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By

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INTRODUCTION

On July 16, 1942, French police arrested Lazare Pytkowicz and his family at their home and transported them to the Vélodrome d’Hiver (Vél d’Hiv), an indoor cycling stadium in Paris. The orders for these arrests came on behalf of the Vichy regime and they were directed towards foreign French Jews. On the eve of what would be known as the largest roundup of Jews in France, sympathetic organizations distributed cautionary leaflets within large Jewish neighborhoods warning that some type of operation may occur. Pytkowicz, however, never thought that French authorities would carry out a mass deportation against its citizens. The next day the Pytkowicz family was forcibly taken to the Vél d’Hiv and, within eighteen hours after the start of the roundups, over 13,000 Jewish citizens crammed into the stadium. Lazare Pytkowicz witnessed horrifying and chaotic scenes inside the Vél d’Hiv. Those expecting the inevitable deportation to camps in the east leaped to their death below from the high stands. Pregnant women, overcome with stress, prematurely gave birth. Panicked children screamed to find their families and distraught parents frantically searched for their loved ones. Fearing the worst, Pytkowicz’s mother saw an opportunity for her son to escape and she begged him to take it. He said goodbye to his family for the last time and became one of the handful of Jews to survive the Vél d’Hiv roundups (referred to in French as “La Rafle du Vél d’Hiv”).

Pytkowicz’s testimony was published in Le Monde on 17 May 1987 and this article coincided with a larger movement to remember the Holocaust in France. His desire to bear

witness to these events was in reaction to increased knowledge of Vichy’s role in the organization and implementation of the crimes against Jewish citizens during the war. Until the 1960s, few scholarly works existed regarding the nation’s role in such atrocities. Instead, most narratives subscribed to the Gaullist myth that exalted a united resistance movement and silenced memories, such as the Vél d’Hiv roundups, that might tarnish this triumphant image of France. In creating this type of legend, de Gaulle hoped to unite the divided nation after the war and solidify the Resistance, as well as himself, as the logical successor of the Third Republic (1870-1940). Nearly twenty years after the creation of this narrative, historians and scholars alike began to uncover another image of Vichy that challenged de Gaulle’s myth. As a result of this new awareness, the site on which the Vél d’Hiv roundups occurred moved from a place of obscurity and into the spotlight.

The historiography regarding Vichy, the French State’s role in the Holocaust, and the memory of these events after the end of the Second World War in France is rather extensive. Still, scholars tend to agree that the political turmoil that would culminate in the establishment of the Vichy regime began during the interwar period. In the 1930s, the country was divided along political lines and on the verge of what some historians would call a civil war. Adding fuel to

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this fire, the German Army overtook the country in a mere six weeks. This shocked not only Frenchmen, but world leaders alike. Quickly after this defeat, Pétain established the collaborative Vichy government under the pretense that he was protecting the nation’s interests. As the war progressed, however, Vichy’s willingness to comply with Nazi doctrine grew, thus creating even deeper riffs within the France.\(^3\) After an Allied victory, this internal fragmentation prompted de Gaulle to create a nationalist myth centered on an exaggerated resistance movement in hopes of preventing further disintegration of the nation.

The scholarly works regarding the legacy of Vichy and this regime’s execution of state crimes can be divided into four time periods. From 1945 - 1970 scholars published monographs and journals which maintained the nationalist myth established by de Gaulle and his supporters. These sources focused heavily on the success of the Resistance and reinforced the unity of France. From 1970 - 1990, this historiography drastically changed and scholars focused on redefining and rewriting the history that had been accepted for over fifteen years. One of the most important historical writings to come out of this era was Robert Paxton’s *Vichy France*. Still considered to be a seminal work in the field, Paxton challenged the Gaullist myth and redefined the way historians studied France and the Second World War. The significance of these historiographical changes and the way in which they influenced the creation of the Vél d’Hiv monument will be discussed further in Chapter One.

As the 1990s approached, the historiography shifted to the memory of the occupation and how this past frequently haunted political debates in the postwar period. Notably, Henry Rousso’s monograph titled *The Vichy Syndrome* (1991) addressed the new obsession with the memory of the occupation. In his book, Rousso argued that the political tension in France,

embodied by the Vichy regime, “played an essential if not primary role in the difficulties that the people of France have faced in reconciling themselves to their history.”⁴ As a result, he claimed major post-war events can be seen “through the prism of Vichy.” In addition to Rousso’s work, The Claims of Memory (1999) by Caroline Wiedmer explored the way in which sites that commemorate the Vél d’Hiv roundups have evolved over time. Wiedmer argued that France has tried to “down-play the trauma inflicted on others by crafting the cracked figure of a hero from the shards of national defeat.”⁵ She suggests that the policies behind the creation of these memorials go beyond remembering the victims of the war, revealing instead issues deeply rooted in the present that speak to what it means to be German or French.⁶

Finally, studies published after 2000 focus more on the experiences of various groups in French society during the war and how these are woven together to create one narrative. One such example of this stems the difficulties the nation has faced in defining who made up the Résistance and who collaborated with Vichy. France: The Dark Years (2001) by Julian Jackson sought to highlight the fluidity of these two groups as a result of everyday life during the occupation. Jackson compiled a synthesis on the topic, incorporating multiple viewpoints on everything from the politics in Vichy, to the myth that surrounds the Résistance. Jackson’s monograph reminds historians that the history of France cannot be understood in separate compartments such as “Vichy,” “The Résistance,” or “Collaboration.” He argues that these


⁶ Ibid, 9-10.
groups existed in a dynamic relation to each other, so scholars should view them as such in order to paint a more accurate picture of the past.\textsuperscript{7}

Also published during this period, \textit{Divided Memory} (2012) by Olivier Wieviorka focuses on the evolution of policy regarding Vichy in the postwar period. In his study, Wieviorka illustrates how presidents utilized the memory of the occupation to influence their political strategies. Wieviorka argues that there are many factors that create memory, both on the political level and on the public level, and he points out the government did not always tell the truth in favor of keeping the peace. Similar to other scholars during this period, Wieviorka states that historians need to see that there are numerous memories and threads to this narrative that blend together to create one history.\textsuperscript{8} A particularly interesting section of Wieviorka’s work focuses on Mitterand’s presidency. Initially an official under Pétain who received the \textit{Françisque}, or Medal of Honor, for his service to the Vichy government, Mitterand eventually worked for the underground Communist Résistance and then became President of the Republic in the postwar period.\textsuperscript{9} In this way, Mitterand’s past is a perfect example of how collaborator or resistor were not black and white terms and he illustrates how, during the occupation, people often would blend into both.

In addition to understanding previous works regarding Vichy and the memory of the French state, it is also necessary to review how scholars have defined the gray areas of collaboration exemplified by Mitterrand’s political career. The term holds many different meanings and can refer to a number of different actions which occurred during the Second World

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{9} Ibid, 122-143.
\end{itemize}
War in France. While creating one singular definition of collaboration remains a difficult task, two historians have provided working definitions that help to clarify the differences within this nuanced subject. Notably, Vichy historian Stanley Hoffmann states that there are two types of collaboration, collaboration with Germany in order to safeguard French interests and collaborationism with the Nazis in which Frenchmen and women openly desired co-operation with the Germans.\textsuperscript{10} Additionally, Philippe Burrin, historian of political ideologies during the Second World War, expands on Hoffmann’s definition and utilizes the term accommodation rather than collaboration. Burrin states that there was “forced accommodation” in which French citizens were required to work with the Germans in order to maintain services as a result of the occupation, “voluntary accommodation” in which the French took initiatives to comply with Nazi orders for either professional or personal reasons, and “political accommodation” in which certain French officials subscribed to Nazi ideology.\textsuperscript{11} For this purpose of this study, the term collaboration will be used to discuss French complicity in the Holocaust, especially those involved in willingly organizing and implementing the Vél d’Hiv roundups.

Building on the work of these historians, this thesis complicates the existing historiography by placing the Vél d’Hiv roundups and the subsequent challenges in commemorating this event into the larger narrative of France’s struggle to come to terms with the past. As illustrated by scholarly literature on France and the Second World War, many of these authors focus on bigger themes of memory or look at the Vél d’Hiv roundups as a case study to compare with the way other nations have confronted their difficult histories. This study, however, looks at the way in which cultural and political events prior to the 1990s influenced


France in the process of memorializing the past and highlighted the Vél d'Hiv roundups as the symbol for French involvement in the Holocaust. Thus this thesis argues that by bringing issues of collaboration to the forefront of French public discourse, the public debates and conflicts that arose throughout the postwar period regarding the memory of Vichy pushed the site of the Vél d'Hiv into the spotlight and prompted the memory of this event to play an integral role in the way France redefined its past and implemented policies of memorialization for the future.

In order to illustrate this process, this thesis utilizes a variety of sources to examine the way in which changes in French historiography influenced the evolution of the Vél d'Hiv monument, and in turn, how this new knowledge became available to French citizens. In Chapter One, contemporary scholarly works are analyzed to uncover how intellectuals challenged the Gaullist myth. In addition to this, newspaper articles and reviews are also examined to illustrate the multiple reactions of French intellectuals to this new and emerging scholarship. Chapter Two closely examines the former physical site of the Vél d’Hiv stadium, the new memorial site created in 1993, newspaper articles referencing annual commemorations of the event, and presidential speeches regarding French complicity in the Holocaust to emphasize the way in which social memory and historical memory meshed together to create a new narrative. Finally, Chapter Three utilizes media, such as novels and film, as well as responses to these materials to show how the changes to the national narrative made in the previous chapters trickled down to the public level and influenced the way French citizens learned about the Holocaust, collaboration and, the Second World War.

This project is situated at the intersection of theories on social and historical memory as well as studies of reconciliation. In order to understand how societies create memory, Maurice Halbwachs proposes a theory of social memory that suggests individuals create and maintain
memories based on their social environment. He argues that there are as many collective memories as there are groups and institutions in society and these individuals maintain their memories through the support of dominant groups within a given society.\textsuperscript{12} Furthermore, Halbwachs argues that present generations become aware of their identity by juxtaposing their present situations to the constructed past.\textsuperscript{13} Thus, for Halbwachs, the revision of history occurs in light of the present and within an overarching social framework.

Pierre Nora adds to this theory by making a distinction between the social memory proposed by Halbwachs and historical memory created through sites of memory. Nora states that “real memory,” or social memory, is “vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation,” and history is a discipline propelled by change through which societies organize the past. He states that while memory is “susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived,” history constantly calls for analysis and criticism.\textsuperscript{14} This process of analysis and criticism propels history and illustrates that a society “no longer identifies with a memory’s heritage” once a society sets out to recreate the past. For Nora, the rewriting of history allows groups to construct and define their identity and he believes this process of using memory to create history occurs at what he calls “lieux de mémoire,” or sites of memory.\textsuperscript{15} Here, places, dates, people, and memorials play an integral role in maintaining memory and creating connections to the past. Nora argues that these sites are places “where memory crystallizes and secretes itself… where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn -- but… where a sense of historical


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, 24.


\textsuperscript{15} Ibid 9-15.
continuity persists.” Thus for Nora, historical memory challenges notions of social memory through these commemorative sites.

These two types of memory fit within the history of the Vél d’Hiv in the postwar period and this thesis can been seen as a case study of the ways in which Nora’s sites of memory and Halbwachs’ social memory compete against each other in a process of appropriation and contestation that ultimately revised the historical narrative on this subject. The image of the Resistance and the Gaullist narrative that were created and maintained during the immediate postwar period is an example Halbwachs’ social memory that the vast majority of French citizens supported after the war. Furthermore, the changes to this historiography that took place during the late 1960s and early 1970s are examples of Halbwachs’ argument that generations define themselves in opposition to past historical narratives. Here, Nora’s theory regarding sites of memory begins to compete with the social memory embodied by the Resistance. As a result, the site of the Vél d’Hiv roundups gained significance as it was connected to not only the event itself, but also the postwar desire to silence this past.

In addition to memory studies, theories of reconciliation are also useful to understand the similar paths that societies take in coming to terms with the past. According to Priscilla B. Hayner, reconciliation “implies building or rebuilding relationships today that are not haunted by the conflicts and hatreds of yesterday.” In order to achieve this, she argues that a state must

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16 Ibid, 15.

17 This process is described by Alon Confino in “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems and Methods.” According to Confino, memory is a useful tool that societies use to make connections between the cultural, the social, and the political. He argues that the study of memory focuses on the ways in which people choose how to construct the past.


follow certain steps to take responsibility for its wrongdoings. She states that there must be an end to violence or the threat of violence within the given society, the perpetrators of the crime or civilian representatives must acknowledge these wrongdoings and offer reparations (a crucial step in creating a shared understanding of the past), the state must “bind forces” between the two opposing parties in order to create links of commonalities, structural inequalities between the victims and the perpetrators must be addressed on the part of the state, and societies need to give reconciliation time to allow groups to heal.\textsuperscript{19} Hayner states that reconciliation depends on “factors and dynamics that cannot be predicted or controlled,” thus it may take a nation decades before they “grapple with the weight of their past.”\textsuperscript{20} The way in which the nation has dealt with the history of the Vél d’Hiv roundups coincides with this model presented by Hayner and it is evident that the passage of time has been a key factor for France as a nation to address their complicity in the organization and implementation of crimes against French foreign Jews during the Second World War.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter One, titled “Breaking the Gaullist Myth: Changes to French Historiography and Trials for Crimes against Humanity” explores the conflicts that arose between a new generation of scholars and the generation of French citizens who had experienced the Second World War as new knowledge regarding collaboration and French involvement in the Holocaust became available through new studies on Vichy and trials for crimes against humanity. Chapter Two, titled, “Monumental History: the Vél d’Hiv and the Politics of Commemoration” explores the debates that arose between scholars and political leaders as the site and commemorative practices related to the Vél d’Hiv changed during the

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, 163.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 163-165.
1990s. Chapter Three titled, “Looking towards the Future: Cultural Interpretations of Vél d’Hiv Roundups” analyses the way authors and directors were influenced by the duty to remember, which stemmed from the changing policies of memorialization in the 1990s, to create materials for the general public that would allow them to access this turbulent history regarding the memory of the occupation and the Vél d’Hiv roundups. This thesis concludes with an assessment of the current commemorative sites of the Vél d’Hiv and suggestions for how this location can be further utilized to educate the nation about the past and address issues of discrimination and persecution in the present.
CHAPTER I

BREAKING THE GAULLIST MYTH: CHANGES TO FRENCH HISTORIOGRAPHY AND TRIALS FOR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

Introduction

The postwar myth proposed by de Gaulle first met challenges in the mid-1960s as political and cultural events both in France and around the globe threatened to dismantle this national narrative. In Israel, the onset of the Six Day War prompted a revival of Holocaust memories around the world, including testimonials of such events as the Vél d’Hiv roundups in France. In addition to this, the May 1968 student riots saw a generation of young adults challenging contemporary society in France. Their desire to change what they saw as a conservative and oppressive Republic prompted a revision of the Gaullist myth which was established and supported by their parents and political leaders who had experienced the Second World War. As a result of these changes, scholars produced new materials that directly confronted the narrative which exalted the Resistance movement and downplayed collaboration. This new knowledge was then confirmed and applied in trials against former Nazi and Vichy leaders for their role in the Holocaust. This chapter argues that the changes to historiography and the trials for crimes against humanity propelled the reconstruction of the national narrative during this time period by eliciting public debates regarding the memory of the Vichy regime.
Postwar Narratives

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, historiographical changes regarding the Vichy regime and French collaboration influenced the way in which scholars and intellectuals approached the topic of France during the Second World War. During the immediate postwar period scholarly work regarding the occupation and Vichy were limited and, of those narratives produced, two themes were common. First, resistance fighters often published their own journals or testimonies regarding the war to reinforce the idea that France adamantly fought against the occupation. One example of this type of publication comes from Agnès Humbert. In her diary titled *Résistance: A Frenchwoman's Journal of the War* (1946), Humbert reflects on her time as an underground resistance leader working with other resistors to publish liberation papers in Paris. In her diary, she discusses the betrayal of her group to the Gestapo, their eventual arrest, and their sentence to death. Humbert was able to escape execution, however, and instead she was transferred to German concentration camp where she worked as slave labor at the Phrix Rayon Factory until after the war. Throughout her writings, she frequently mentions how de Gaulle inspired her to begin her journey as a member of the Résistance and she evokes grand images of France when recounting why she continued to fight.21 After the war, testimonies like Humbert’s were popular as they praised those citizens who actively sought to end the Vichy regime and Nazi occupation.

In addition to personal accounts of the war, historical works that gave the Gaullist myth credibility and highlighted the success of the Resistance were also popular until the late 1960s. Robert Aron’s *The Vichy Regime* (1955) can be seen as an example of this type of work as it was the most widely accepted portrayal of the French State in the postwar period. In his monograph,

Aron proposed that there were in fact two sides to the Vichy government. He argued that Pétain intended to use the puppet government as a means to save France while Pierre Laval, Prime Minister of Vichy, wished to collaborate with the Nazis. In addition to defending Pétain’s honor, Aron’s work also coincides with the Resistance myth proposed by de Gaulle. He states, “With this kind of structure and with its variety of organizations, the Resistance was the real country which, little by little, grew up beside the legal country which was on its deathbed…”

According to this description of the Resistance, the network of resisters represented the true French nation who had remained loyal to the Republic throughout the war. Like many scholars during this period, Aron presented the war in black and white terms and he avoided addressing the gray areas of collaboration. For this reason, Aron’s work was widely successful during the immediate postwar period and his work remained the model for this subject until Paxton’s study in the 1970s.

Recreating the History of Vichy

Changes in French historiography which took place between the late 1960s and early 1980s occurred as a result of cultural and political changes around the globe. Notably, the Six Day War between Israel and neighboring countries in 1967 led to a reevaluation of Jewish identity across the globe. Prompted by the fear that the Jewish state might disappear, there was a new wave of French Jewish citizens who wanted to discuss their war experiences, including the fate of those Jews who were victims of the Vél d’Hiv roundups. According to historian Joan B. Wolf, this event marked the beginning of “a certain Holocaust consciousness in French public

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23 Ibid, 433.
In addition to the Six Day War, the May 1968 student protests prompted many French citizens to question the legitimacy of the Republic. Angered by the oppressive nature of conservative political leaders as well as the declining standards of French Universities, students and young adults challenged existing societal norms throughout France. This sentiment culminated during May 1968 in the form of violent student protests which swept through Paris. During these riots, protestors utilized slogans such as “Fascists shall not pass,” “CRS [riot control forces] equals SS,” and “We are all German Jews” to undermine those in power who had experienced the Second World War. For students at the time, de Gaulle, President Pompidou, and their supporters were the “heirs” to the Resistance and, in order to discredit their authority, these young adults wanted to expose the skeletons in their closets. Thus, the May 1968 student movement prompted a generation of intellectuals to re-evaluate the history of the Second World War in France.

In union with these ideas, the film *Le Chagrin et le Pitié*, released in 1969, challenged the Gaullist myth that had prevailed in France since 1945. Using interviews from Resistance leaders and former collaborators in Clermont-Ferrand, this documentary revealed the various ways in which many citizens of the small village collaborated with the Nazis during the war. According to historian Henry Rousso, the film sparked controversy because it was a “deliberate effort of demysticication on a vast scale.” Through their film, director Marcel Ophüls and producer André

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Harris, wanted to “shed light on the shadowy areas of history” and prompt French citizens to critically think about their past. In addition to challenging the historical narrative in France, Rousso pointed out that the film also exposed the age gap between the generation who fought during the war, who often had hostile responses to the documentary, and the younger age group who found answers to their questions of the past within the film. As a result of this bold film, French intellectuals took to popular newspapers to openly debate the merits of such a documentary. Thus, this public commentary created a dialogue between those who supported the film and those angered by its release which French society to begin altering the narrative regarding Vichy and collaboration.

One example of the public response to this film came from Pierre Vianssonponté, a political commentator for *Le Monde*. After the release of *Le Chagrin et le Pitié*, the O.R.T.F. (*Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française*), or the public television and radio agency in France, refused to air Ophüls’ documentary. Angered by this decision, Vianssonponté stated that *Le Chagrin et le Pitié* was “a striking image of the ‘dark years of France’” that reversed “the golden myth and jostles former ideas… making you want to cry out ‘Let the dead bury the dead.’” He argued that citizens should continue to boycott the O.R.T.F. because it will not air “one of the best evocations of contemporary French History filmed for the French” and was thus refusing to treat French citizens as adults. For these reasons, he claimed that French television’s role was neither to instruct nor to prompt reflection, but to put the nation to sleep. Similar to the

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31 Ibid.
student’s desires during the May 1968 events, *Le Chagrin et le Pitié* was an overt symbol to dismantle de Gaulle’s myth and bring this difficult period of French history into public debate.

In addition to *Le Chagrin et le Pitié*, Robert Paxton’s work *Vichy France*, published in English in 1972 and translated to French in 1973, affected French society in a similar way. Arguing against the Gaullist narrative supported by Aron, he stated that there was not a “double game” in Vichy where Pétain was innocent and Laval was the collaborator. He claimed that collaboration was actually a French concept, first proposed by Vichy and initially rejected by Hitler.\(^{32}\) In addition to these arguments, he also offered an analysis of the factors that led to the creation of the French State. Paxton stated that Vichy was established to obtain a favorable position in a new European empire led by the Nazis, to prevent further destruction and death similar to that of the First World War, and, what Paxton notes as most important, to prevent a Communist takeover in the absence of a French government and in the likelihood of a German victory.\(^{33}\)

While *Vichy France* was not the first to challenge Aron’s writing, Paxton’s work was the most direct and the most successful.\(^{34}\) For examples a decade after the publication of Paxton’s monograph, *Vichy France* sold over 58,000 copies\(^{35}\) and today scholars still cite *Vichy France*.


\(^{33}\) Ibid, 8-16.

\(^{34}\) See Stanley Hoffmann’s two articles “The Vichy Ciricle of French Conservatives” (1956) and “Self-Ensnared: Collaboration with Nazi Germany” (1968), as well as Eberhard Jäckel’s *La France dans l’Europe de Hitler* (1966).

as being instrumental in changing the way historians approached the subject.\textsuperscript{36} While Paxton’s work has certainly had a lasting legacy, the controversy in France which surrounded his analysis was crucial in prompting scholars and intellectuals to reconstruct the national narrative.

According to a review article, “Vérité et sévérité,” published in \textit{Le Monde}, French scholars often resorted to arguments that Paxton was from America and used German archives to discredit his study. Even though this reviewer of Paxton’s work believed that \textit{Vichy France} was a beneficial and informative analysis of the inner workings of the French State, the article illustrates how these issues frequently came up in other scholarly reviews.\textsuperscript{37}

In writing \textit{Vichy France}, Paxton was unable to utilize French material, since the archives were not yet open. Instead, he consulted German documents that focused on interactions between Nazi and Vichy officials during the occupation. Many French critics believed that these German sources were biased and could not accurately depict the nature of events which transpired during the early stages of the war. Paul Auphan, writer and former officer of the Vichy regime, used this point to argue against Paxton in a review published in \textit{Le Monde} titled “Un pamphlet pour justifier une opinion.” In this article, Auphan stated that while Paxton wanted to reconstruct what occurred in France between 1940 and 1944, the use of German sources to do this prevented him from being successful. Auphan argued that Paxton neglected to illustrate the ways in which


occupied France was in a position to always agree with the Nazis implying that the German sources had a significant bias that altered the reality of what happened during the war. Furthermore, Auphan stated that the choice to use German archives was offensive because Paxton claimed French sources produced after the war were created to disguise the truth.\textsuperscript{38}

In addition to the harsh criticism sources used in \textit{Vichy France}, French reviewers also rejected Paxton’s work was because of his nationality. Born in America, Paxton was interested in the creation of fascist states in the twentieth century and even though he was a highly acclaimed historian, French citizens used this fact to argue that he could not fully understand the way in which this traumatic event had affected their nation. Auphan also touched upon this point in his review for \textit{Le Monde} by stating that, \textit{Vichy France} was “not a book enameled in gaps and errors: it is a passionate presentation that seeks to twist a little piece of history in order to draw the American public against France.”\textsuperscript{39} Historian Paul Gillet also argued against Paxton on this point in his review of \textit{Vichy France}. He stated that Paxton, being an American, had no right to reveal the skeleton’s hidden in France’s closet and to reopen these national wounds. He also added that Paxton’s assessment of France was merciless and too severe. These harsh reviews of \textit{Vichy France} illustrate the depth with which the Gaullist myth had been ingrained within some French citizens, but they also opened a debate that encouraged other scholars to critically examine the past.

As the 1980s approached, scholarly work on Vichy shifted to the nation’s role in the Holocaust. \textit{Vichy France and the Jews} (1981) by Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton was one of the first studies to critically explore this topic and this monograph brought to light many


\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
of the atrocities committed against foreign Jews in France by the French State and citizens alike. In this monograph, Marrus and Paxton argued that antisemitism was inherent in France before the occupation and, unlike the prevailing idea at the time, many French citizens actually supported the persecution of foreign born French Jews because of their association with the failed Third Republic and the declining economic situation.\(^{40}\) Marrus and Paxton argue that this support stemmed from a unique form of French antisemitism that was a product of a xenophobia directed particularly toward foreign born Jews rather than a type of racism. For this reason, many French citizens blamed foreign born, or stateless Jews, for the failings of the nation at the start of the war. The authors even point out that this type of xenophobia was present in writings from citizens from all backgrounds, including Vichy officials, resistance leaders, and everyday citizens which captured how deep this notion had infiltrated French society.\(^{41}\)

The three scholarly works presented here, *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*, *Vichy France*, and *Vichy France and the Jews*, illustrate the way in which the historiography in France drastically changed between 1960 and 1980. Previously, histories regarding the occupation focused on the Resistance which ignored not only the way in which French citizens had collaborated with the Germans, but also avoided discussing the way in which the nation was responsible for the death of nearly a quarter of its Jewish population.\(^{42}\) In addition to this, French historiography frequently meshed the experiences of persecuted Resistance members and foreign Jews together, making it seems as though they were subjugated in the same way. While this was usually done in order to prove that the Resistance fighters had suffered dramatically during the war, the


\(^{41}\) Ibid, 31.

\(^{42}\) Ibid, 362.
experience of the majority of Jews in France and those who resisted were drastically different. Both Paxton and Marrus illustrate this point throughout the monograph by showing how foreign Jews were excluded from society and subjected to mass deportations. As this new knowledge of the “Dark Years” spread throughout France, scholars and citizens alike sought to hold former Nazi and Vichy leaders accountable for their actions.

**Trials for Crimes against Humanity**

As the historiography regarding Vichy changed and Jewish memory of the Second World War resurfaced, some individuals advocated for trials against former Vichy leaders who were responsible for collaborating with the Germans during the war. While initially cases against men like Klaus Barbie and Paul Touvier focused on crimes committed against the Resistance or the way in which the Catholic Church hid convicted collaborators after the war, they eventually revealed the role that France played in committing crimes against the Jewish population to the public. The cases of Jean Leguay and René Bousquet, which occurred later in this period of legal battles, specifically dealt with the role the individuals played in organizing the Vél d’Hiv roundups. The unforeseen death of both of these individuals before the end of their trials, however, left many French intellectuals with a desire to obtain closure and the memorialization of the Vél d’Hiv became a way for the nation to reconcile with the past.

The trials that took place in the 1980s and 1990s were different than the *épuration légale*, or legal purge, that occurred after the war. These first legal proceedings stemmed from de Gaulle’s need to reunify France after the collapse of the Vichy regime and to legitimize his authority as leader of the Republic. The postwar purges allowed de Gaulle to blame the occupation on a few select leaders in Vichy and cast the image of France as a nation of resistors. De Gaulle based this legal purge on the claim that Vichy was not a valid government and that
France was still at war with Germany. Since the leaders of Vichy acted on their own freewill to collaborate with the occupiers, they had knowingly chosen to betray France. He stressed that these men who had assisted the Germans would be treated justly and that they would go through an official legal process. After the war, those believed to have actively collaborated were arrested, interned at the Vél d’Hiv arena, and eventually tried before the High Court.

While de Gaulle argued these legal proceedings would achieve justice for the nation, they ultimately appeared to be nothing more than show trials. For example, out of 106 cases tried between the years of 1945 to 1949, sixty-three resulted in convictions, three in acquittals, and forty in decisions not to pursue the case. Those who were convicted and not sentenced to death lost their civil rights, while out of the eighteen individuals sentenced to death, ten were reached in absentia, five were reduced (including Pétain’s), and three were carried out (Pierre Laval, Fernand de Brinon, and Joseph Darnand). For those convicted in absentia, the French government exerted little effort in tracking down the criminals. This would change, however, in the late 1960s as global laws regarding crimes against humanity were redefined.

According to French law, the penalties related to sentences given during the legal purge could only be carried out up to twenty years after their conviction. Fearing that former collaborators could emerge untouched as early as May 8, 1965, an international convention was held to discuss the matter. They determined that war crimes and crimes against humanity were now issues of international law and it was their duty to ensure that “humanity is forever safe

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43 Charles De Gaulle, War Memoirs of Charles de Gaulle, Unity, (Simon and Schuster, 1959), 244.
44 Weidmer, 75.
from the return of tyranny and Nazi cruelties.” Thus, if any nation refused to prosecute an individual as a result of their crimes committed during the war, it would be considered a breach of international law. As a result, French parliament unanimously voted to remove the time limit on charges in 1964 in accordance with this convention. Since the purges after the war focused on instances of collaboration, rather than crimes against humanity, this legal decision paved the way for former Nazi and Vichy leaders in France to stand trial for acts perpetrated against Jewish citizens. At the time, however, the French Republic never imaged that French State’s role in the implementation of the Final Solution would come to light.

**Antisemitism and the French State**

Antisemitic legislation in Vichy was created early in the occupation. On 22 July 1940, just twelve days after Philippe Pétain assumed control, Vichy enacted a law that established a commission to review naturalization record since 1927 and strip all those deemed “undesirable” of their French citizenship. From this legislation, 15,000 emigrants lost their citizenship, including 6,000 Jews. Legislation such as this was created on behalf of Vichy and in response to Nazis policies that pressured Jews to emigrate out of Germany and into surrounding countries. In addition to this influx of Jewish immigrants, the goal of the German occupation was to deplete France of all valuable resources thus exacerbating the nation’s competition for available goods. For this reason, historians Michael R. Marrus and Robert Paxton believe Vichy officials

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48 Ibid.


conducted “a competitive or rival anti-Semitism” when compared to the Germans.51 This can be seen in the numerous pieces of legislation passed by the French State. For example, Vichy leaders created over four hundred “laws, amendments to laws, decrees, and police measures” that prevented foreign Jews from assimilating into French culture and society.52 One of the most important of these laws for the purpose of this study, passed on October 4, 1940, gave the French State the ability to intern foreign Jews in camps.53 This last decree legally allowed French police to organize and conduct the roundups of July 16th and 17th at the Vél d’Hiv.

As previously mentioned, the trials conducted during the postwar purges neglected former collaborator’s roles in the Holocaust, however, the passing of legislation in 1964 allowed these state crimes to become the focal point of the later legal proceedings. The first ordeal to address this new law of crimes against humanity began in the early 1970s against former Gestapo chief Klaus Barbie. Like most of the trials for crimes against humanity in France, the process of indicting Barbie was long and full of complications. Publically, the press focused on Barbie’s involvement with the arrest and death of Jean Moulin, a national Resistance hero, however in the court room, his trial revolved around his role in the arrest and murder of orphaned Jewish children from Izieu. In this way, Barbie’s case is important to note because it established a distinction between war crimes (those committed against the Resistance) and crimes against humanity (those committed against civilians). As a result of Barbie’s case, the memory of the Holocaust, which had been overshadowed by the Resistance for almost forty years, “finally

51 Ibid, 12.


53 Marrus and Paxton, Vichy France and the Jews, 4.
received the attention it was due" and this trial set the stage for the indictment of other Vichy officials involved in the Final Solution in France.

*The French State and the Vél d’Hiv Roundups*

The indictment of René Bousquet, former head of Vichy police, was a significant catalyst in the surge of events that occurred in the 1990s surrounding the Vél d’Hiv monument. According to Michael Curtis, René Bousquet was “the handsome, elegant, ambitious, insincere careerist.” Bousquet was born into a middle class family in Montauban and his father was a radical-socialist lawyer. Before the war, Bousquet worked in the prefectoral body of France and he became chief of staff for the local prefect of Tarn-et-Garonne at the age of twenty. His desire to climb the career ladder resulted in his eventual appointment to be the regional prefect of Champagne by Pétain shortly after the start of the war.

According to Bousquet, he wanted to use his position as a high ranking Vichy official to ensure that the sovereignty of France was upheld, and he firmly believed that the concept of collaboration proposed by Pétain would allow the French State to do this. His position, however, required him to repress communist activities and hand over conspirators to the police for execution. Here, the man supposedly standing up for French national sovereignty was allowing fellow Frenchmen to die at the hands of the Germans. Despite this, Bousquet continued to prove himself through his dedication to his position and he was again promoted to head of the national police in April 1942 by Pierre Laval. While Bousquet claimed these efforts were sacrifices to subdue the right-wing extremists, his new job title required him to collaborate more extensively

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54 Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, 205.

with the Germans to maintain order and implement the exclusion, arrest, internment, and deportation of Jews.

The crimes for which Bousquet would later face charges began to take form three weeks after he assumed his new position with the police. Seeing failure on the Eastern Front, Hitler turned to Western Europe and sought to find a solution to the Jewish question. On January 1942, Nazi officials found the answer for the destruction of European Jewry at the Wannsee Conference where these leading statesmen worked out the details for the implementation of mass genocide. Following this decision to exterminate the Jewish race, French leaders found themselves under increased pressure from the Nazis to organize and participate in deportations of French Jews to the east. Bousquet used this to his advantage in an attempt to acquire autonomy for France. During his first days in office, he met with Reinhard Heydrich (the head of the Reich Security Office), Karl Oberg (head of German Police), Helmut Knochen (leader of the Security Police), and Heinrich Himmler (head of the Nazi SS) to discuss the deportation of Jews from France. Together the French police and the Germans would “struggle against the common enemy, and would act as independent executors of orders.” Over the next few weeks, Bousquet negotiated with the Germans regarding how these deportations would be carried out. On July 2, 1942, they finally agreed that the French police would act autonomously in deporting Jews first from the occupied zone and then later the unoccupied zone. In return for France’s collaboration, the Germans agreed to recognize Vichy’s independence in these actions and increase their police force. To Bousquet, this recognition of independence was a great achievement.

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56 Ibid, 294-295.
57 Ibid, 295.
Initially, Vichy officials proposed to deport Jewish women between the ages of fifteen and fifty-five and males between the ages of fifteen and sixty during these roundups. René Bousquet, Secretary General of Vichy police, wanted to avoid the deportation of native French Jews, so he requested that only stateless individuals be included in this process. With this new development, the French State feared they would not meet the quota to deport 10,000 Jews. In an attempt to avoid this situation, Laval sent a request to Berlin asking for children between the ages of two and fifteen to be deported as well. He believed that in doing this, Vichy would not only meet the numbers requested by the Germans, but the state would also not need to provide for the orphaned children left behind. Without receiving confirmation from Berlin, the Vichy government gave the go-ahead for the deportations to take place in the early morning hours of July 16th and 17th.

On the day of the deportations, Jewish families were pulled from their homes with “considerable force” by over 4,500 French police involved in the procedure. They were then packed onto buses and taken to the Vélodrome d’Hiver, a stadium designed for less than 2,000 people. Here, over 13,000 men, women, and children crammed into this small space where they lived without food, water, or proper sanitation. Marcelle Duval, a Red Cross nurse tasked with creating an aid station at the Vélodrome stated,

“The mass amount of people and the sheer size of the building were overwhelming. Some people were sitting, others were coming down the stairs and others were going up. There children yelling, crying, looking for their parents and parents looking for their children. We were not used to these kinds of conditions and we spent a few minutes in confusion.”


To make this already horrific scene described by Duval even more tragic, children were eventually separated from their parents because Laval’s request to deport those younger than fifteen would not be passed until July 31st.

Once some French citizens discovered what was happening at the Vél d’Hiv, the population was outraged, especially by the harsh treatment of the children. This great disappointment in the Vichy government forced Laval to end all participation in mass deportations. Still, by the end of the war, “approximately one-quarter of the Jewish population of France had fallen victim to the Holocaust.”60 As for the Jewish citizens who survived the deportations, one of the most hurtful aspects of this atrocity was the treatment received from those they considered fellow Frenchmen. In a comparison of writings from French Jews who had survived Nazi concentration camps, Annette Wieviorka and Françoise Rosset conclude that these men and women did not see how Vichy could legally remove them from their homes by simply ignoring their citizenship. According to these historians, “For the Jews… whether French for generations or immigrants, it was difficult and perhaps impossible to acknowledge that the French model of emancipation and integration, born of the Revolution… could have been rendered null and void by the Vichy government.”61

In the period after the war, Bousquet’s role in the Vél d’Hiv roundups was forgotten and he went on to make a name for himself in the world of business. He became a senior executive in the Banque d’Indochine and served as a member of the board for dozens of corporate companies and newspapers. He even had the backing of then soon to be President Mitterrand for Bosquet’s support in his run for presidency in 1965. Mitterrand considered Bousquet a friend and explained

60 Weidmer, _The Claims of Memory_, 43.

that his life could not be looked at in terms of black and white.\textsuperscript{62} His ability to fully reintegrate himself back into society illustrates the nation’s desire to move on after the war and forget about the gray areas of collaboration. However, these crimes committed by the Vichy government and other French administrators that were addressed during these trials and indictments for crimes against humanity confirmed the revised narratives of the occupation proposed by historians and the mass media coverage of these events aided in the dissemination of this knowledge to the general public.

Until the late 1970s, Bousquet’s past had remained relatively untouched in the media, however with public frenzy surrounding other trials for crimes against humanity, this would soon change. In 1978, \textit{L’Express} published an article detailing Bousquet’s involvement in Jewish deportations during the war. Following the publication of this information, newspapers throughout France covered the story. In \textit{Le Monde} alone, articles surfaced detailing the atrocities which had transpired in France during the war. Titles like, “The Vél d’Hiv Roundup,” “A symposium of the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences on the Jewish Genocide. Vichy-Auschwitz, Serge Klarsfeld,” and “The Plight of Jews in France” became common headlines as readers were confronted with information that had been ignored since the end of the war. As a result of this media attention, Bousquet publically resigned from his position in the \textit{Banque d’Indochine} early in 1979. An article published on January 31, 1979, however, indicated that this resignation had occurred as early as September 1978 as a result of pressure from the bank’s director Jack Frances who wanted to cut all associations with Bousquet.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid, 298.

While Bousquet remained out of the courtroom for some time after this publication, his name frequently graced the covers of newspapers for his connection to Jean Leguay, another Vichy official involved in the Vél d’Hiv roundups who was on trial for crimes against humanity. Before the court could reach a verdict, however, Leguay passed away causing many to feel as if justice had not been served. The nation turned to Bousquet to fill this void. On September 13, 1989, just two days after the end of Leguay’s trial, Serge Klarsfeld, the famed Nazi hunter, and Charles Libman pushed for an indictment against Bousquet on behalf of the l’Association Les Fils et Filles des Déportés Juifs de France (FFDJF). According to Klarsfeld, they were “seeking a condemnation of the Vichy regime in its most odious aspect: the deportation of children.” Leaving the courthouse after his indictment, Bousquet stated that between 1940-1944 he had “no other concern than to protect and defend France against the occupier.” In November 1990, the Court of Appeals in Paris took the case and he was indicted in January 1991. The case never made it to trial however, as Bosquet was assassinated by a radical extremist “seeking justice for France” on June 8, 1993. The controversy surrounding his indictment and the feeling of injustice regarding his unfinished trial, led to a frenzy of public debates surrounding the Vél d’Hiv monument and this would culminate in drastic changes to the memorial site of the roundups.

**Conclusion**

The changes to French historiography in the late 1960s and early 1970s prompted public debates amongst French scholars that challenged the narrative of the Second World War that had

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65 Ibid


67 Curtis, *Verdict on Vichy*, 298.
been in place since 1945. This period of conflict illustrates the process of appropriation and contestation between the social memory of those alive during the Second World War who fought against these changes and the idea of historical memory that hoped to reconstruct the idea of collaboration during the occupation. Furthermore, it supports the notion that societies must obtain distance from shameful events in the past before they can further seek reconciliation as the younger generations in France who were farther removed from the war were more willing to incorporate this history back into the national narrative. Following these historiographical changes, the push for trials against former Nazi and Vichy officials illustrates the way in which other French intellectuals sought justice in light of this new knowledge and the mass media attention that surrounded these legal proceedings is an example of how these historical findings were eventually disseminated to the public during this time period. As the nation lost its hope for justice with the abrupt endings of trials against Jean Leguay and René Bousquet, the upcoming fiftieth anniversary ceremony of the Vél d’Hiv roundups would become the backdrop for a debate between intellectuals and politicians as these scholars called for an apology for the deportations from the highest level of the French Republic.
CHAPTER II

MONUMENTAL HISTORY: THE VÉL D’HIV AND THE POLITICS OF COMMEMORATION

Introduction

In 1959, the site where 13,152 Jews were interned during the roundup of July 16 and 17, 1942, was demolished due to a fire. Marking the end of this well known Parisian landmark, an article titled “La Fin du Vél d’Hiv” was published in Le Monde on May 14, 1959. In this nostalgic recollection of the past, the author recounts the diverse and grand history of the Vél d’Hiv. The article elaborates on the world famous cycling races and boxing matches for which the Vélodrome was well known. The newspaper also describes events from the 1924 Olympics that were held at the Vél d’Hiv and memorable moments in sports history that transpired at the stadium. In addition to popular sporting events, the Vél d’Hiv hosted many political rallies and demonstrations for both far right and left wing parties before and after the war. Le Monde ends this history of the Vél d’Hiv with a single sentence acknowledging the roundups of 1942. Vaguely, the article states, “During the occupation, it became a concentration camp” and this is followed by “All this is now only memories. The Vel’ d’Hiv, which held a large place in Parisian life, will soon be gone.”68

As detailed in the previous chapter, memories of collaboration, especially those that confirmed French involvement in the Holocaust, were often deemphasized in light of the

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Resistance narrative. After historians brought these atrocities to light, many French intellectuals and French citizens believed that it was necessary for the Republic to take responsibility for the crimes committed during the war and make amends for the nation’s past. This chapter argues that the tension regarding the Republic’s accountability for past injustices prompted debates once again between those who had experienced the war and younger generation by questioning what it means to be French and the role of the Republic within society. As a result, the Vél d’Hiv became a political stage for citizens and politicians alike to refashion the national narrative.

Changes to the Site of Memory

Amongst scholars, there seems to be a disagreement regarding when the first plaque was installed and which organization implemented this dedication. According to historian Caroline Weidmer, this initial stele was put in place in 1949 under General de Gaulle.\(^6^9\) Anna Senik claims that in 1981, under the initiative of Les Fils et Filles des Déportés Juifs, the square where the roundups took place was renamed “Place des Martyrs Juifs du Vélodrome d'Hiver” which coincided with the commemoration of a memorial plaque.\(^7^0\) Finally, and most likely, Peter Carrier states that the initial Vél d’Hiv monument was installed in 1946 “by an anti-racist association at the entrance to the Vélodrome building on the boulevard de Grenelle where private commemorations were held.”\(^7^1\) In archival photographs from the Ghetto Fighters House (seen in Figure 1 below), the first plaque is shown next to the entrance to the Vél d’Hiv. Since this building was demolished in 1959, the first stele must have been dedicated prior to this date.


Figure 1 The entrance to the Vel' d'hiv (Winter Velodrome) in Paris, 44603, Ghetto Fighters House Archives, Ghetto Fighters House Museum, Israel.

Aside from the origins of the first plaque, the initial commemoration text contained inaccuracies and did not explicitly mention French involvement in the implementation and organization of these roundups. The first dedication reads as follows and the image can be seen in Figure 2 below.
On July 16, 1942, thirty thousand Jewish men, women and children victims of racial persecution were confined in this place by order of the Nazi occupier, all separated from each other, they were deported to Germany and the concentration camps. Free men, remember.  

Figure 2  A memorial plaque mounted at the entrance to the Vel' d'hiv (Winter Velodrome) in Paris, 44608, Ghetto Fighters House Archives, Ghetto Fighters House Museum, Israel.

72 Wiedmer, *The Claims of Memory*, 44.
As illustrated above, the text from the first plaque, omits any aspect of French involvement in the Vél d’Hiv deportations and instead places blame on “the Nazi occupier.” Furthermore, the number of men, women, and children involved in the round-up was overestimated and it failed to mention that out of all those transported to the Vélodrome, the majority of the individuals were children.\textsuperscript{73} In addition to these absences, the plaque does not specifically point on the Jewishness of the victims and instead vaguely alludes to the roundups as an act of “racial persecution.” This first monument coincides with the Gaullist narrative as it does not mention French involvement in the deportation of Jewish citizens and places all blame for the roundups on the Germans.

While it is not clear if a similar plaque was reinstalled after the demolition of the Vél d’Hiv, a new marker to commemorate the events which transpired at the cycling stadium would not be dedicated until 1986. This period of silence not only came from the Republic’s reluctance to rake responsibility for the roundups, but it also stemmed from Jewish citizens’ hesitancy to draw attention to their suffering during the war. According to historian Carrier, this silence was an attempt to downplay their identity as Jewish victims and reintegrate back into society in 1944.\textsuperscript{74} Without the voices of those persecuted fighting to maintain the memory of the past, de Gaulle’s narrative would continue to play a prominent role in French culture until a new plaque offered a different interpretation of the Vél d’Hiv roundups.

On July 2, 1986, Jacques Chirac, mayor of Paris at the time, met with the *Conseil représentatif des institutions juives de France* (CRIF), to discuss past, present, and future risks

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid, 44.

\textsuperscript{74} Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments and Memorials*, 68.
associated with racial discrimination. During this meeting Théo Klein praised Chirac for his progressive policies and the mayor announced an initiative to rename the square in which the Vél d’Hiv once stood to “Une place des Martyrs-Juifs-du-Vél d'Hiv.”\textsuperscript{75} Fourteen days later, on July 18, Chirac attended the fortieth anniversary ceremony of the roundups making him the first prominent political figure to do so. \textsuperscript{76} On this day, he officially recognized the new name of the square and unveiled a plaque that memorialized “the victims of the Nazi occupation” and condemned the “collaboration and the policy of racial discrimination of the Vichy regime.”\textsuperscript{77} During this commemoration, Chirac remarked “The dark hours must also be remembered by our citizens… if it is necessary to keep the memory of the heroes, it is also necessary to keep the memory of the victims… Paris has not forgotten and will not forget those days of shame and tears.”\textsuperscript{78} Chirac’s comments and actions can be seen as an example of Nora’s theory on sites of memory as the Mayor utilized the former location of the Vélodrome to challenge the social memory of the Second World War that only commemorated the Resistance.

In addition to Chirac’s speech, the new plaque also openly challenged social memory by attesting to French involvement in the roundups. The new marker, which still stands today, can be seen below in Figure 3 and 4 and it reads as follows:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{75} Le Monde, “M. Chirach Annonce l’Inaguration d’une Place des Martyres-Juifs-du-Vel’d’Hiv’ a Paris,” 2 July 1986.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Carrier, Holocaust Monuments and National Memory, 52.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Le Monde, “M. Chirac rend hommage aux victimes de ‘ces journées de honte et de larmes,’” 21 July 1986.
\item \textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
On July 16 and 17, 1942
Thirteen thousand one hundred and fifty-two Jews were arrested
In Paris and its suburbs
deported and assassinated at Auschwitz.

In the Vélodrom d’Hiver, which stood here,
Four thousand one hundred and fifteen children
Two thousand nine hundred and sixteen women
One thousand one hundred and twenty-nine men
Were confined under inhuman conditions,
by the police of the Vichy government,
on the order of the Nazi occupiers.
May those who tried to come to their aid be thanked.
Passer-by remember!\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{79} Wiedmer, \textit{The Claims of Memory}. 45.
This new plaque moves far beyond the errors made in the previous attempt to commemorate the roundups. Notably, it provides a more accurate representation of those deported, it identifies these victims as being Jewish, and it recognizes Vichy’s role in the roundups. While this plaque made great strides in providing a more accurate description of the roundups, the extent to which the Vichy government collaborated with the Germans is still somewhat vague. Nevertheless, the complicity of the French State in the roundups, which Chirac alluded to during the commemoration, as well as the ongoing trials for crimes against humanity discussed in chapter one, created an environment in which French scholars and intellectuals searched for a way to atone for the nation’s past. These attempts would culminate in the creation of the Comité Vél d'Hiv ‘42 and a public debate between this group and President Mitterrand regarding the responsibility of France.

Figure 4. Vél d’Hiv Memorial Space and Remembrance Wreath, Paris

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80 Ibid, 45.
Mitterrand and the Comité Vél d’Hiv ‘42

On May 25, 1992, a conference was held at the Sorbonne titled La mémoire de Vichy et ses falsifications. Here, French historians, such as René Rémond, Robert Frank, Jean-Pierre Azéma, François Bédarida, as well as former resistant member Lucie Aubrac, activist Serge Klarsfeld, and journalist Jacques Derogy discussed the important task of historians to strive for accuracy in the field regarding the Vichy regime and the crimes committed against the Jews.81 This event took place less than two months before the fiftieth anniversary of the Vél d’Hiv roundups and those who attended this event were inspired to use the upcoming commemoration as a platform to speak about the nation’s role in Holocaust during the Second World War.

Weeks before the anniversary event, this group of scholars merged together to form the Comité Vél d’Hiv ‘42. In a public appeal published in Le Monde on June 17, 1992 signed by over 60 prominent French intellectuals, this group requested that President François Mitterrand officially recognize the role that the French State played in the “persecution and crimes against the Jews of France.”82 These individuals believed that this formal recognition would not only bring the roundups back into public discourse, but it would also be a “reaffirmation of republican values” by taking responsibility for this atrocity and apologizing for its occurrence.83 President Mitterrand agreed to attend the event, but days before the ceremony, he made a statement during the annual presidential television interview that sparked a public battle between the Comité and the supporters of the Gaullist memory.

81 Ibid, 27.


83 Carrier, Holocaust Monuments and National Memory, 70.
During his interview, President Mitterrand claimed that, “In 1940, there was a French state, it was Vichy, it was not the Republic. And it is this French State that we must hold accountable. Do not ask the Republic to be accountable, we did what we had to do!” According to him, the French Republic upheld the value of all citizens and their rights, including Jews, and after the war this same Republic purged collaborators who had organized the event in question. Based on this fact, Mitterrand saw the current French government and the French State as separate entities, making Vichy the only institution that needed to be held responsible for these acts. According to historian Peter Carrier, Mitterrand avoided taking responsibility for the deportations because a public acceptance would lead to questioning of citizens’ rights under the French government, which were denied by Vichy, and this recognition would destroy the belief that the French State existed outside of the Republic.

Following his controversial statement, Mitterrand attended the fiftieth anniversary ceremony on July 16, 1992 where he was booed by the crowd for his earlier remarks. Over the next few weeks, a string of responses were subsequently published in Le Monde regarding this situation. Coming to President Mitterrand’s defense, former President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing made a statement on behalf of his successor. According to Giscard d'Estaing, Mitterrand had been misinterpreted by the public. He stated that,

“And so he [Mr. Mitterrand] is quite justified. We [the Republic] condemn the actions of the Vichy regime. These actions have already brought to justice, many people have been prosecuted, penalized, sometimes the most extreme punishment. But the current French Republic is not the continuation of the Vichy regime. When we were in the army, in 1944, there was still the Vichy regime. We were not under the orders of the Vichy regime. We served Free France. So I believe that what he [Mr. Mitterrand] said, is that

85 Carrier, Holocaust Monuments and National Memorials, 73.
France condemns all the actions that have been committed by the Vichy regime. By contrast, France is not recognized in these actions, or in the behavior of those who, at the time, seized power abusively.\(^87\)

Furthermore, Giscard d'Estaing responded to the request by some demanding a day of commemoration be set aside to honor the victims of the roundup. According to the former president, he thought that the memory of the Vél d'Hiv should be added to the National Day of Deportation rather than creating an entirely new day of commemoration. He argued that, a separate commemorative day would generate divisions amongst the French and the state would be keeping with national tradition by honoring all who were victims of the Nazis.\(^88\)

In response to these statements, the Comité Vél d'Hiv '42 published another statement in Le Monde criticizing Mitterrand for refusing to acknowledge that these atrocities were committed by French citizens. This time, the group pointed out that Mitterrand failed to see that while the “Vichy State” had committed these acts, they were still perpetrated by “French administrators, French magistrates, and French police” who had “accepted to swear an oath of loyalty to Pétain, to carry out inhumane orders and at times to take criminal initiatives themselves, forgetting that they had been named to their position by a republican state.”\(^89\) These individuals wanted Mitterrand to make a real statement so that it, “…be known to all, so that it leaves its mark on future generations: a French state, which was certainly the negation of the Republic but which was nevertheless French, actively participated in the destruction of European Jews.”\(^90\) Furthermore, they were even more outraged because for years Mitterrand would lay a


\(^{88}\) Ibid.


wreath at Pétain’s grave, honoring his service at Verdun. Citizens believed that it was unfair for Mitterrand to pay homage to Pétain while at the same time honoring his victims. Mitterrand’s actions called his past into question, causing this debate to become even more turbulent.

Upon investigation, it was discovered that Mitterrand had been a Vichy administrator. During the occupation, Mitterrand received the francique, an award given to those who had served the French State well. In order to obtain this award, recipients had to pledge an oath to Pétain that stated, “I offer myself up to Marshall Pétain just as he offered himself up for France. I pledge to serve his teachings and to remain faithful to him and to his work.” Commenting on the President’s past, Serge Klasfield made a statement in Le Monde. The activist said,

“Mitterrand is also one of the few surviving heads of state from that time. He had enthusiasm for Pétain. Although he had an honorable route with the Resistance, it does not deny the young man he was. He has even placed a wreath at the tomb of Petain every November 11th. If we want to be fair it must be done for the other marshals.”

In response to public attention given to this incident, in 1993 Mitterrand finally “instituted by decree a national day of commemoration each year, on the date of the anniversary of the Vél d’Hiv roundups July 16, 1942.” This day would remember all those who suffered from “racial and anti-Semitic persecution under the authority of Vichy.” Furthermore, Mitterrand also ordered that the Republic create a new monument that would be “more appropriate” to commemorate the roundups.

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91 Wiedmer, The Claims of Memory, 47.
92 Ibid, 140.
95 Ibid.
The new statue, seen in Figure 5 and 6 below, designed by artist and former deportee Walter Spitzer, was an attempt to make peace between the citizens and the former president. The sculpture itself is bronze and located on a walkway along the Seine, just blocks away from the original Vél d’Hiv location. This new monument depicts seven individuals kneeling on a bicycle track with their luggage surrounding them. 96 Below the statue the inscription reads: “The French Republic pays homage to the racist persecution, anti-Semitism, and crimes against humanity committed under the de facto authority of the government of the French State from 1940-1944. Never Forget.” While this new monument creates a more visual and symbolic depiction of the roundups, some members of the French Jewish community argue that the monument does not overtly depict the Jewishness of its victims or the considerable number of children interned at the Vél d’Hiv. 97 Furthermore, the statue does not accurately convey the cramped conditions in which

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96 Wiedmer, The Claims of Memory, 47.
97 Ibid, 48.
these individuals found themselves and the text located below the statue still makes clear distinction between the French State and the Republic.

Figure 6. The Vél d'Hiv Commemorative Statue overlooking the Eiffel Tower, Paris

**Commemoration as a Political Tool**

Trying to conceal his past and maintain the legacy of the French Republic, President Mitterrand failed to understand the impact of his statement made before the fiftieth anniversary perpetuated the myth that had existed in France for decades. What the Vél d'Hiv committee commemoration. Politically, separating the Republic from Vichy distanced himself from his past in Pétain’s regime, an obstacle he had tried to overcome since his election, but in doing this, he brought to light, that Mitterrand could not, was that by taking responsibility for the crimes committed during the war, the country could being to reconcile with the past. This battle between the citizens and the Republic was not over, however, and it would continue until President Jacques Chirac made the first steps to unite this segmented past in 1995.
During the July 1995 commemoration ceremony newly elected President Chirac became the first president to take public responsibility for the acts committed by Vichy during the Second World War. While this open admission may have been a way for the new president to create distance between himself and former President Mitterand, Chirac’s involvement with this site of memory was nothing new. As mentioned before, he was the first political official to attend the Vél d’Hiv commemoration in 1986 as Mayor of Paris and he had also overseen the creation of a new plaque to honor the victims of the deportations. On the fiftieth anniversary of the roundups he even made a public statement over the radio in which he proclaimed, that he could not “find the right words to say the horror, grief that all those who lived through these tragic events must have felt.”\footnote{Le Monde “La Commémoration de la Rafle du Vel’ d’Hiv’ M. Chirac Souligne le Devoir de Nous Souvenir des Atrocités du Nazisme,” 17 July 1992.} He then added, “After so many years, we keep to the six million innocent victims of the Holocaust an unremitting debt and duty to remember the Nazis atrocities and to ensure that such horror never happens again in any place and in any form whatsoever.”

Statements and actions such as this set the tone for what would become during Chirac’s presidency.

During the fifty-third anniversary of the Vél d’Hiv roundups Chirac kept with the policy of memorization he had established during his time as mayor and proclaimed, “France, the homeland of the Enlightenment and of the rights of man, a land of welcome and asylum, on that day committed the irreparable…. Breaking its word, it handed those who were under its protection over to their executioners… we owe them an everlasting debt.”\footnote{President Chirac’s Vél d’Hiv speech, July 16th, 1995, found in: Senik, L'Historie Mouvementée de la Reconnaissance Officielle des Crimes de Vichy Contre les Juifs.} According to him, the purpose of his bold statement was “To recognize the errors of the past and the errors
committed by the state and not to hide the dark hours of our history, that is plainly the way to
defend a vision of man, of his freedom and dignity.”  His words echoed the request of the
Committé Vél d’Hiv ’42 from three years prior. Being the first president to take public
responsibility on behalf of the nation, Chirac demonstrated the ways in which a new generation
of French citizens viewed their country. While previous politicians believed that acknowledging
Vichy’s actions would lessen the integrity of the Republic, Chirac position the nation in a new
light by taking responsibility for the deplorable actions committed by French individuals during
the war. In this way, he hoped to reiterate the image of France as a nation of freedom and dignity
and strengthen the tie of the current Republic to the ideas from the French Revolution.

Chirac’s speech was met with approval from prominent Jewish leaders. Joseph Sitruk, the chief rabbi of Paris, was “‘fully satisfied’” by the President's proclamation. Jean Kahn, president of the European Jewish Congress, “said Jews as well as all those who fought the Nazis ‘must have been delighted to hear these words.’”  Finally, Serge Klarsfeld said “‘this speech contained everything we hoped to hear one day.’”  In an attempt to distance himself from former President Mitterrand, Chirac’s speech did more than acknowledging the role that Vichy played in Nazi anti-Semitic measures. This newly elected president set the precedent for memorialization policies regarding the commemorative ceremonies and he took the first steps to bridge the gap between the history of the Republic and the French State.

After Chirac’s term, Nicholas Sarkozy, the first French president born after the war, set out to restore the prestige of the Resistance he believed had been lost in previous years. On May

100 Ibid.


102 Ibid.
4, 2007 he visited the plateau of Glières, the site of a celebrated Resistance battle, and he promised to return each year to commemorate the event. A few weeks later, Sarkozy also proclaimed that the letter written by Resistance martyr Guy Môquet, be read every year to secondary school students. This memorial policy which exhaled the Resistance revealed the president’s desire to “break from the policy of repentance” that had preceded his presidency. This idea was echoed in a speech he made in Lyon on April 5, 2007. He stated,

“I hate the fashion for repentance that expresses hatred of France and of its History… I hate the repentance that is an obstacle to integration because one seldom wants to join what one has learned to hate, when one should love and respect it. That is my truth.”

This sentiment would be mirrored in his memorial policy for the Vél d’Hiv -- one that did not negate the work of President Chirac, but also one that did not attempt to advance the former president’s message.

On the sixty-fifth anniversary of the roundups instead of attending the memorial ceremony at the site of the Vél d’Hiv, Sarkozy went to the newly dedicated Mémorial de la Shoah, stating he wanted to visit because he had not been there before. Commenting on the subject of recognizing the nation’s role in deportation of French Jews Sarkozy stated, that Chirac “said the right things and I think that there is nothing to subtract or add to the excellent speech he made at the time.” During his visit, Sarkozy was accompanied by Simone Veil, the President of the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah, and Serge Klarsfield. After his visit, director of the Mémorial de la Shoah, Jacques Fredj stated that the President’s visit illustrated “strong

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104 Ibid, 166.

105 Nicholas Sarkozy’s Campaign Speech in Lyon on April 5, 2007. Found in, Olivier Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 166.

action” and that his presence “shows how far we have come since the declaration of Jacques Chirac. Our country made a huge leap forward in teaching the history of the Holocaust.”107

After Sarkozy’s policies that exalted the Resistance and French nationalism, François Hollande chose to mirror former President Chirac’s statements regarding the Vél d’Hiv. During the seventieth anniversary commemoration of the roundups, President Hollande decreed,

“Those women, men, and children could not have known the fate that awaited them…They trusted in France. They believed that the country of the great Revolution and the City of Light would be a safe haven for them… Indeed, it was in Paris in 1791, under the National Constituent Assembly, that Jews had become fully fledged citizens for the first time in Europe… The truth is that French police—on the basis of the lists they had themselves drawn up—undertook to arrest the thousands of innocent people trapped on July 16, 1942. And that the French gendarmerie escorted them to the internment camps. The truth is that no German soldiers—not a single one—were mobilized at any stage of the operation. The truth is that this crime was committed in France, by France… But the truth is also that the crime of the Vel d’Hiv was committed against France, against her values, against her principles, against her ideal… It is by being clear-sighted about our own history that France, thanks to the spirit of harmony and unity, will best promote her values, here and throughout the world.”108

Taking Chirac’s message a step farther, Hollande made an effort to tie the history of Vichy back into the narrative of the Republic, thus reaffirming the nation’s role in the roundups. Stating that the crime was committed in France, by France, and against France illustrated his wish to claim responsibility for these actions on behalf of the Republic and recognize that this moment in history went against the nation’s values. Moving on from this, he argued that the only way to find harmony in the future and remedy the past is to be honest about this tragic moment in history. In this way, Hollande established a promising new policy of memorialization that attempted to use the lessons of the past to address current issues of injustice within France.

107 Ibid.
108 François Hollande, “70th Anniversary of the Vel D’Hiv Roundup - Speech by M. François Hollande, President of the Republic,” Consulat Général de France à Miami, 26 July 2012.
Conclusion

The state crimes committed during the Second World War by French officials at the Vél d’Hiv illustrates the way in which the French broke with its traditional values during the Second World War and chose to collaborate with the Germans. The controversy that emerged during the 1990s around President Mitterrand and the Vél d’Hiv committee was an example of the competing realms of social memory and sites of memory and the nation used the public discussion of these events to reconstruct the historical narrative. Three years later, Jacques Chirac’s speech appeased French citizens by acknowledging the country’s involvement in anti-Semitic actions during the war and this action coincides with steps needed to reconcile with the past. His decree established a policy that allowed the country to recognize these events without tarnishing the image of the Republic by redefining what it means to be French. Following Chirac’s efforts, the public looked towards the actions of President Sarkozy and President Hollande at the annual commemorative events to makes statements about the nation’s responsibility of the past. While Sarkozy’s methods hoped to reignite national pride in the Resistance his policies occasionally fell flat, as illustrated by his speech at the Mémorial de la Shoah. President Hollande, on the other hand, advanced the message proclaimed by Chirac in 1995 and continued to work within the framework of reconciliation. The importance placed on the duty to remember during this period influenced writers and directors alike who were previously unfamiliar with the roundups. The following decade would see inspired citizens like Tatiana de Rosnay, Rose Bosch, and Alexandre Jardin creating materials for the general public that addressed these issues of collaboration and complicity in the Holocaust.
CHAPTER III

LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE: CULTURAL INTERPRETATIONS OF VÉL D’HIV ROUNDPUPS

Introduction

Popular forms of media, such as books and films, have the potential to inspire the general public and create interest in a subject. These types of materials also have the unique ability to not only entertain but educate their consumers. Writers Tatiana de Rosnay, Rose Bosch, and Alexandre Jardin hoped to accomplish this through their individual pieces on the Vél d’Hiv roundups. Through works such as Elle s’Appelait Sarah, La Rafle, and Des Gens trés bien, each of these individuals depicted a certain image of the event in order to captivate the public and resonate with current issues. In Sarah’s Key, Tatiana de Rosnay wanted to convey the difficulties France faced coming to terms with its past and promote a duty to remember amongst her readership. Similarly, in La Rafle, Rose Bosch wanted viewers to understand the event itself, especially they way in which Jewish children were affected, and, like de Rosnay, instill within viewers a duty to commemorate the past. Finally, Alexandre Jardin’s personal history prompts French citizens to think about and discuss the ways in which collaboration touched ordinary families during the war. This chapter argues that the reaction to the publication of these cultural materials once again opened the public forum for French citizens to reassess the details of this history. Furthermore, the popularity of these materials illustrates the way in which the changing
historical narrative was disseminated to the general public and how these works became important tools to educate the nation about Vichy and the occupation.

**Elle s’Appelait Sarah**

The historical fiction, *Elle s’Appelait Sarah (Sarah’s Key)*, by French author, Tatiana de Rosnay, was published in France in 2007. The novel follows American journalist Julia Jarmond in her quest to write a magazine article in honor of the 60th anniversary of the Vél d’Hiv roundups. In the novel, de Rosnay contrasts Jarmond’s life as wife, writer, and mother against the story of a young Jewish girl named Sarah Stravinsky whose family was torn apart as a result of the roundups. As the two stories evolve, they move closer together, until Julia discovers that her in-law’s apartment was the home from which Sarah was arrested. Using her novel as a vehicle, de Rosnay hoped to convey the horrors experienced by the children of the Vél d’Hiv roundups, the difficulties France has faced in coming to terms with its past, and the way in which history very much continues to affect the present.

When discussing her reasons for writing *Sarah’s Key*, de Rosnay stated that, “I was moved, appalled by what I discovered concerning the Vél d’Hiv roundups, especially what happened to those 4,000 Jewish children, and I knew I had to write about it.”\(^{109}\) In the author’s note at the beginning of the novel, de Rosnay even states that her work is a “tribute to the children of the Vél d’Hiv. The children who never came back. And the ones who survived to tell.”\(^{110}\) For these reasons, part of *Sarah’s Key* is told from the perspective of ten year old Sarah Stravinsky in order to convey the fear and confusion that the children of the roundups experienced. One example of this can be seen in the conversation Sarah has with her father after


\(^{110}\) Ibid.
they have been arrested. In the midst of chaos, Sarah’s father tries to locate her brother, Michel. Feeling proud of what she has done, Sarah reveals to her father that she locked Michel in their secret cupboard to keep him safe. She states, “It’s a deep cupboard, there is enough air in there for him to breathe. And he has water and the flashlight. He’ll be fine, Papa.”\textsuperscript{111} From this exchange, it is clear that Sarah does not understand the gravity of their situation in the same way that many of her non-fictional counterparts, including her father, experienced the roundups.

De Rosnay’s novel also addresses the way in which the Vél d’Hiv roundups have been a controversial topic for France during the postwar years. She stated that “I realized I didn’t know much about what exactly happened that day. I was not taught about this event at school, during the ‘70s. And it still seemed to be shrouded by some kind of taboo.”\textsuperscript{112} She reveals this dynamic in her novel via the interactions between Julia Jarmond and her father-in-law Édouard Tezac. After adamant refusal from her husband’s family to discuss the history of their Parisian apartment, Édouard finally decides to have an open conversation with Julia. She learns that Édouard’s father purchased the apartment through a family friend and that he never questioned who the apartment previously belonged to, even though he had suspected that it was a Jewish family. According to Édouard, “He had closed his eyes, like so many other Parisians, during that terrible year of 1942.”\textsuperscript{113} After Sarah escaped from the internment camp, she returned to Paris only to find her brother’s body still locked in the cupboard. After this discovery, Édouard’s father made him promise to never speak of the event again. He stated “Sarah became a secret. A secret I never stopped thinking about. I don’t think my father ever realized how much I thought

\begin{footnotes}
\item[112] Ibid.
\item[113] Ibid, 162-163.
\end{footnotes}
of her. How his silence regarding her made me suffer.”114 While he initially questions why Julia wanted to pry into the past, his discussion of the tragic event finally relieved his suffering, just as Chirac’s speech had done for the nation in 1995.

Finally, de Rosnay wanted her novel to illustrate the ways in which the past continues to influence the present. To show this, the author switches between Sarah’s life in 1940s Paris and Julia’s journey in the present. According to one reviewer, Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, this technique is not only a constant reminder of “the presence of ghosts of history,” but it also emphasizes “Julia’s conviction that the truth must always be sought.”115 This is exemplified in the scene previously mentioned between Julia and Édouard. As Édouard recounts the history of the apartment, the present is cut short to tell the same story from Sarah’s point of view. Immediately after the discovery of Michel’s body, the reader is brought back to the present where Édouard explains how this event has continued to affect him, even in the present day. He states, “My father said that we could never forget. Never. And he was right, Julia. It has been there, within us. And it has been there for me, for the past sixty years.”116 The director of the film adaptation, Gilles Paquet-Brenner, has explained how he believes that Sarah’s Key feels immediate to the readers which then allow them to see “how history can have resonance in everyday life.”117

114 Ibid, 164.


116 De Rosnay, Sarah’s Key, 163.

While together, these elements of Sarah’s Key illustrate the challenge France has faced coming to terms with its past, de Rosnay’s ultimate goal was to provide France with a way to learn about the past. According to Paquet-Brenner, Sarah’s Key “is less about instruction than about making this history inclusive and accessible to people with no particular connection to the events.” In a way, the novel has already accomplished that. Since its publication in 2007 Sarah’s Key has sold over 4 million copies in thirty-five countries. Her work of fiction was translated into twenty different languages and, as mentioned before, it was adapted into a successful film. For Vichy scholar, Andrew Sobanet, the mass dissemination of this story illustrates, “that important lines of thinking from historiography and scholarship on memory have passed into broader popular culture.”

Furthermore, de Rosnay is sparking interest in this history amongst French school children. She stated that since her novel was so widely successful in both France and Britain, Sarah’s Key is now being used in French schools to teach students about the occupation and the nation’s role in these state crimes. To accompany these lessons, de Rosnay often visits these institutions and is accompanied by survivors of the roundups. She believes that her novel and these lectures add another dimension to learning about French involvement in the Holocaust by appealing to the students’ emotions. Furthermore, since this event is finally a subject matter

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118 Flitterman-Lewis, “Film Reviews,” 52.


120 Ibid.


123 Tatiana de Rosnay, “CNN: Sarah’s Key isn’t just a Holocaust film.” Interview by Piers Morgan, July 15, 2011.
covered in French classes, de Rosnay believes that this means France is finally ready to look at the past. The director of the film adaptation echoes de Rosnay’s statement when he said that the French finally have enough distance and perspective to deal with these events as a country and as a society. For him, the French needed de Rosnay’s story.  

La Rafle

In addition to de Rosnay’s novel, the film, *La Rafle* (The Roundup), was released on March 10, 2010 in France. The film depicts the lives of a Jewish family and their neighbors in 1940s Paris. The movie itself illustrates life for Jewish citizens in Paris during 1942 and starkly contrasts this with the brutality of the roundups. During the first half of the film, director Rose Bosch juxtaposes life for the Weismann family in Paris against the planning of the impending Vél d’Hiv roundups by French officials. Next, *La Rafle* illustrates with horrific clarity the chaos of the roundups and the sheer madness which existed inside of the Vélodrome as over 13,000 individuals were interned in deplorable conditions as well as life at the internment camps on the outskirts of Paris. Here, Bosch captures the heart wrenching separation of parents from their children and, for the lucky few like Weismann, their ability to escape.

The opening scene of *La Rafle* features a black background with red text which warns viewers that “All the events, even the most extreme, actually took place in that summer of 1942.” Following this announcement, archival footage of Hitler’s arrival and tour of France are accompanied by the song “Paris” by Edith Piaf. The undeniable Frenchness of the song accompanied with the arrival of the Germans mimics the way in which this moment in history clashes with the nation’s national narrative. During this first portion of the film, Bosch moves

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between everyday life for the Weismann family and the planning of the roundups by both French and German officials. For example, the film flashes between scenes where Joseph mocks Hitler to Hitler himself delivering a speech condemning the Jews. In another instance, the film depicts the reaction of the Weismann family after the 9th decree of July 8th, 1942 is passed forbidding Jews from inhabiting public places. This is immediately followed by a conversation between Pétain and Laval in which they decide to deport only foreign Jews from France during the roundups. Finally, the film captures the Weismann family enjoying a normal evening in their home as Shabbat ends. This is juxtaposed against meetings between Bousquet, the Germans, and Laval as they plan the Vél d’Hiv Roundups. In these scenes, Bosch captures the normalcy of family life for the Jews in France while also illustrating the desire of French leaders to gain autonomy in the nation again via the deportation of the nation’s foreign Jews.

The next section of the film focuses on the roundups and conditions at the Vél d’Hiv. The night before the roundups, the film depicts mothers tucking their sons into bed. Joseph is still reading and his mother instructs him that he will always have time to finish tomorrow. This is instantly cut to images of French police preparing for the roundups. They are instructed to begin at 4:00 AM and remove all listed Jews from their homes. These men are instructed to “proceed swiftly and without needless chatter.” They are also told to not question the ethics of the operation. From here, the police forcefully remove these citizens from their homes. In one incident, after learning children will also be deported, a young mother tries to warn others what is happening. She is then punched by a guard and she falls to the ground. The scene elicits confusion as individuals try to fight against arrest. Some non-Jewish residents in the apartments try to hide their neighbors’ children to prevent their arrest. There is screaming, crying, and pleas for the roundups to end. In despair, a young mother jumps from the roof of her apartment.
building with her child in her arms, eliciting panicked screams from the onlookers below. This scene cuts to Bousquet and other French officials who are tracking the progress of the roundups.

At the Vélodrome, the camera pans around the inside of the building revealing the cramped space in which the Jewish prisoners are trapped (see figure 7 below). The scene is chaotic and overwhelms the viewer’s senses. There is screaming, a mother giving birth, children running, and police officers blowing their whistles. The scene also addresses the horrid sanitary conditions at the Vélodrome as hallways and corridors became public restrooms. Annette Mondo, the French Red Cross nurse assigned to the Vél d’Hiv, is introduced at the stadium as she tries to aid the panicked population. She is confronted with patients having seizures, fainting, sick children, and she learns that she is one of only six nurses assigned to the Vél d’Hiv. The doctor working then reveals that there are many people who wish to help, however the French government does not want any witnesses to the events taking place. In the Vélodrome, nurses complain that they have brought in sick individuals from the hospital and from the asylums. In the stands, the prisoners discuss how they trusted the French to not let this happen to this. While Bosch received some criticism for the dramatic nature of these scenes, she worked closely with survivors and conducted her own research as well to recreate the past in an authentic way. The end result was a successful film that had the ability to convey the horrors of the roundups.

According to journalist Simon Round, the film La Rafle had a monumental impact on France. “It was one of the top 10 films of 2010, and was seen in cinemas by more than three million people - more than Hollywood blockbusters Schindler's List and The Pianist.”

According to CBO-Box Office, two months after the film’s opening, 2,821,845 people had seen

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Figure 7. Bosch’s depiction of the inside of the Vél d’Hiv, from La Rafle

La Rafle in France.127 The success of this film accomplished what Rose Bosch set out to do. In preparation for this film, she spent five years researching what would become La Rafle. The native Frenchwoman stated that she was appalled by the lack of knowledge regarding the round-ups. She stated that, “I wanted to be as accurate as possible. We wanted to get this tragedy known and into the text books, rather than the two lines that I read when I was in school.”128 For her this necessity to remember stems from the fleeting lives of the survivors. In her interview with the Jewish Chronicle, she stated, “Our generation is the last one which will be able to hear

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the memories of these survivors… The Holocaust was something so gigantically horrific that when all the witnesses have gone, people may choose not to believe that it happened at all.”

After its release, newspapers in France had mixed opinions regarding the quality and accuracy of La Rafle. For Jacques Mandelbaum in Le Monde, he stated that the film does not fundamentally reveal or prove anything about the event as the marketing campaign for the film suggests. Furthermore, Mandelbaum says that the film is aesthetically mediocre. He argues that the film wants the viewer to feel as if he or she is there, however he argues that the film is overly dramatic and lacks perspective. Mandelbaum believes that in this point, the director is too naïve to assume that she can show everything which surrounded this event. In another critical review by Libération, Didier Péron states that Rose Bosch’s attempt to revive the events of 1942 is “between retro kitsch and blackmail accuracy.” He argues that there are too many elements at work that do not go together such as a desire for historical truth and an overly melodramatic narrative. For these reasons, Péron states that La Rafle is not a good film and it does not represent the truth. The film “built a dummy stage on which is replayed a true tragedy, it is different.” Finally, Eric Libiot, a well known film critic, stated that while the film had good intentions, it left movie goers feeling indifferent.

Other reviews praised Bosch for her work. Olivier Delcroix for Le Figaro wrote that La Rafle, meticulously captured the past and is touching without being overly sentimental. He

129 Ibid.
131 Didier Péron, “‘La Rafle’: Leurres de Vérité Pour le Vel d'Hiv,” Libération, 10 March 2010.
132 Ibid.
further stated that, “The Roundup brings back a piece of the inglorious past of France under the Occupation, but is magnified by the courage of those that will be called the “Righteous.””

While reviews were mixed, the statistics illustrate that French citizens were interested in the film and, whether or not they approved of Bosch’s portrayal, their attendance meant that the roundups were being brought back into French public discourse.

*Des Gens très Bien*

Fictional books and films were not the only forms of popular media to address the nation’s role in the Vél d’Hiv roundups. Famed author Alexandre Jardin, known for writing feel-good stories in which he lightly mocks his family, published in 2011 *Des Gens très bien* (*Very Good People*), a personal history that confronted the mystery surrounding his late grandfather’s position in the Vichy regime. Jardin hoped that his work would question the blindness of his own family and of his country regarding their responsibility in organizing state crimes during the occupation. His work however, was not received well by historians and authors alike, and the subsequent debate which surfaced in popular French newspapers revealed the way in which the topic of the occupation, especially when discussing ordinary citizens, was still a sensitive topic in France.

*Des Gens très bien* is divided into 3 sections. In the first chapter, “Fini de Rire” (Finished Laughing), Alexandre discusses the publication of his father’s book *Nain Jaune*, which offers a glimpse into the life of his grandfather, Jean Jardin, during the occupation, and the ways in which he slowly learned about his grandfather’s role in the Vél d’Hiv roundups. In this section, Alexandre argues that in *Nain Jaune*, his father depicted a caricature of his grandfather, detached

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from history, in order to teach the French to love their parents, no matter what they did during
the occupation. He claims that he wants to counteract this image by providing a more accurate
illustration of his family. In chapter two titled “Se Refaire” (To Remake) Alexandre discusses his
friendship with Zac, son of a former Nazi, and how together, they deconstructed the discourse
surrounding his grandfather in order to recreate a more accurate version of the past. Finally, in
the last chapter titled “Entretien avec Le Pire” (Negotiations with the worst), Alexandre
provides his own narrative of his grandfather’s life, marrying his personal story with his own
historical research. 136

Reviews of Alexandre’s work were often critical. In Le Monde, Christine Rousseau
published a scathing review of Des Gens très bien in which she described the book as “full of
anger, shame and guilt through which the novelist intends to ‘purge his DNA’ soiled by his
grandfather.” 137 She states that reading his book is an uncomfortable experience and his “quest
for truth proves awkward and naive.” 138 Furthermore, Rousseau adds that Alexandre too often
resorts to historical shortcuts and anachronistic judgments that make him seem desperate to pin
his grandfather as one of the key organizers of the Vél d’Hiv roundups. 139

Francois Hauter also published a piercing review in Le Figaro in which he called Jardin
“A Pinocchio of our time.” He states that Des Gens très bien is Alexandre’s version of an
adolescent temper tantrum. Hauter argues that no one doubts that the Vichy regime and Pierre
Laval actively collaborated with the Germans and thus “signing one of the darkest pages of our

136 Alexandre Jardin, Des gens très bien, 11-46.
137 Christine Rousseau, “‘Des gens très bien,’ d’Alexandre Jardin: le roman noire des Jardin,” Le Monde, 6
January 2011.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
history.” He goes on to state that people react to “the unimaginable with their own temperament” and that under the circumstances in which the French found themselves in the 1940s, they tried to survive and protect those dear to them. He believes that Jardin ignores these facts and resorts to misinterpretations of the past. Furthermore, Hauter believes Jardin’s book is too painful to read because the author’s anger is evident throughout his writing and the way in which he makes assumptions without any evidence is distressing.  

The most striking review of Alexandre’s book came from his uncle, Gabriel Jardin. In a lengthy article published by Le Figaro, Gabriel set out to dismantle Des Gens très bien piece by piece. Gabriel states that he was disgusted by the claims Alexandre made and he saw the book as “childish and obnoxious.” Through this article, Gabriel identified arguments made against his father. These include accusations that Jean Jardin was never brought to justice, he was not powerless in the face of Vichy officials, his participation in the Resistance movement was not as vital as he claimed, and that others have gone out of their way to protect his name. For each of these allegations, Gabriel offered historical evidence to support his point as well as personal testimony from himself and intellectuals to defend his claim. He concludes by stating, “Certain individuals, during the tragic period of the Occupation of France, preferred to hide or flee to not compromise; others ran the risk of compromising themselves to defend their countrymen and save lives. Jean Jardin was the latter.”

After the two prominent newspapers in France, Le Monde and Le Figaro, published reviews shaming Jardin’s book, he penned an explanation to The Guardian. In this open rebuttal against his critics, Jardin explained that he is now in the middle of a “fierce memorial battle”

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between his generation and his late father’s generation.\textsuperscript{142} He claims that while France is a country where many topics can be openly discussed, confronting the matter of an individual’s dishonor during the Second World War, especially if that person was an incredibly well liked and decent person, leads to harsh criticism. Jardin believed that his book elicited such fury from the public because he explicitly reveals the complicity of average families in France. He stated that “… my book talks above all about family, and therefore about all families that, to varying degrees, followed Marshal Pétain in 1940… But here I bring up the accountability of people who believed they had moral standards, therefore I'm impugning the honour of our own families.” He said that what he found most perplexing was that society of respectable individuals could aid in the implementation of these crimes. He attributes this to a moral discourse used by Vichy to mobilize the French population. He confessed that “My grandfather, a man steeped in Christianity, was one of those people.” He also stated that the responsibility of average French citizens was overlooked because “convenient figures of evil” were put on trial as a symbol for the nation. This allowed families to see men like Touvier, Bousquet, and Papon as evil, not themselves.\textsuperscript{143}

Less than a month later, Jardin published a similar attack against his critics in \textit{Le Monde}. He argued against the critics that claimed his book was not accurately historical. He claimed,

\textit{“Des gens très bien} is my story, chronicling my slow awareness as a grand-son of Pierre Laval’s chief of staff from late April 1942 to 30 October 1943 dates that cover, alas, the period of roundups.”\textsuperscript{144} He claims that, unlike the biographers who have chronicled the life of his

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{144} Alexandre Jardin, “Mon Grand-père était bien un collaborateur,” \textit{Le Monde}, 9 February 2011.
\end{itemize}
grandfather, he has asked the difficult questions. This includes finding out what his grandfather did on the day of the Vél d’Hiv roundups and understanding the degree of knowledge that Jean Jardin had regarding plans for deportation. He believed that those denying that Jean knew about the roundups did not take into account that his high level position would require him to know this information. Furthermore, Alexandre Jardin was angry at these scholars for stating that his book did not have enough evidence because he believed this implied that he only wanted to tarnish his grandfather’s image.\footnote{Ibid.} Alexandre also defended himself by saying he wants not only France, but the world to know his love for his country and that he does not believe that the nation is full of Vichy supporters unable to confront the past. He believes that his ability to openly publish such a story reveals that France willing to listen and avoid passing on a legacy of blindness to the next generation. For France, he believes “[a]wareness is linked to vitality.”\footnote{Ibid.}

While the majority of the reviews of Jardin’s book were negative, one critique by Jean-Pierre Azéma, a prominent scholar of Vichy, offered a more forgiving analysis of his work. Azéma stated that Jardin had made approximations on topics that are difficult to treat, however, this could happen to any non-historian writing about the subject. Furthermore, he comes to Jardin’s defense regarding one of the most debated aspects of his work. Most reviewers cite that Jardin’s position within the Vichy government was too insignificant for him to have been involved in the Vél d’Hiv roundups. Azéma believes that these historians are wrong and that as Laval’s chief of staff, it is likely Jardin would have been aware of this operation.\footnote{L’Express, “Jean-Pierre Azéma : ‘À Vichy, les cabinets ministériels avaient un rôle majeur,’” 7 January 2011.}
Conclusion

This chapter illustrates the way in which scholarly studies on Vichy have been disseminated to the public over time. This process which began in the 1970s with a rewriting of the history of Vichy eventually led to the creation of popular media that hopes to inform consumers about important issues that not only affect the past, but also the present. Historical fictions like *Sara’s Key* and *La Rafle* demonstrate the way in which fictional narratives have the ability to engage audiences in the recreation of historical narrative by prompting these readers and viewers to have a conversation about the past. Furthermore, works like *Des Gens très bien*, illustrates the way in which social and historical memory come into conflict and how this tension leads to a discussion about the way history is written. Together, these works have become influential in teaching French citizens about the occupation and the nation’s role in the Holocaust.
CONCLUSION

This thesis highlights the way in which achieving reconciliation is a long process that spans generations. For France, confronting the nation’s role in the Holocaust has taken over seventy years, and in some ways, the French are still wrestling with this issue. The heated debates surrounding the introduction of collaboration into French historiography illustrated the way in which social memory confronted a new generation who wanted to re-evaluate the past. The subsequent prosecution of former Vichy and Nazi officials confirmed the arguments made by these historians in the 1960s and 1970s and brought the larger issue of French involvement in the Holocaust into public debate. The 1990s saw an increased interested in the annual commemorative ceremony for the Vél d’Hiv roundups and intellectuals appealed to the Republic to take responsibilities for these crimes. Unable to deny French involvement in these events, scholars fought against politicians who tried to maintain separation between what was the French State and the continuation of the Republic embodied by the Resistance. After Chirac took responsibility for these actions on behalf of the nation, a duty to remember swept through France and took form in the creation of popular media. The publication of materials such as Sarah’s Key, La Rafle, et Des Gens trés bien echoed the call to reach out to the public and teach children and adults alike about the events of the past to ensure they never happen again. This history illustrates the competing ideas of memory defined by Halbwachs and Nora and depicts how these competing ideas shape and transform the historical narrative. Furthermore, the way in which
France has confronted these issues coincides with the model of reconciliation presented by Hayner as the nation has need time to face the past.

While the Republic has taken responsibility for these roundups, further strides could be made to ensure further generations learn about the legacy of this event. The creation of a new memorial space to commemorate the Vél d’Hiv roundups would be crucial in advancing this process. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the current space of memorialization consists of two locations. First, there is the bronze statue depicting the victims of the roundups on the track of the Vélodrome that was dedicated in 1993. This monument is located less than 300 meters away from the first commemorative area as illustrated in Figure 8 below and is currently the site where the annual commemorative events take place. The aesthetic nature of this area is an important aspect in having the memorial services on the walkway surrounding the statue, however the importance of the former sites of the roundups should not be neglected.

Figure 8. Map illustrating the distance between the two memorial locations
This original location of the Vélodrome d’Hiver sits on the corner where the commemorative plaque, inaugurated by Chirac, once stood. Previously, this stele rested upon a wall in an alcove between a two government buildings. Today, this area is under construction while a new multilevel office complex is being built. The area, as of July 2015, can be seen below in Figure 9. Behind a construction barrier blocking the street directly in front of the plaque, this memorial has been encased in glass and is accompanied by a brief explanation of roundups. This layout, however, is temporary, and according to the plans for the office space on the builder’s website, a memorial garden will be constructed in honor of the Vél d’Hiv roundups. This new home for the monument is located perpendicular to its current location on the Rue Nélaton at the original entrance to the Vél d’Hiv. The rough design for the garden can be seen below in Figure 10.

Figure 9. Commemoration site of the Vél d’Hiv roundups, 2015.
Figure 10. Floor plans for the new memorial garden outlined within the red box

The new garden coincides with the creation of a much needed memorial space that directly addresses the roundups, however there are certain factors that must be taken into consideration when constructing this area. As Nora argued, this site of memory not only remains connected to the roundups of 1942, but it also engages in the debates that have surrounded the nation in the process of coming to terms with the past. In order to engage visitors in this process, this new garden should act as a center of education. Here, visitors should be able to learn about the roundups and the turbulent history that has accompanied the memorization of this event. Exhibits, text, photos, and multimedia examples should be incorporate to engage both adults and children who would visit the site. Furthermore, the incorporation of popular materials, such as
clips from *La Rafle* or narrative from *Sarah’s Key*, would be helpful for students to make connections with their visit to the information they learn in class.

The inclusion of these sources would not only allow visitors to connect with the past, but it would also allow them to use this knowledge to think about the future. Utilizing the Vél d’Hiv roundups as an example in history, visitors would be able to have an open dialogue regarding the turbulent process of memorialization and the way in which issues of racial discrimination affect society today. Thus, the memory of the Vél d’Hiv has the potential to remain a focal point for the nation to discuss concepts of state responsibility and national identity in the present.
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