlightening interpretative aid, suggesting a limited aesthetic repertoire of contemporary monuments to which a large number of the proposals conformed. However, this formal interpretation of the monuments overlooks the influence of the political context on the form and possible interpretation of the prolonged indecision. Instead of arguing deductively from the form of proposed models, I will attempt to assess the significance of models inductively in relation to conditions and expectations established before and after the two competitions.

As von Buttlar shows, there were consistent grounds on which consensus may have been reached over the monument, on the basis of pictorial, affective or conceptual criteria. The recurrent motifs of "emptiness" (Leere) and the sublime, for example, confirms von Buttlar's identification of semiotic consistencies between different models. The fact that no agreement was reached on the basis of these consistent motifs therefore suggests that the roots of dissent lay elsewhere, in the discrepancy between the anticipated political function of the monument and the formal means available to fulfil this function. The formal briefing addressed to competition participants defined precise conditions for the monument's function (see previous section 2. a.), but no indication of *how* this should be implemented. While we may applaud the openness of the briefing, permitting

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<sup>201</sup> Gesine Weinmiller, *Materialien für die erste Beurteilungssitzung* (press release, November 1997).

<sup>202</sup> Cf. Udo Becker, *Lexikon der Symbole*, Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder 1992, p. 127.

<sup>203</sup> Florian von Buttlar, Stefanie Endlich, "'Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas' in Berlin", unpublished paper given at the conference *Denkmale und kulturelles Gedächtnis nach dem Ende der Ost-West-Konfrontation*, Berlin, 18.-22. November 1998.

all possible artistic techniques, the combination of strictly defined political conditions and open formal conditions put pressure on artists alone to shoulder the incommensurable political burden of creating Germany's new national monument.

The models shortlisted in 1995 and 1997 may be interpreted as formal responses to the conditions of centrality and nationality established in the petitions, conditions which were echoed in instructions for participants in the competitions and ensuing debates. The political function of the proposed monumental forms was reflected in the ways in which individuals and the state were intended to use the monument, and how they each related to it as the basis of a symbolic contract between the state, artist and individuals. In practice, however, the large variety of proposals each prescribed a different social and state usage: different ways in which private memories of individuals may be rendered public via a monumental medium of shared commemoration.

The field of steles by Eisenman and Serra, for example, isolates visitors in order to arouse a sense of disorientation or fear, whereas the proposals of Libeskind and Weinmiller offered an open space in which to rest, reflect and talk. By inviting visitors to compose an answer to the question "why?", Gerz's model aimed to involve the public in the active construction of a necessarily incomplete monument. Each of these three models prescribed a specific type of sociability: radical isolation, casual public communication, and formal written testimony. Moreover, theoretical statements of the artists and architects described the public to which the monument appeals in an indeterminate fashion, defined variously as supranational, national or local. According to Gerz, the monument was to appeal to "a community beyond the nation",<sup>204</sup> although he described it as "a place of German identity".<sup>205</sup> Hermann Rudolf warned against burdening the monument with the task of "national-pedagogical reform", a task better implemented by individual witnesses and the scientific community, while nevertheless pleading for the monument as a necessary "public presence [...] in the centre of public life, in the centre of the capital city".<sup>206</sup> Michel Friedman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany defined the monument more precisely as an expression of local culture, "for my capital city".<sup>207</sup> The local appeal of the monument was reinforced by the dominance of local over national media in the treatment of this topic, and by the key role played by the Berlin Senate in postponing the decision following conflicts of opinion between local and national governments in 1998 and 1999. Indecision was a consequence not only of the difficulty of

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<sup>204</sup> Gerz, *Materialien für die erste Beurteilungssitzung* (press release, November 1997).

<sup>205</sup> Gerz, at public presentation of proposed monument, Marstall Gallery, Berlin, 16.1.98.

<sup>206</sup> Hermann Rudolf, "Entscheidung über das Trauern", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 13.1.98, p. 27.

selecting an appropriate form of monument, therefore, but also of the conflicting opinions over the public usage and the social and political function of the monument, and of the complex decision-making procedure, which included the association and federal and local governments.

The shortlisted models likewise projected very different assumptions about the state. Libeskind described his model as a "gateway to the governmental zone", a monument which is "supportive of the state" ("staatstragend").<sup>208</sup> In contrast, Eisenman claimed that his model left no area free for ritual wreath-laying ceremonies, and therefore resisted state appropriation.<sup>209</sup> According to Eduard Beaucamp, this model "prevents inappropriate collective mourning rituals, public demonstrations, representative state occasions" - a function revised in 1998 when Eisenman agreed to reduce its size, add trees, a coach park and an information centre.<sup>210</sup> Finally, Gerz attempted to displace responsibility for the creation of the monument from the artist and the state to the public. He brought into question the traditionally distinct roles of the commissioning authority and the commissioned work of art carried out by an artist for a specific audience. The invitation to answer the question "why?" not only delegated creative activity to the audience by requesting it to compose a collective text inscribed onto the concrete base of the monument, but also demonstrated the freedom of contemporary artists to work for commissions which do not predetermine the content or form of the work, a contractual relationship which Gerz defines as a "non-commission".<sup>211</sup> His essentially political understanding of the role of the artist nevertheless led him to withdraw his model from the competition in July 1998 on the grounds that the continuing controversy over the project proved the failure of state and society to fulfil the conditions of the commission.<sup>212</sup>

In spite of the disparities between the proposed usages of these monuments by society and the state, they revealed some consistent formal and semantic motifs which constituted a potential basis for consensus over the Holocaust Monument. Most blueprints proposed a low-lying structure (Libeskind's was an exception). Almost all models demonstrate varying degrees of abstraction by avoiding the representation of human or natural figures, and none except Gerz gave prior attention

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<sup>207</sup> Michel Friedman, quoted in "Furcht vor abstrakten Pfiffigkeiten", *Berliner Zeitung*, 21/22.3.98, p. 9.

<sup>208</sup> Libeskind, at public presentation of proposed monument at Marstall Gallery, Berlin, 19.1.98.

<sup>209</sup> Eisenman, at public presentation of proposed monument at Marstall Gallery, Berlin, 13.1.98.

<sup>210</sup> Eduard Beaucamp, "Baut Serra!", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 3.2.98, p. 35.

<sup>211</sup> Gerz, interview, "Das dekorative Gemeinwesen", *Die Tageszeitung*, 11.4.95.

<sup>212</sup> Cf. "Gerz zieht Entwurf zum Mahnmal zurück", *Berliner Zeitung*, 28.7.98, p. 11.

to an inscription.<sup>213</sup> It is perhaps significant of the consensual nature of abstraction that the most abstract of the shortlisted models, the field of steles by Eisenman and Serra, was favoured by the specialist commission and by the chancellor. Also consistent to most models were the composite references to existent symbols and monuments in what Gert Mattenklott calls "monuments of monuments".<sup>214</sup> Libeskind's model, for example, served as a symbolic focal point for quotations of at least 5 existent symbols in Berlin: the Jewish Museum, Reichstag, Goethe memorial, Wannsee Villa and the facades of city houses. Weinmiller's model cited the Star of David, classical pillars and even the Wailing Wall. Jakob-Marks's proposal to name all victims adopted the technique of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, while Gerz's principle of asking citizens to compose a script for the monument repeated a technique already used for his counter-monuments in Biron, Harburg and Saarbrücken.<sup>215</sup> Moreover, the models of Eisenman and Serra, Gerz and Weinmiller all employed elemental monolithic forms as an ironic reproduction and multiplication of the basic form of traditional sculptural monuments.

The most consistent theme of these models was the problem of representation itself. In the third of a series of conferences organised by the Berlin Senate in 1997, on the "Typology and Iconography of the Monument", discussion focused on the motif of emptiness. "Im Herzen eines deutschen Denkmals," claimed James Young, "wird eine Leere sein müssen, die irgendwie durch den Künstler als Inspiration oder als Konzept dargestellt werden muß."<sup>216</sup> Robert Kudielka warned against the "falsche Pathos der ehfurchtsgebietenden Leere",<sup>217</sup> however, and appealed instead to the example of counter-monuments which commemorate the past not with focal points of collective identification, but by exploring the very process of commemoration: "Of course, it's a question of the 'unrepresentable', but this does not mean that we have to theatrically give in to immeasurability, but to [...] articulate precisely the relation between the capacity of the means of representation and the limits of its adequacy."<sup>218</sup> In practice, only Gerz incorporated elements of the counter-monument genre, where the lampposts and concrete base functioned as a mere support

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<sup>213</sup> Only Ungers and Hans Hollein incorporated inscriptions into their proposals. The absence of historical explanation in the form of verbal commentary, a text or inscription would foster an ambiguous meaning. Cf. Jens Jessen, "Das undeutliche Mahnmal", *Berliner Zeitung*, 20.1.98, p. 4.

<sup>214</sup> Gert Mattenklott, "'Denk ich an Deutschland ...' Deutsche Denkmäler 1790 bis 1990", Sekretariat für kulturelle Zusammenarbeit Nordrhein-Westfalen (ed.), *Deutsche Nationaldenkmale 1790-1990*, Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte 1993, pp. 17-47, p. 46.

<sup>215</sup> Cf. James Young, "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today", *Critical Inquiry* 2, 1992, pp. 267-296.

<sup>216</sup> See James Young's commentary at the third congress 1997, "Erinnerung, Gegenerinnerung und das Ende des Monuments", in Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur (ed.), *Colloquium: Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*, Berlin, 1997, pp. 124-125, p. 125.

<sup>217</sup> See Kudielka's commentary at the third congress 1997, *ibid.*, pp. 140-141, p. 141.

<sup>218</sup> Kudielka, "Das falsche Gewicht der Betroffenheit", *Freitag* 37, 5.9.97, p. 13.

for questioning visitors and recording their responses. By dispensing almost entirely with sculptural form, this proposal provided an alternative (non-symbolic) *rhetorical* basis for perpetually negotiating the process of commemoration as such. Its open character did not demand consensus in a single signification but readiness to interrogate the principles of commemoration.

Other models directly echoed the previous theoretical discussions on emptiness. Ungers' construction of perforated steel girders enclosing an empty concrete platform indeed put an empty space at its centre, described by Tilman Buddensieg as "monumental nothingness".<sup>219</sup> Libeskind likewise attempted to make emptiness visible and spur reflection by casting the empty spaces or "voids" of the Jewish Museum in concrete, with the aim, according to Harald Fricke, of "making emptiness intelligible".<sup>220</sup> Moreover, all these models, in particular the arrangements of concrete panels and steles by Weinmiller, Eisenman and Serra, corresponded closely to the definition of a cenotaph - a monument in the form of an empty grave, or one in memory of lost dead people or those buried elsewhere.<sup>221</sup> One could even argue that the Holocaust Monument conforms to the definition of a cenotaph *regardless* of its particular form, insofar as it marks a geographical site in memory of dead people not buried on the site of the monument. A monument of this sort - empty, abstract, in memory of absent dead, dedicated to all Jewish victims of the Second World War genocide, a representation dedicated to something unrepresentable - is perhaps an architectural translation of the sublime, which Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm defines in terms of hollowness, a lack of (human) scale, abstraction, enormity, and inaccessibility.<sup>222</sup> The motif of the cenotaph and, by implication, the sublime, which was inherent to several of the monumental projects and to the project itself regardless of individual models, suggests that consensus over the monument presupposed consensus over the *principle* of a cenotaph, regardless of its particular form. Some critics argued that even counter-monuments are grounded in an aesthetics of the sublime, due to the renunciation of sensible effects in favour of the conceptualisation of representation.<sup>223</sup> However, the direct appeal to the spectator's active participation in the continuous rhetorical construction of counter-monuments in fact displaces their effect from the realm of aesthetic experience to the rational conceptualisation of its function.

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<sup>219</sup> See Buddensieg's commentary at the third congress 1997, in *Colloquium: Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*, pp. 125-128, p. 126.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. Harald Fricke, "Tote Monumente, lebendige Leere", *Die Tageszeitung* (Magazin), 17/18.1.98, p. iv.

<sup>221</sup> Cf. Alan Borg, *War Memorials from Antiquity to the Present*, London: Leo Cooper 1991, p. 75.

<sup>222</sup> Hoffmann-Axthelm bases his analysis on the architectural theories of Etienne-Louis Boullée: "Die Ästhetik der Nichtzuständigkeit", in: Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (ed.), *Der Wettbewerb für das 'Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas'*, Berlin: Verlag der Kunst 1995, pp. 74-83, p. 79; cf. Konrad Liessmann, "Auschwitz als Kunstgenuß", *Freitag*, 28.2.97, p. 9.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. Mariam Niroumand, "Darsteller und Denklöcher", *Die Tageszeitung*, 14.4.97, p. 15.

Formal consistencies between the proposed models suggested that consensus over this monument should be sought less in the precise *form* of one monument than in the *mode* of commemoration, whether that of a cenotaph (an empty tomb), the critique of representation in the manner of counter-monuments, or the countless other traditional forms of commemoration such as a national holiday, a political wreath-laying ceremony or demonstration, for example. However, the inconclusive competitions to build a central Holocaust Monument suggested that there was no basis for agreement over either the form or mode of commemoration. The unyielding insistence on a *national* monument from the beginning of the campaign in 1988 - a form of commemoration favoured by national movements of the nineteenth century following the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, or the unification of Germany in 1871, for example - was perhaps one reason why no consensus was established. The anachronism of both the chosen form (a monument) and its symbolic potency (representative of the nation) were the prime causes of the repeated postponement of this project until, following increased political pressure, the authority for reaching a decision was transferred to the Bundestag in 1999.

### *C. The Holocaust Monument and the Politics of National Integration in the 1990s*

Petitions, competitions, exhibitions and media debate relating to the Holocaust Monument determined the political dimension of this issue well before politicians were summoned to implement a decision from 1998. In its early stages, from 1989, the project was a source of controversy over the pedagogical benefits of commemorating either perpetrators or victims on the Prince-Albrecht site. The association Aktives Museum vouched for documentation about persecutions, the association Perspektive Berlin for a monumental commemoration of victims. Even more controversial was the debate over the question whether victims should be commemorated with a single ecumenical monument or separate monuments. Critics feared that a single monument would blur historical distinctions between racial persecutions, but also that separate monuments would foster the symbolic segregation of the memory of victim groups according to a hierarchy established within the system of perpetration itself. Although the decision fell in favour of a central monument specifically for Jewish victims, plans for the location and site of additional monuments remained unresolved. Why was this monument, like the Vél' d'Hiv', a source of intense and prolonged political controversy? And are we justified, like Jürgen Habermas and James Young in the wake of Helmut Kohl, in interpreting this monument as a direct reflection

of Germany's political memory culture? According to Habermas, "das Denkmal wird ein Zeichen sein, daß die Erinnerung an den Holocaust ein konstituierendes Element des ethisch-politischen Selbstverständnisses der Bundesrepublik ist".<sup>224</sup> Opinion polls carried out in August 1995, stating that only 46 per cent of interviewees "knew about the project" and 37 per cent "had heard about the debate", dissuade us from drawing conclusions about a *national* memory culture on the basis of the Holocaust Monument.<sup>225</sup> A more accurate interpretation of the political consequence of this monument can instead be made on the basis of the rhetorical constructions of intellectuals and politicians engaged in the debate, where references to the nation reflect the multiple and often contradictory political and aesthetic understandings of a specific social group rather than general characteristics of a genuinely collective national memory culture.

Opinions towards the monument among both local and national politicians were divided regardless of their party allegiance. The approaching parliamentary elections of September 1998 and the local governmental election in Berlin of October 1999 nevertheless polarised the monument into an issue of party politics. Resistance within the Berlin Senate, and vociferous campaigning against the monument by the Eberhard Diepgen, were a major obstacle to a final decision. At the local level, the CDU emerged as opponents, the SPD as supporters of the project. At a national level, however, CDU representatives generally supported the project behind Kohl while the SPD opposed the project. In 1999, however, fifty-eight CDU/CSU members of parliament put forward a motion to cancel the project and voted against it in the Bundestag vote in June that year. The controversial statement against the monument made by the SPD cultural representative Naumann in July 1998 served to polarise the debate into a party political issue at a national level. Backed by the SPD candidate for chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, for whom polls predicted an election victory, Naumann's statement put pressure on the CDU/CSU/FDP coalition government to push through a decision for the monument before the election in order to prevent the SPD, in the event of their election victory, from reversing the project. In this way, the emotional issue of the Holocaust Monument and impatience over the longstanding indecision was exploited by party representatives in order to project an illusory resolve and cohesion of party policy where none existed, for individual opinions rarely coincided with party allegiances. Genuine attitudes towards this issue were motivated not by party political allegiances but by understandings of the

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<sup>224</sup> Quoted by James Young, "Was keine andere Nation je versucht hat", *Berliner Zeitung*, 18.12.98, pp. 13-14. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, "Der Zeigefinger. Die Deutschen und ihr Denkmal", *Die Zeit*, 31.3.99, pp. 42-44.

<sup>225</sup> Cf. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann & Renate Köcher (eds.), *Allensbacher Jahrbuch der Demoskopie 1993-1997*, (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1997), p. 516.

efficacy of monuments as carriers of historical information and as supports of a coherent memory culture.

The political expediency of the Holocaust Monument in the parliamentary elections of September 1998 is symptomatic of issues of cultural policy in Germany since unification in 1990. These include the treatment of monuments erected under the German Democratic Republic by either destruction, alteration or integration, and countless new architectural constructions in Berlin prior to its reinstatement as the capital city in 1999.<sup>226</sup> In this context, Naumann's provocative criticism of the monument project was not based on architectural or historical criteria, but served to draw attention to the SPD's policy to reform the administration of culture in Germany. The proposal to nominate a state minister for cultural affairs within the federal government (previously unheard of in the Federal Republic, where culture had traditionally been the responsibility of local government) pointed towards an authoritative national alternative to the previous federal cultural policy. Naumann's decisive rejection of the monument and simultaneous approval of the reconstruction of the Hohenzollern palace in Berlin supposed an end of intractable debates over national symbols such as the Holocaust Monument, which had regularly spurred conflict between local and central governments.<sup>227</sup>

The Holocaust Monument was further embroiled in political controversy in October 1998 when the writer Martin Walser, on receiving the Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels (Peace Prize of the German Book Trade), spoke out against the monument. Walser argued not only against the symbolic ritualisation of history, however, but also for the "normalisation" of the Federal Republic's memory culture, in which "Auschwitz" would no longer play a central role as a "Dauerpräsentation der Schande", "Einschüchterungsmittel", "Moralkeule" "Pflichtübung" or "Moralpistole" in the hands of "Meinungssoldaten".<sup>228</sup> Walser's sweeping polemic nevertheless had little to do with the monument, which here served as a "projection surface"<sup>229</sup> for moral and political arguments. By equating the historical event "Auschwitz" with the monumental medium of transmission in his plea to end the ritual "Dauerpräsentation" of the first and to renounce the second, Walser overlooked the distinction between the function of aesthetic media and their alleged moral messages. Social memory is not directly sustained by or dependent upon the physical

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<sup>226</sup> Cf. Klaus von Beyme, *Hauptstadtssuche*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1991, pp. 77-111.

<sup>227</sup> Jens Jessen, "Eine Frage der Hauptstadt", *Berliner Zeitung*, 27.8.98, p. 9.

<sup>228</sup> Martin Walser, "Erfahrungen beim Verfassen einer Sonntagsrede", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 12.10.98, p. 10.

<sup>229</sup> "Projektionsfläche": Moshe Zuckermann, "Perspektiven der Holocaust-Rezeption in Israel und Deutschland", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 14, 1998, pp. 19-29, p. 29.

presence of a monument. As Winfried Speitkamp demonstrates, the destruction of monuments is not an expression of a society's desire to eliminate memory.<sup>230</sup> Likewise, the construction of new monuments does not guarantee the maintenance of social memory. The relation between the aesthetic presence of monuments and social memory is not causal but subject to the relatively arbitrary play of public and political interests, which constitute the social context in which the monument emerges. However, many participants in the debate, including advocates of the monument such as Lea Rosh and Eberhard Jäckel, shared the "realist" and moralistic arguments of Walser by *equating* the monument with the continuing primacy of the genocide in German memory culture.

The political instrumentalisation of the Holocaust Monument may be understood not in moral terms, advocated by Walser, but in relation to the public negotiation of the political culture of the new Federal Republic since 1989. The political context in which the monument emerged may in turn be understood in terms of a conflict of generations identifying with either the GDR or the "old" or "new" Federal Republics before and after the caesura of 1989/90. Calls by the association Perspektive Berlin for a "single" monument representing "eine Verpflichtung für alle Deutschen in Ost und West"<sup>231</sup> not only anticipated the actual unification of Germany in 1989, but defined the Holocaust Monument as a historical symbol with which citizens of both former German states, as well as younger members of the new state, could identify.

If built according to the intentions of its organisers, the Holocaust Monument would represent a state gesture intended to reassert the memory of one of the primary symbolic foundations or "codes"<sup>232</sup> of the "old" Federal Republic as a common code of the "new" Federal Republic.<sup>233</sup> In the words of Reinhard Rürup, it was designed so that "man sich auch im vereinigten Deutschland der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit bewußt bleibt".<sup>234</sup> In its early stages, this monument was thus defended by the last surviving generation of witnesses of the Second World War, including Willi Brandt, Günter Grass, Walter Jens and Rürup, as a symbolic compensation for the symbolic origins of the new state in 1989/90. The events of 1989/90

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<sup>230</sup> Winfried Speitkamp (ed.), "Denkmalsturz und Symbolkonflikt in der modernen Geschichte", in *Denkmalsturz. Zur Konfliktgeschichte politischer Symbolik*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997, pp. 5-21, p. 18.

<sup>231</sup> Perspektive Berlin, "Aufruf", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 30.1.89, p. 4.

<sup>232</sup> Bernhard Giesen, *Die Intellektuellen und die Nation*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993, p. 237.

<sup>233</sup> A gesture which would overshadow the German Democratic Republic's positive self-legitimation as an "anti-fascist" state. Cf. Jürgen Kocka, "Geteilte Erinnerungen. Zweierlei Geschichtsbewußtsein im vereinten Deutschland", *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* 1, 1998, pp. 104-111.

<sup>234</sup> Reinhard Rürup, "Lebendige Erinnerungskultur in der Demokratie: Gedanken und Erwartungen" (Enquete-Kommission des Deutschen Bundestages, Berlin, 10.11.97), p. 5.

displaced the most memorable historical and political origins of the Federal Republic from 1945 and 1949 to 1989 and 1990 respectively (corresponding to historical and constitutional caesuras), such that the origin of the "new" Federal Republic from 1989/90, symbolised by commemorations of 9 November, 3 October, and new memorials of the Berlin Wall (1998) and the 17 June uprisings in East Berlin (1999), partially occluded the former origins of 1945/49. The Holocaust Monument may therefore be interpreted as a means of systematically integrating the memory of the National Socialist dictatorship culminating in the rupture of 1945 into the more recent memory of the Communist dictatorship of the GDR culminating in the rupture of 1989, in order to prevent the historical origin of the "new" Federal Republic in 1989 from entirely displacing the previous historical origin of 1945. In this way, the generation of German citizens whose strongest historical memory or emotional attachment is 1989 rather than 1945 would be offered an opportunity of incorporating both 1945 *and* 1989 into their personal archive of historical memories. Of course, it is unlikely that a single monument could symbolically bridge this complex generational gap, but it is possible that unconscious desire for the official integration and continuity of memory of the genocide motivated many people to participate in this ten-year long debate, and that the debate itself contributed positively to a process of symbolically integrating disparate generations and societies of both Germanys.<sup>235</sup>

#### *D. "National Consensus" on the Basis of Art?*

Over ten years after the inception of the project in 1988 and following the competitions of 1995 and 1997, in which over 500 official monuments were submitted and several more alternative projects devised, no satisfactory decision had been reached. I would suggest two reasons why this is so.

1. The complexity of the means available to reach a decision. There were several purely structural political reasons why neither of the competitions led to a satisfactory decision. First, the multiple institutions involved in the decision-making process, including the three commissioning bodies and sponsors - the Berlin Senate, Bundestag committee and association - made it difficult to reach a unanimous agreement. Second, the large number (over 500) of competition entries. Third, the inconclusive and open nature of the competitions, which both led to joint first prizes and

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<sup>235</sup> Compare the analyses of generational structures of eastern and western Germany by Dieter Geulen, *Politische Sozialisation in der DDR. Autobiographische Gruppengespräche mit Angehörigen der Intelligenz*, Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 1998; and Bernhard Giesen, *Die Intellektuellen und die Nation. Eine deutsche Achsenzeit*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993, (see pp. 236-255).

exhibitions and provoked irreconcilable opinions in conferences and in the media. Fourth, the controversial intervention of Helmut Kohl in the cancellation of the first competition and in the selection of the model by Eisenman and Serra in the second competition, which rekindled controversy over the chancellor's somewhat autocratic influence over the new design and reinauguration of the Neue Wache monument in 1993.<sup>236</sup>

2. The failure to achieve consensus over the Holocaust Monument in spite of the common motifs of proposals submitted in 1995 and 1997 may be imputed to the prodigious number of usages prescribed by the models for individuals and the state, but also to the problematic principle of constructing a "central", "national" symbol. The conditions of the campaign and issues of debate suggest that the failure to reach consensus over the Holocaust Monument was partly due to the coercive nature of the very demand for consensus. The call for a central national monument in the initial petitions, in competition instructions, and in discussions following the annulment of the first competition in 1995 created an irreconcilable discrepancy between the expected political *conditions* and the aesthetic *medium* required to realise these conditions. Can the appeal for such a monument be fulfilled in a single site? Although the architectural competitions focused public attention on the specific question of form, the root of the controversy in fact lay in the social, political and moral presuppositions of the monument. Resistance to the project was triggered not only by the inadequacy of the aesthetic medium in relation to the subject matter, not because the technical means to "represent" genocide realistically had not been mastered, therefore, but (i) because the reduction of a historical event which exceeds our imagination to a single, largely abstract, form without documentary evidence breaks a historiographical taboo, entailing a disregard for historical detail which could foster relativism,<sup>237</sup> both in the interpretation and public usage of the monument; (ii) because the political conditions of centrality and national representativeness surpass the capacity of a *single* symbol to commemorate the genocide in *general*; (iii) because the conspicuous central site contradicted a longstanding policy of constructing decentral historical memorials in Germany. This project was hampered not only by the problem of form, therefore, but by doubts over the conditions required for a national symbol.

Calls for consensus did not feature in petitions at the start of the campaign in 1989, but six years later in reaction to controversy following the first architectural competition in 1995, when Chancellor Kohl's intervention halted the plan to build the monument designed by Christine

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<sup>236</sup> Official title: "Zentrale Gedenkstätte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland", dedicated "Den Opfern von Krieg und Gewaltherrschaft".

Jackob-Marks on the grounds that too little consensus had been established.<sup>238</sup> In May 1996, the Bundestag announced a series of major conferences for early 1997 devoted to the question of how to achieve social consensus on the basis of the monument. Among the ten speakers at the Bundestag debate of 1996, six explicitly pleaded for broad social consensus. However, the very insistence on consensus exacerbated debate over how to establish it. By calling for consensus without identifying how to realise it in a monument, members of parliament aggravated the discrepancy between the stringent political conditions and artistic monumental means for fulfilling them.<sup>239</sup> Likewise, although consensus became the single most consistent condition for the realisation of the monument, no participants defined the precise procedure by which consensus could be built. Dispute occurred at three levels - over the most suitable form and site of the monument, the very necessity of a central national monument, and the appropriate political means required to secure a decision on behalf of the jury, joint organisers (Bundestag committee, Berlin Senate and association), the chancellor, parliament, intellectuals or by direct public consent. In other words, three types of consensus were sought over the questions of *what* to build, *whether* it should be built, and *how* to reach a decision. And the fact that the debate focused largely on the first question of form reflects the unique political legitimacy accorded to art, as well as a reluctance to involve the state in the decision-making process. Paradoxically, the fixation of political representatives on the necessity for the consent of as large a portion of society as possible<sup>240</sup> supposed the voluntary elimination of political mechanisms in the choice of a monumental form - a call for a type of plebiscite or direct democracy over the unorthodox issue of *aesthetic form!* The observations of the journalist Bernhard Schulz reflect how this project for an artistic monument became the focus of a political dilemma, where a single object was called upon to embody an entire society's relation to its complex history: "ob ein Kunstwerk all die Bedeutungen mitteilen und zugleich all die Mißverständnisse vermeiden kann, die mit dem Vorhaben so unentwirrbar verknüpft werden. [...] Unüberwindlich scheint mittlerweile die Schwierigkeit, mit einem Denkmal in zeitgenössischer Formensprache eine eindeutige und allgemeinverständliche Aussage zu

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<sup>237</sup> Cf. Saul Friedländer (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation. Nazism and the 'Final Solution'*, Cambridge Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 6ff.

<sup>238</sup> Cf. "Kanzler Kohl lehnt Berliner Entwurf ab", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 1.7.95, p. 1.

<sup>239</sup> Cf. *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages. Stenographischer Bericht - 13. Wahlperiode - 104. Sitzung*: in particular the statements of Volker Beck, Peter Conradi, Ludwig Elm, Anton Pfeifer, Peter Radunski and Rupert Scholz; cf. Peter Conradi's appeal for consensus over "ein Denkmal des deutschen Volkes" to be achieved "in einer breiten öffentlichen Diskussion": open letter to participants in the first colloquium, 10.1.97 (unpublished).

<sup>240</sup> Expressed by Ludwig Elm and Anton Pfeifer in the Bundestag debate of 9 May 1996.

treffen."<sup>241</sup> The organisers' plans to involve the public in the process of selecting a design by means of competitions, conferences and media debates failed due to the nature of the prescribed monument, where a single site and form referring to the genocide in general were expected to fulfil a "nationale Aufgabe"<sup>242</sup> as the "Kern unseres Selbstverständnisses als Nation".<sup>243</sup>

These plans also failed because consensus was sought first and essentially in the monumental form, without previously establishing whether the public consented to the more fundamental issues of whether to build such a monument and how to reach a decision. Petitions and briefings had dictated conditions for a monument without discussing other types of commemoration. Moreover, the insistence on establishing broad social consensus over the sculptural form of the monument and the abrupt intervention of the chancellor delayed the implementation of other decision-making processes such as parliament. In terms of political theory, applying categories established by Gerhard Lehbruch, for example, we may identify three types of consensus which would have facilitated the construction of the monument according to the terms of the petitions and briefings to artists and architects. One reason why no common decision was reached following the competitions is that direct national consensus over a single central monument as described above would have approached *authoritarian* consensus.<sup>244</sup> Other forms of consensus - indispensable prerequisites for establishing rules by which to proceed, but which were neglected in all but the final phase of the debate - were *issue* consensus regarding the necessity of such a monument, and *fundamental* or *procedural* consensus regarding the mechanisms required to reach a decision.<sup>245</sup>

Only during the final stage of the debate were decision-making processes discussed openly, including the legitimacy of the various political institutions available to reach a decision beyond direct public consent over monumental form. Where the monument alone appeared to offer no reliable foundation for agreement in spite of conferences and exhibitions facilitating public participation, alternative forms of state authority were taken into consideration and implemented. When Chancellor Kohl's decision to cancel the competition in 1995 and select the model by Peter Eisenman and Richard Serra in 1998 were dismissed as autocratic, alternative appeals were made

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<sup>241</sup> Bernard Schulz, "Strittiges Mahnmal", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 23.3.98, p. 1.

<sup>242</sup> Peter Radunski, in *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages. Stenographischer Bericht - 13. Wahlperiode - 104. Sitzung*, p. 9076.

<sup>243</sup> Anton Pfeifer, *idem.*, p. 9071.

<sup>244</sup> Cf. Gerhard Lehbruch, "Strukturen ideologischer Konflikte bei Parteienwettbewerb", *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 10, 1969, pp. 285-313, p. 291f.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*

for a direct parliamentary ballot on the issue.<sup>246</sup> Finally, the official appointment of Naumann as the Federal Cultural Representative (*Bundeskulturbeauftragter*) of the newly elected government in September 1998, whose status was later muted by decree to State Minister for Culture in the Chancellor's Office (*Staatsminister für Kultur im Kanzleramt*) introduced a new platform for cultural representation comparable to the French Minister of Culture and British Minister of Heritage.

The complex political function of art prevented a decision over the Holocaust Monument even when organisers began to negotiate new methods of institutional decision-making beyond the competition procedure. Following inconclusive attempts to implement a plebiscitary decision by inviting the public to participate via exhibitions, conferences, public hearings and extensive press coverage, Bundestag MPs were called to vote on four motions which precluded any discussion of aesthetics. The challenge of resolving the incongruous relation between politics and art posed from 1998 by this project for a *national monument* therefore remained unresolved throughout the debate. Characteristic of this persistent dilemma were remarks by Volker Beck and Wolfgang Gerhardt in the debate of 25 June 1999. Both MPs questioned the legitimacy of the Bundestag to favour the inclusion of an information centre in the monument. Beck suggested that a monument is democratic only if "open", while Gerhardt argued that supplementary documentation would effectively neutralise both the artistic expressiveness of the field of steles and violate the principal criterion of the petitions and competition, designed specifically to select a monument.

The failure of the quest to select a purely "artistic" monument void of rhetorical aids is one reason why the proposal by the theologian Richard Schröder to erect a monument dispensing with aesthetic form and serving merely as a support of the inscription "Du sollst nicht morden" was perceived as a fitting response to an apparently irresolvable debate over sculptural form. However, by displacing the object of dispute from plastic form to rhetoric, and by transferring the dedication from Jewish victims to a universal claim contained in the fifth commandment, Schröder's proposal also invalidated the premises of the competitions and petitions, which had called for a monument dedicated specifically to the "murdered Jews of Europe". If realised, this model would have displaced the signifying function of the monument from sculptural form to its inscription, from an aesthetic to a rhetoric form of commemoration. Neither of these solutions was favoured by members of parliament in June 1999. Eisenman's purely abstract solution left the signification of

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<sup>246</sup> Among the first advocates of parliamentary intervention was the historian Johannes Willms. Cf. Willms, "Das leere Machtwort", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 10/11.6.98, p. 15.

the monument open to relative interpretations of history, whereas the rhetorical precision of Schröder's model divided the public over the aptness of its meaning. The inscription was criticised for being too general to evoke the genocide against Jews, because it evoked a false affinity between Christianity and Judaism, and because the Hebrew lettering would be more readable for descendants of victims or else have a purely decorative function for people unable to read Hebrew. The final decision to complement Eisenman's model with an information centre therefore had the advantage of compensating the aesthetic medium *of* history with pedagogical information *about* history and about other memorials on authentic historic sites. Information is not fixed in stone or subject to multiple interpretations, but can be modified over time and thus controlled by the foundation in collaboration with scientific advisers.<sup>247</sup>

The challenge to select an appropriate form of monument was therefore skirted. The information centre, somewhat like an institutional guardhouse, will offer the public an intellectual access to the monument and provide pedagogical orientation beyond the scope of the monument. Social consensus was therefore not achieved directly over the issue of the Holocaust Monument but on the basis of a complex combination of petitions, media debate, competitions, public forums, conferences and exhibitions, followed by the intervention of Chancellor Kohl and the State Minister for Culture, Michael Naumann, and with the aid of formal political apparatus, including the association, Berlin Senate and the Bundestag cultural committee. This monument is therefore less a representation of national self-understanding than an exercise in the political negotiation of a national symbol perceived as national.

The call for a central, national monument immediately raises the questions: "central to what?" and "who belongs to the nation?" The terms in which the debate over this monument were conducted reflect how advocates of the project attempted to define national self-understanding via a medium designed to support memory of the genocide beyond the lifespan of witnesses, a medium which operates alongside other types of literary and filmic media, museums and educational programmes. It is questionable, however, whether the construction of symbols corresponds effectively to the construction of a society's "self-understanding". Such a premise may only be fulfilled in the unlikely event that the relation between memories harboured by individual citizens and symbols characteristic of an institutionalised memory culture is directly proportional.

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<sup>247</sup> Early parliamentary negotiations proposed a foundation or "Stiftung zur Errichtung eines Denkmals für die ermordeten Juden Europas" comprising an executive council and advisory council composed of representatives from other Berlin memorials, the Central Council of Jews, Holocaust victim groups and other specialists. Cf. Moritz Müller-Wirth, "Mahnmal-Stiftung nimmt Gestalt an", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 8.7.99, p. 4.

In moral terms, the attempt to equip the nation with a central symbol of an emotional bond derived from a sense of collective guilt could foster a degree of complacency by the mere fact that it subsumes this emotional, albeit problematical, attachment to the past to the construction of a national common bond in the present. Several critics expressed doubts about the Holocaust Monument in these terms. Eike Geisel's deliberately provocative claim that "even dead Jews may serve to bind the national collective"<sup>248</sup> echoed widespread critiques of the Holocaust Monument as a form of "alibi" which "delegates"<sup>249</sup> memory to objects, such that the significance of the remembered events is subordinate to the contemporary expediency of commemoration. Monuments are therefore a form of social convention which inevitably historicise events by rendering them in a mode common to all other monumentalised events of different historical periods. Their inherent aesthetic, ornamental value and usage as urban landmarks, and their traditionally conventional function, established in the nineteenth century<sup>250</sup> as foci of *positive* identification, even makes them inherently suspect as a means to acknowledge the historical legacy of the genocide against Jews.

These doubts, and the failure of the competitions to culminate in a clear decision over what form and whether to build the monument, underscored its social undesirability. The project was too big - both physically, as if a big crime is compensated by a big monument, and emotionally, bordering on pathos. During the debate, this national monument acquired a status as an absolute, if not as *the* national monument for all time. It reflects an ideal holistic notion of nationhood which cannot accommodate the historical complexity of its theme, and which only detailed documentation can convey. When Walter Jens publicly opposed the project in February 1998 by asking the question "It is easy to talk about the death of millions - but how did Selma Kohn go into the gas?"<sup>251</sup> he highlighted an essential incongruity between history and its medium, between the facts of historical experience and the ideal, ideological function imposed on this single, allegedly national monument.

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<sup>248</sup> Eike Geisel, "Lebenshilfe von toten Juden", *Junge Welt*, 14.5.94.

<sup>249</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the discourse of "delegation" in relation to national monuments, see Chapter III, section C. 2.

<sup>250</sup> Cf. Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 8.

<sup>251</sup> Walter Jens, "In letzter Minute", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 7.2.98, p. 33.