

# A Right to Irreconcilability?

## Oradour-sur-Glane, German-French Relations and the Limits of Reconciliation after World War II

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In September 2009, Pierre Lellouche, the French State Secretary for European Relations, visited Verdun for the 25th anniversary of the meeting between the French President François Mitterrand and the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. The picture of these two men shaking hands on the grounds of the battlefield of Verdun has become a symbol of Franco-German reconciliation. Lellouche remembered 25 years later:

“Neither the German Chancellor Kohl nor the French President Mitterrand knew on 22 September 1984 with any certainty that the Cold War would end five years later [...], but they were fully aware that in some ways they closed the chapter of the mass graves of [19]14-18 and the chapter Oradour-sur-Glane; the chapter of the three major German-French wars [...].”<sup>1</sup>

On June 10, 1944, a unit of the *Waffen-SS* had completely destroyed the French village of Oradour-sur-Glane. 642 men, women, and children were killed in this massacre and the village was burnt down to a landscape of ruins. For the French, Oradour became a symbol of their suffering under Ger-

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1 Speech delivered by Pierre Lellouche at Verdun on 22 November 2009, <http://www.france-allemande.fr/Rede-von-Pierre-Lellouche-in,4741.html>, accessed 5 November 2011. All translations from French and German by the author.

man occupation during World War II.<sup>2</sup> With the words of Pierre Lellouche, with the gesture at Verdun, the Second World War symbolized by Oradour, should have been a closed chapter. Indeed, this seems to hold true not only for official relations and symbolic politics, but also for transnational relations on the level of society. Today the new village of Oradour has ties with Germany by way of a partnership between the elementary school and the German *Theo Schoeller Grundschule* in Nürnberg. The school in Oradour has even included German into its curriculum. Moreover, with Gerda Hasselfeldt, the former vice-president of the German *Bundestag*, an important political personality is committed to an exchange between Germany and the village.<sup>3</sup>

However, if we take a closer look, this picture falls apart: Most of the relations with Germany are new and controversial; time and time again, there is resistance from members of the National Association of the Families of the Martyrs of Oradour-sur-Glane (ANFM) against closer ties with Germany. For example, there were emotional discussions in 2004 when it became known that a German delegation of young people and former members of the French *résistance* would attend the commemorative ceremony on June 10, following an invitation by the local mayor.<sup>4</sup> Even a reconciliation concert given by a German choir 63 years after the crime, was contro-

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- 2 Standard works on Oradour include: Jean-Jacques Fouché, *Oradour* (Paris: Lia-  
na Levi, 2001); Sarah Farmer, *10 juin 1944, Oradour: Arrêt sur mémoire* (Paris:  
Perrin, 2007).
- 3 Henning Meyer, *Der Wandel der französischen 'Erinnerungskultur' des Zweiten  
Weltkriegs am Beispiel dreier 'Erinnerungsorte': Bordeaux, Caen und Or-  
adour-sur-Glane* (PhD diss., Universität Augsburg, 2006), [http://opus.bibliothek.  
.uni-augsburg.de/volltexte/2008/760/pdf/H\\_Meyer\\_Erinnerungskultur.pdf](http://opus.bibliothek.<br/>.uni-augsburg.de/volltexte/2008/760/pdf/H_Meyer_Erinnerungskultur.pdf), 430-  
435, accessed 30 May 2011. Concerning the pupils learning German in Oradour:  
[http://www.theo-schoeller-grundschule.de/Unsere\\_Schule/Partnerschule/partner-  
schule.html](http://www.theo-schoeller-grundschule.de/Unsere_Schule/Partnerschule/partner-<br/>schule.html), accessed 30 May 2011. Concerning Gerda Hasselfeldt's commit-  
ment: Caroline Ischinger, Den Blick gemeinsam nach vorne richten, *Dachauer  
SZ*, 25 May 2010.
- 4 Thomas Schober, *Oradour – eine Warnung an die Menschheit*, [http://draf.d.org  
/draf\\_2001\\_09/htdocs/start40\\_3.html](http://draf.d.org<br/>/draf_2001_09/htdocs/start40_3.html), accessed 23 November 2010; Béatrice  
Jérôme, Les élus alsaciens participeront aux ceremonies, *Le Monde*, 9 June  
2004.

versial.<sup>5</sup> A town partnership with a German city is still unthinkable to the current day.<sup>6</sup> Whereas on the level of symbolic politics – in the words of Pierre Lellouche – Oradour belongs to the past, the situation is much more complex when considering Oradour as a reality – an actually existing community. What can reconciliation possibly mean after a particularly brutal crime like the massacre of Oradour? How did those who survived react to efforts of reconciliation from the Germans? How do the descendants of those who were killed deal with such reconciliation attempts today? Moreover, are the Oradour citizens actually reconciled with Germany today?

This article will endeavor to answer these questions. It is a case study that will measure the scope and the success of initiatives from within civil society aiming at reconciliation at a place that was heavily struck and marked by World War II and its aftermath.<sup>7</sup> In the next section, reconciliation will be defined in order to develop a framework for this analysis. Several factors and conditions of relevance in the processes of reconciliation are identified and applied to the Oradour case. Section 3 will provide an overview of gestures of reconciliation in the context of Oradour as well as a discussion of its successes and failures, problems, and limits. Section 4 contains an analysis of ‘Oradour’ in its different meanings in order to identify the addressees of the reconciliation gestures as well as the various actors involved in the reconciliation process. Furthermore, this analysis will focus on persons and collectives included in and excluded from the process of

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5 Andreas Sichelstiel, Europahymne Höhepunkt, *Pegnitz-Zeitung*, 21 May 2007.

6 In 1990 the mayor of Oradour, Robert Lapuelle, said in an interview with Jacqueline Deloffre from the German newspaper *Die Zeit*, that it was still too early for a town partnership, <http://images.zeit.de/text/1990/40/Manche-Haendezittern-noch>, accessed 24 April 2008. In an interview with Caroline Ischinger, the new mayor of Oradour, Raymond Frugier, was confident that a closer relationship between Dachau and Oradour would emerge, but didn’t speak about a town partnership. Was bedeutet Ihr Besuch in Dachau?, *Dachauer SZ*, 25 May 2010.

7 The following results are based on the research done for my PhD thesis, which deals with “Oradour and the Germans. Dealing with a war crime and its memory: Criminal prosecution, indemnification, revisionism and gestures of reconciliation in the FRG and GDR, 1949-2011”. In this article, I will limit myself to the relations between Oradour and the FRG.

reconciliation. Concluding, I will discuss the question of the right to irreconcilability in the case of Oradour.

## RECONCILIATION WITH ORADOUR: DETERMINING FACTORS

In 2009, Veit Straßner criticized the lack of discussion in the social sciences on the concept of “reconciliation” and recommended a definition that will serve as the basis of our reflections:

“Reconciliation is the state of being reconciled as well as the process that aims at this state. The fundamental condition of reconciliation is a burdened past, with which one shall come to terms in order to achieve a state that is defined by the beginning or resumption of trustworthy and cooperative relationships. In this state of reconciliation, peaceful coexistence and cooperation are possible (again). Reconciliation in the double sense of the word takes place on the individual level between perpetrators and victims as well as on the collective level. Reconciliation processes are highly complex internal processes that cannot be demanded, but can be supported or obstructed by external factors.”<sup>8</sup>

In looking more closely at some factors of Straßner’s definition and applying it to the Oradour case, we find several unfavorable conditions for the process of reconciliation. Firstly, the *burdened past*, which forms the prerequisite of every need for reconciliation, is in this case extremely cruel. In fact, the majority of the victims were women and children who were locked up in the village church. Those who were not killed by gas, shells, or gunshots were burnt alive. Only 52 out of 642 corpses could be identified and buried in individual graves.<sup>9</sup> Such circumstances surrounding death constitute great problems in the process of mourning, since the uncertainties of

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8 Veit Straßner, Versöhnung und Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung – Ein Vorschlag zur Begriffsbestimmung und Konzeptionalisierung, in: *Amnesie, Amnestie oder Aufarbeitung? Zum Umgang mit autoritären Vergangenheiten und Menschenrechtsverletzungen*, ed. Siegmar Schmidt et al. (Wiesbaden: VS, 2009), 23-36, here: 29.

9 Fouché, *Oradour*, 149-154, 159-166, 180-182.

the victims' death often haunt the surviving family and friends for a life-time.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, many of the schoolchildren, who had been the victims in this massacre, came from hamlets outside the village. Their death often left families behind who had lost more than one child or even all of their children on June 10.<sup>11</sup> Jean-Jacques Fouché, philosopher and an expert on the Oradour case, goes so far as to say that “the dimensions of the massacre, especially the fact that most of the victims were women and children, creates irreconcilability”.<sup>12</sup>

The second unfavorable starting point for reconciliation concerns the *beginning or resumption of trustworthy and cooperative relationships* after the conflict. The prefix “re-” in “reconciliation” refers to a state prior to the conflict, and in this sense, the term means the re-establishment of the former community.<sup>13</sup> In the Oradour case there was no initial point to go back to. On the one hand, it is doubtful that there are ways back to a former community after a crime like this. On the other hand, no relations had existed between the village and Germany or Germans before the massacre, thus nothing could be revived there. On the contrary, there was an “anti-Boche” culture in the Limousin region and Oradour was no exception in this matter.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, resumption was not at stake here. In fact, the very

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10 Albert Valade, who lost his sister in the massacre, for example explains that his mother lived for a certain time with the hope that her daughter would come back. Albert Valade, *La page de catéchisme. Oradour-sur-Glane. Les villages sans enfants*, 2nd ed. (Neuvic Entier: Editions de la Veytizou S.A.R.L., 2004), 94. Aline Perney describes that until today the question of how her brother and father died is haunting her. *Tulle et Oradour*, Table ronde, France 3 Limousin, 2004, Archive of the Centre de la mémoire d'Oradour-sur-Glane (hereafter: ACMO), V4.5.2/03.

11 Concerning the situation in the hamlets: Valade, *Page*. Considering the loss of several children also: Farmer, *Oradour*, 212-213.

12 Jean-Jacques Fouché, *Oradour. La politique et la justice* (Saint-Paul: Souny, 2004), 18.

13 Sebastian Friese, *Politik der gesellschaftlichen Versöhnung. Eine theologisch-ethische Untersuchung am Beispiel der Gacaca-Gerichte in Ruanda* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010), 8.

14 Fouché, *Oradour*, 92. *Boches* is a derogatory term for Germans.

beginning of the ‘relations’ between the village and the Germans was marked by a horrible crime.

Thirdly, *external factors* have created an unfavorable context for reconciliation in Oradour, specifically the actions of the French and German state. The French state has played a leading role in Oradour after the massacre. Under General de Gaulle, Oradour became the national symbol of the French suffering at the hands of the Germans during the Second World War. The ruins became public property and were declared historical monuments. High representatives of the French state attended the annual commemoration ceremonies, and the French state financially supported the construction of the new Oradour. A new village was built next to the ruins.<sup>15</sup> According to Straßner, generally external factors like public recognition of the crime and financial support for the victims should actually support a reconciliation process.<sup>16</sup> However, the new village was not even finished when the close relationship between the French state and Oradour ruptured in 1953. As the Oradour trial in Bordeaux made known to the public, Frenchmen from Alsace who were nearly all forced into the SS had participated in the massacre. The question of their criminal prosecution turned into a national crisis. Oradour demanded a prosecution of the French perpetrators together with the Germans whereas the Alsace region insisted that these forced recruited men were only victims. Finally, the French National Assembly granted an amnesty to the already condemned Frenchmen.<sup>17</sup> In Oradour this was felt like a second martyrdom<sup>18</sup> and the consequences were dramatic: the village disassociated itself from the state and retreated into isolation and mourning for years. Feasts and ceremonies were either prohibited or strictly regimented. The streets were left without names, the houses without colour. Over the years, there were no trees or flowers in the village. In the 1960s, the ice covering Oradour started to melt very slowly. But even in the early 1990s, the houses still remained grey and without any

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15 Farmer, *Oradour*, 79-120.

16 Straßner, *Versöhnung*, 28.

17 Only the man who had engaged voluntarily in the SS was not granted amnesty. Several studies deal with the trial. The most detailed are Fouché, *Politique*, and Guillaume Javerliat, *Bordeaux 1953: le deuxième drame d’Oradour. Entre histoire, mémoire et politique* (Limoges: Pulim, 2009).

18 Farmer, *Oradour*, 194.

decorations. At that time, the streets were still empty and public events were forbidden in June.<sup>19</sup> The amnesty created a national conflict and henceforth the need for reconciliation with the French state and the Alsace region. The isolation and bitterness that resulted from the Bordeaux process and characterized the double conflict within France is one of the external factors that inhibited the process of reconciliation in Oradour. The tensions between Oradour and the French state have weakened since the 1980s; and in the 1990s reconciliation initiatives followed between Oradour and Alsace.<sup>20</sup>

At a first look, on the part of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) two factors were given that theoretically intended to promote reconciliation: criminal prosecution and compensation. Altogether twelve preliminary proceedings were opened by the German public prosecutor's offices regarding the German crime in Oradour.<sup>21</sup> In 1960, a French-German agreement of compensation for the crimes committed by the Nazis made it possible for most of those affected by the massacre to receive indemnification payments from the German state.<sup>22</sup> However, looking at the issue more closely, it is doubtful whether these measures had a positive impact on the reconciliation process. Legally justified or not, the preliminary hearings never led to a tri-

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19 Farmer, *Oradour*, 204-217; Fouché, *Politique*, 467-476; Meyer, *Wandel*, 403-410.

20 Meyer, *Wandel*, 408-410, 415-418.

21 As there is no study including all the preliminary proceedings in the FRG, I have to refer to the files that have been collected by the public prosecutor's office in Stuttgart. When preliminary proceedings on the Oradour case were initiated in 1995, the office received nearly all the former writs of prohibition. Stadtarchiv Ludwigsburg, Js 48144/89, Roter Band II. Four preliminary proceedings don't appear however and can be found in: Staatsarchiv Nürnberg, 1 AR 29/53; Staatsarchiv Bremen, 20 Js 50/81; Landesarchiv Münster, 45 Js 53/89; Claudia Moisel, *Frankreich und die deutschen Kriegsverbrecher. Politik und Praxis der Strafverfolgung nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004), 187-188.

22 Claudia Moisel, Pragmatischer Formelkompromiss: Das deutsch-französische Globalabkommen von 1960, in: *Grenzen der Wiedergutmachung. Die Entschädigung für NS-Verfolgte in West- und Osteuropa 1945-2000*, ed. Hans Günter Hockerts et al. (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), 242-284, here: 275-276.

al in the FRG. Thus, not a single man was ever condemned there.<sup>23</sup> Besides, the West German government was active on behalf of German soldiers who had been condemned in Bordeaux in 1953 and finally achieved their early release.<sup>24</sup> Regarding the compensation, we know that the majority of those entitled to receive payments did accept.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, we know nearly nothing on how the agreement was perceived. What is certain is that the early release of the Germans convicted in Bordeaux as well as the fact that the General of the SS-Division *Das Reich* could live a normal life in Germany are mentioned in the book about the massacre and its aftermath sold by the ANFM. However, the book totally ignores the compensation payment.<sup>26</sup>

Regarding the official recognition of the crime as another element supposed to support reconciliation, it was not until the year 2000 that with Gerhard Schröder a German chancellor officially recognized the massacre. He repeated this recognition four years later, but there was no apology for the crime, as some had expected.<sup>27</sup> The long lasting silence of the German chancellors had a particularly negative effect because for several decades, former SS men and revisionists denied in their publications to have been guilty of having committed the massacre. While the French state censored

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23 In 1983, the former officer Heinz Barth was condemned in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) for having participated in the Oradour massacre. Henry Leide, *NS-Verbrecher und Staatssicherheit. Die geheime Vergangenheitspolitik der DDR* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 131-142. Andrea Erkenbrecher, *Der Prozess gegen Heinz Barth 1983. Eine Fallstudie zur politischen Instrumentalisierung von Kriegsverbrecherprozessen in der DDR* (M.A. thesis, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 2006).

24 Moisel, *Frankreich*, 183-188; Fouché, *Oradour*, 268.

25 This is the result of an evaluation I made of the so-called “fiches de contrôle”, index cards that were established for every person who received compensation following the Franco-German agreement. Those cards are archived in the Archive du monde combattant, Caen.

26 Guy Pauchou and Pierre Masfrand, *Oradour sur Glane. Vision d'epouvante* (Limoges: Melting Phot, 2003), 138-139.

27 Meyer, *Wandel*, 433-434; Lucas Delattre, A Oradour, dernière étape de la réconciliation franco-allemand, *Le Monde*, 30 May 2000.

several of those books, the German government did not.<sup>28</sup> This revisionism offended the survivors and the relatives of the victims, which for some is Oradour's third trauma.<sup>29</sup> In conclusion, it can be stated that concerning the actions of the French and the West German state since the end of World War II, the events that obstructed a process of reconciliation outweighed those that supported it.

## RECONCILIATION INITIATIVES FROM WITHIN CIVIL SOCIETY

Reconciliation between Oradour and Germany has not been a subject in academic research so far. Nevertheless, the topic is *en passant* mentioned in a few studies, especially the following two aspects: The missing official apology from the German state and the question of Oradour's readiness for reconciliation with Germany.<sup>30</sup> Research on civil society's gestures of reconciliation towards Oradour is just at its beginning.<sup>31</sup> This research desideratum is remarkable because numerous such gestures can be evidenced. Germans have offered help for the reconstruction of the village, they have raised money, they have laid wreaths, have brought their sympathy, memorial plates, and gifts of atonement. They have celebrated church services of atonement and concerts of reconciliation in the new local church of Oradour. When examining civil society's involvement in the reconciliation process, three aspects are particularly remarkable: Firstly, gestures aimed at reconciliation date back to 1947. Secondly, it can be evidenced that the ac-

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28 Meyer, *Wandel*, 340-344; Jean-Jacques Fouché, *Le négationnisme et le symbole Oradour* (2002), <http://www.cerclegramsci.org/rubs/tribune10.htm>, accessed 31 May 2011.

29 In his documentary film, *Oradour, le retour à la vie*, 2009, Marc Desoutter speaks of the "three great traumas", whereas Robert Hébras, one of the men to survive the massacre, uses the expression "injuries".

30 Notably: Fouché, *Oradour*, 241, 244; Jean-Jacques Fouché, Le Centre de la mémoire d'Oradour, *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire* 73 (2002), 125-137; Henning Meyer, *Oradour-sur-Glane und sein Rang in der französischen 'Erinnerungskultur'* (M.A. thesis, Universität Augsburg, 2003), 109-113.

31 Meyer, *Oradour-sur-Glane*, 109-113; Meyer, *Wandel*, 433-434.

tors and the chosen forms of reconciliation efforts are heterogeneous and it further can be established that within this heterogeneity Christian motivations and corresponding symbols have been dominant for quite some time. Thirdly, different phases and turning points can be observed. During the ten years following the massacre, the rejection of such gestures prevailed and the offers aimed at reconciliation remained unanswered. This was the case when in 1947 the German youth magazine *Benjamin* campaigned for young volunteers to support the construction of the new Oradour village. The appeal received a positive response but the offer was vehemently rejected by the ANFM.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, a goblet of atonement from the German branch of *Pax Christi*, a non-governmental Catholic peace movement, offered in 1955 was not accepted.<sup>33</sup> In 1953, a donation from a school in Castrop-Rauxel offered to pay for the planting of a tree in Oradour may have been used for the intended purpose, but there was still no direct contact with Oradour. Not the villagers, but the French High Commissioner André François Poncet signed the letter of appreciation.<sup>34</sup> For the 10th commemoration day of the massacre a delegation of the descendants of the victims of Penzberg and the Rombergpark brought an insignia.<sup>35</sup> As far as we know, this insignia was

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32 Alfons Erb, Oradour gestern und heute, *Dokumente. Zeitschrift für den deutsch-französischen Dialog* 4, 2 (1948), 86-93.

33 Hedwig Groß, Das Geheimnis der Versöhnung heißt Erinnerung. Vor 50 Jahren verübte eine SS-Division das Massaker von Oradour-sur-Glane, in: *Begegnungsfahrt. 50 Jahre deutsch-französische Geschichte, 50 Jahre Pax Christi Frankreich, 25. April bis 4. Mai 1994*, Bischöfliches Diözesanarchiv Aachen (hereafter: BDA), Ala Pax Christi, vol. 35.

34 H.M., Laßt Bäume darüber wachsen, *Die 7 Tage*, 8 May 1953; Ulrich Brochhagen, *Nach Nürnberg. Vergangenheitsbewältigung in der Ära Adenauer* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1999), 162.

35 The Rombergpark is a park in the German town of Dortmund where in spring 1945 several hundred people, Germans as well as foreigners, were executed by National Socialists. Ulrich Sander, *Mord im Rombergpark. Tatsachenbericht* (Dortmund: Grafit Verlag, 1993). Concerning Penzberg, on 28 April 1945, units of the *Wehrmacht* and a group of *Werwolf* members killed 16 persons. Some of them had tried to save the local mine from being blasted by the National Socialists and therefore had taken over the local power. Among the victims were also persons who haven't been involved in this action at all. *Die tödliche Utopie*.

never posted and the delegation's invitation to people in Oradour to participate in the commemoration of the crimes of Penzberg and the Rombergpark was never answered.<sup>36</sup> "Trustworthy and cooperative relationships" were not established in this phase, a time heavily marked by the crime itself and the so-called second martyrdom of the Bordeaux judgement and the amnesty which followed.

The first turning point in the relationship between Germans and the Oradour citizens took place in 1976 as the result of Vinzenz Kremp's commitment to the village. Born in 1915, Kremp participated in the Second World War as a soldier in the *Wehrmacht*. After the end of the war, he became a member of the *Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge* (VDK), engaging in the maintenance of war graves.<sup>37</sup> He committed himself to reconciliation out of his wartime experience, where he might or might not have been involved in a possible war crime.<sup>38</sup> During a church service in Oradour in 1976, he donated, together with a youth group, a candelabra as a reconciliation gift. From this gesture emerged his long-lasting contact with the village and his deep friendship with the local priest, Henri Boudet. Kremp traveled regularly to Oradour and also welcomed Boudet and young people from Oradour to his home in Baden.<sup>39</sup>

However, the election of Raymond Frugier as Oradour's new mayor in 1995 is the most important turning point. Since his inauguration, Frugier has been practicing an active reconciliation policy, first towards Alsace and

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*Bilder, Texte, Dokumente, Daten zum Dritten Reich*, fourth ed., ed. Horst Möller et al. (München and Berlin: Selbstverlag Institut für Zeitgeschichte, 2003), 285, 314. Both executions were part of the so-called *Kriegsendphasenverbrechen*.

36 Feierliche Ehrung der Märtyrer von Oradour, *Die Tat*, 19 June 1954; Man muß ihnen das Handwerk legen!, *Die Tat*, 19 June 1954.

37 Joseph Spinner, Vinzenz Kremp (1915-1996), <http://www.umkirch.de/ceasy/modules/cms/main.php5?cPageId=166>, accessed 31 May 2011.

38 Vinzenz Kremp, *Oradour-sur-Glane*, 2, manuscript, given to the author by Wolfram Kremp. Wolfgang Kremp, Interview with the author, 19 February 2010.

39 Correspondence between Vinzenz Kremp and Henri Boudet, 1976-1986, given to the author by Henri Boudet; Henri Boudet, interview with the author, 9 May 2008.

later on towards Germany.<sup>40</sup> Whereas Vinzenz Kremp's contacts with Oradour remained unofficial and progressed notably with the local parish, the contacts now shifted to another level. Not only did Frugier officially welcome German delegations but he also welcomed increasingly more people of higher political standing. In retrospect, many innovations took place during his seventeen years in office: In 1997, he officially welcomed for the first time a German mayor in Oradour.<sup>41</sup> In 2000, he officially received Reinhold Bocklet, a high-ranking official in the Bavarian state chancellery.<sup>42</sup> Then, in 2004, for the first time, he invited a German delegation of young people and former members of the French *résistance* to attend the commemoration ceremony for the 60th anniversary of the massacre.<sup>43</sup> Later, in 2007, a German choir was invited to give a concert in Oradour.<sup>44</sup> The same year and two years later, there was a visit from Gerda Hasselfeldt, the vice president of the German *Bundestag*.<sup>45</sup> Most of these initiatives grew out of already existing relations or they led to long-lasting associations, which qualifies them as "trustworthy and cooperative relationships". For instance, the visit of Gerda Hasselfeldt led to a return visit in 2010, when, for the first time, a large official delegation of Oradour traveled to Germany that included the mayor, members of the local council, a survivor of the massacre as well as one of the victims' relatives, and the local soccer team. They were warmly welcomed in Dachau by Gerda Hasselfeldt and Peter Bürgel, the local mayor.<sup>46</sup> Peter Bürgel then was the first German (local)

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40 Meyer, *Wandel*, 415-418, 430-431.

41 Meyer, *Oradour-sur-Glane*, 110.

42 Gerd Kröncke, Stille in Oradour-sur-Glane, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 29 May 2000.

43 Meyer, *Wandel*, 434; Flyer *Einladung zu einer Bildungsfahrt nach Oradour*, [http://www.drafd.de/files/flyer\\_oradour.pdf](http://www.drafd.de/files/flyer_oradour.pdf), accessed 31 May 2011; *Deutsche auf dem Weg nach Oradour*, Auswahl aus einer Ausstellung von Alexandra C. Schmidt, [http://www.authentic-beauties.de/pdf/Oradour\\_Broschuere.pdf](http://www.authentic-beauties.de/pdf/Oradour_Broschuere.pdf), accessed 31 May 2011.

44 Musik kontra Massaker, *Pegnitz-Zeitung*, 26-28 May 2007.

45 *Besuch in Gedenkstätte in Oradour*, [http://www.hasselfeldt.de/de/detail/aktuelleres\\_2737.htm](http://www.hasselfeldt.de/de/detail/aktuelleres_2737.htm), accessed 15 September 2007. Press release Bundestagsvizepräsidentin Hasselfeldt reist mit Dachauer OB Bürgel nach Oradour, <http://www.hansjoerg-christmann.de/htm/pm2009Juni17.html>, accessed 31 May 2011.

46 Laurent Borderie, Foot et émotion pour l'USO, *Le Populaire*, 2 July 2010.

politician to have been officially invited to attend the commemoration ceremony on June 10, 2011 – the last substantial welcoming gesture put forth by Raymond Frugier for the time being.<sup>47</sup>

Looked at from this point of view, reconciliation between Oradour and Germany was a long and difficult process but it became a success story after all. Although, there is no doubt about the constant progress of these relations considering their official character, there are open questions concerning the people who are not involved in this process, the problems this process provoked and its boundaries.

### **Successes and failures: Vinzenz Kremp and Pax Christi (1955-1994)**

The Catholic peace movement *Pax Christi* was founded in France in 1945 with the aim of reconciliation with Germany. In 1948, the German section was founded.<sup>48</sup> German delegations of *Pax Christi* visited Oradour several times. In 1955, Manfred Hörhammer, first secretary of the German branch<sup>49</sup>, and son of a German father and a French mother, visited Oradour for the first time, but he came *incognito*. Depressed, as he was to witness the ruins and what had happened there, he did not dare to reveal his identity to the local guide. After the visit, he described his experience in his public diary published in a Catholic magazine. As a result, a reader donated her family jewels to have them transformed into a goblet for the parish of Oradour.<sup>50</sup> The gift was not directly handed over to Oradour but rather the president of the German branch presented it to the Bishop of Lourdes, Pierre-Marie Théas, who was the founder of *Pax Christi* and its president in

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47 Benoît Sadry, e-mails to the author, 27 April 2011 and 3 June 2011.

48 Michael Kißener, Der Katholizismus und die deutsch-französische Annäherung in den 1950er Jahren, in: *Wege der Verständigung zwischen Deutschen und Franzosen nach 1945. Zivilgesellschaftliche Annäherungen*, ed. Corine Defrance et al. (Tübingen: Narr, 2010), 89-98, here: 90-91.

49 Ibid., 93.

50 Manfred Hörhammer, Aus meinem Tagebuch, *Pax-Christi-Zeitschrift* 2 (1955); Heinz Theo Risse, Oradour beginnt überall. Reflexionen über einige Beispiele christlicher Friedensarbeit, in: *Versöhnung: Gestalten, Zeiten, Modelle*, ed. Heinrich Fries and Ulrich Valeska (Frankfurt a.M.: Knecht, 1975), 133-144.

France. Théas passed the goblet over to the bishop of Limoges, Rastouil, who was, in turn, to pass it on to the parish of Oradour, which, in the end, rejected the object.<sup>51</sup>

In the following decades, the sentiments of the people in Oradour softened, but Manfred Hörrhammers' hope, that one day German priests would come to the town, accompanied by a bishop, German women and mothers, and "ask Mother Rouffange [sic] to lead us to the graves and to the graveyard", never came true.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, German delegations came in 1963, 1988 and 1994. They visited the ruins, celebrated church services for reconciliation, brought additional gifts of atonement, and laid down flowers. Actually, the town of Oradour opened up when, in 1988, the parish accepted the once rejected goblet and some French women attended the service. A few years later, in 1994, the pilgrims were warmly welcomed by the local priest, Jean Robert, with whom they celebrated a moving church service and who gave them absolution. In the same year, the deputy mayor welcomed the pilgrims for the first time in the church. However, the reception was short and he told the pilgrims that anger no longer existed in Oradour; nevertheless, there were still resentments. Thus, the group of pilgrims had to conclude: "The way to reconciliation wasn't easy in Oradour, and if we're honest, hasn't been reached yet. We prepared a church service, in which we wanted to ask for forgiveness [...] but our secret wish for inhabitants of the village to share the Eucharist with us did not come true."<sup>53</sup> The outcome of their commitment was far from "trustworthy and cooperative relationships", as Straßner would put it. But why did all efforts fail?

To answer this question it is helpful to compare the commitment of *Pax Christi* to that of Vincenz Kremp, as both of them initiated reconciliation in nearly the same setting. As we recall, working with a youth group in Limoges in 1976 to take care of German war graves, Kremp decided to make a gesture of reconciliation towards Oradour by giving a candelabra as a present to the local parish. As had done *Pax Christi*, he established contact

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51 Risse, Oradour; Groß, Geheimnis.

52 Hörrammer, Tagebuch. Marguerite Rouffanche was the only woman to survive the massacre in the church.

53 Pax Christi in Oradour. 'Wir wollen versuchen, uns christlich dem Grauen zu stellen', *Pax Christi* 9/10 (1963); Alice Rapp, Sonntag, 10. Juli 1988, BDA, Ala Pax Christi, vol. 33. Quotation: Groß, Versöhnung.

with the bishop of Limoges first to assess the situation. The bishop consulted the local priest and the ANFM, who both gave the all clear for the deposit of the candelabra in the new church; nonetheless, on the condition that “this deposit is done in a discreet way”. Kremp was asked to contact the local priest, Henri Boudet, for more details.<sup>54</sup> They agreed that the gift should be handed over during a Sunday morning church service. That the contact on that Sunday did not end with the church service was due to a coincidence and Henri Boudet. As Boudet had to baptise a child after the church service, he could not welcome the Germans himself. Instead of sending them alone to the ruins of the city, he had organized a meeting in the presbytery and had asked some young people of the parish to welcome the guests. Furthermore, the president of the ANFM and some other people attended the reception. When Boudet finally joined the group, contact had already been made between the young people. The young French invited the German group to come back in the afternoon to visit an exhibition in the local town hall.<sup>55</sup>

From that day on, Kremp kept up the freshly established contact. He invited Boudet and young people from Oradour to an event of the VDK and to his home in Baden. He also traveled regularly to Oradour.<sup>56</sup> In Germany, Kremp’s commitment to the village not only resounded in the press, but it also initiated more gestures of reconciliation. The first gesture came from the Freiburg criminal investigation department that donated money to the church of Oradour. Then, the Catholic parish of Umkirch signed a charter to “forever” pay for the church’s candles. Several of Kremp’s friends came along with him to Oradour in the following years.<sup>57</sup> Aside from these gestures, in the early eighties Kremp contributed in another way to the reconciliation with Oradour. As the revisionist publications on the massacre became increasingly more aggressive in Germany, Kremp, who had some experience in historical research, started working on the events surrounding

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54 Letter Bishop of Limoges to Archbishop of Freiburg, 1 July 1976, given to the author by Henri Boudet.

55 Henri Boudet, interview with the author, 9 May 2008.

56 Correspondence Kremp-Boudet.

57 Freiburger Kriminalbeamte sammelten für die neue Kirche von Oradour, *Kriegsgräberfürsorge* 4, 11 (1977), 234; Isolde Doelfs, Die Versöhnung vertiefen, *Konradsblatt* 38, 23 September 1979; Correspondence Kremp-Boudet.

the war crimes committed on June 10 in Oradour, and rectified the lies written by former SS men.<sup>58</sup> He thereby advocated for something that Straßner qualifies as an *external factor* to further the process of reconciliation mostly carried out by the state: “an earnest process of coping with the past wrongs as well as solid research into these past wrongs”.<sup>59</sup>

Reading the German newspapers reporting on Kremp’s commitment to Oradour, one gains the impression that a true “fairytales of reconciliation” had taken place at that time.<sup>60</sup> However, while also other sources prove that on the German side increasingly more people were interested and became involved in Kremp’s project, it is difficult to estimate its effect on Oradour. We know that at the time Vinzenz Kremp was well known in the village and, to some extent, he became integrated in the parish. When he came to Oradour, for example, he sometimes read the lesson during the church services. We also know that he was in contact with various other people in Oradour. Among them was the deputy mayor, but above all people of the parish.<sup>61</sup> However, we do not know how strong the bond grew between Kremp and the citizens of Oradour and what this bond meant for the people of Oradour. What is certain is that Kremp’s closest friend was Henri Boudet. Their relationship was not only “trustworthy and cooperative”, but it had grown into a close friendship. A highlight in this long-lasting friendship was the day in 1986, when Henri Boudet received the *Bundesverdienstkreuz* (Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany) for his commitment to the reconciliation of Oradour and Germany.<sup>62</sup>

It should be noted in this respect that this deep friendship grew with a man who himself was not affected by the massacre. Although, as the priest of the village, Henri Boudet in a way “married” the population,<sup>63</sup> but – to stay with the metaphor – he was not born into the family. It is likely that

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58 Correspondence Kremp-Boudet; Kremp, Oradour-sur-Glane.

59 Straßner, Versöhnung, 28.

60 For example: Karl-Heinz Darweger, Die Messe von Oradour, given to the author by Henri Boudet.

61 Correspondence Kremp-Boudet; Henri Boudet, Interview with the author, 9 May 2008.

62 Ludwig Wien, Kommt! Wir wollen es wagen!, *Evangelische Kirchenzeitung* 6 (1986).

63 Henri Boudet, Interview with the author, 9 May 2008.

this position enabled Boudet to become some kind of mediator between Kremp and the population.<sup>64</sup> How hard it can be for people, who suffered through the massacre to engage in “trustworthy and cooperative relationships” with Germans, is illustrated by the following scenario. Vinzenz Kremp was for several years in touch with the Cordeau family in Oradour. They were part of the parish and very close to Henri Boudet. During the events of June 10, 1944, the Cordeaus had lost their only daughter, Bernadette. Forty years after the massacre, their apartment still looked like a museum commemorating their beloved child. One day in the 1980s, Kremp was visiting them with his son and his son’s family. Vinzenz Kremp’s son had brought with him his just several months old son but Mrs. Cordeau refused to touch the baby since to her it was a “German male”.<sup>65</sup>

Coming back to the comparison with *Pax Christi*, we recall that Vinzenz Kremp found in Henri Boudet not only a person with whom he sympathized, but also a mediator to the local population. Contrary to the pilgrims of *Pax Christi*, who had visited Oradour in more or less long intervals, Kremp came back mostly once a year since the contact had first been established. When Henri Boudet left Oradour in 1985, the contact between the two men and between Kremp and different people from Oradour continued. Both factors were responsible for Kremp’s contacts to Oradour not to break off after Henri Boudet left the village in 1985.<sup>66</sup> How close these contacts were actually related to the two men is shown by the fact that after Kremp’s death all relationships to Oradour stopped. Kremp’s children maintained the contact to Boudet, who was visited almost yearly by part of the family until his death in 2011. But their contact with other people from Oradour ended long ago.<sup>67</sup> Even if Kremp had created more solid ties to Oradour than *Pax Christi*, ultimately he did not succeed to establish the kinds of „trustworthy and cooperative relationships” between the inhabit-

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64 There are a lot of indications in the correspondence between the two men pointing to this role.

65 Wolfram Kremp, Interview with the author, 19 February 2010; Henri Boudet, Interview with the author, 9 May 2008.

66 Correspondence Kremp-Boudet.

67 Wolfram Kremp, Interview with the author, 19 February 2010; Wolfram Kremp, e-mail to the author, 21 February 2010.

ants of Oradour and the Germans that would have outlasted his own engagement and his own death.

The commitment of *Pax Christi* and Vinzenz Kremp took place in what can be considered a period during which Oradour had been increasingly open to such gestures of reconciliation. However, these gestures might not have been approved by all inhabitants of the village. In fact, the church services aimed at reconciliation celebrated by *Pax Christi*, met no response. This lack of involvement showed that the people of the French village were not that enthusiastic about reconciliation efforts. Nevertheless, all these initiatives were tolerated. This tolerance seems to be rooted in the fact that these actions were part of civil society and that the German actors had never asked for an official response. Shortly after the 50th anniversary of the massacre in 1994, the local mayor, Robert Lapuelle, stated in an interview that until this day there were “nuances” in Oradour’s dealing with Germans. As could be gathered from his remarks, there were mainly two criteria that decided between acceptable and problematic contacts: The age of the Germans and the nature of the exchange. While there would be no problems on the level of private exchange, it would be difficult once mayors, ambassadors or Members of Parliament were involved. Lapuelle reported that people trampled with rage on wreaths that had been laid down regularly by the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED), the state party of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) and that they were just thrown away later. If the German ambassador had asked to lay a wreath during the commemoration ceremony on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the massacre, he would have had to send him away because the ANFM would not have accepted him. The mayor assured that this was not an act of hostility, but the disposition of the surviving families that would have to be respected.<sup>68</sup> A year later, Raymond Frugier followed Lapuelle in office and in spite of the “disposition of the families”, the new mayor abandoned the policy of “non-official relations”.

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68 Stefan Endel, Tröste meine Trauer!, <http://www.endell.de/infos/philosophie/index.html>, accessed 31 May 2011.

## Official relations between Oradour and Germany since 1995 and the role of civil society

We have already mentioned all the new contacts with Germany that had been accepted and to some extend had been accelerated by Raymond Frugier as mayor of Oradour. Analyzing them from the view of civil society, we can see two developments: Firstly, civil society continued playing an important role. Indeed, the first German delegation to have been invited officially to attend the commemorative ceremony on June 10, 2004 in the French village consisted of civil societal actors. Frugier made an interesting choice in inviting German former members of the French *résistance* and youth groups. Because of their role during the war and their age, both were far from sharing any guilt with the perpetrators of the massacre. The head of the delegation was Gerhard Leo, one of the founding members of the *Verband Deutscher in der Résistance, in den Streitkräften der Antihitlerkoalition und der Bewegung 'Freies Deutschland'* (Association of Germans in the French Resistance, DRAFD). Together with different trade unions, DRAFD had looked for young people to join the delegation.<sup>69</sup> Civil society played also an important role as far as the visits of the mayor of Bad Windsheim, Eckhardt, in 1997, and the Bavarian minister Bocklet in 2000 are concerned. Both visits emerged in the context of Franco-German town and regional partnerships. While Eckhardt visited the twin town of Bad Windsheim, located one hour away from Oradour, Bocklet stayed in Limousin to attend to events of regional partnerships between Bavaria and some French regions.<sup>70</sup> Even if Oradour refused to engage in a partnership with a German city, the civil society network of Franco-German town twinnings and regional partnerships had an impact on Oradour's relations with Germany after all.

Secondly, the new relations between Oradour and Germany are excellent examples of the constant interaction between civil society, the private sphere, and the state. To illustrate with two examples: The concert of rec-

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69 Flyer *Einladung*; Schober, *Oradour*.

70 Ansprache des Ersten Bürgermeisters der Stadt Bad Windsheim, Diplom-Ingenieur (univ.) Wolfgang Eckhardt anlässlich des Besuchs der Gedenkstätte Oradour-sur-Glane mit Kranzniederlegung am 04.10.1997, given to the author by Wolfgang Eckhardt; Kröncke, Stille.

onciliation, given by the choir of Schwaig in 2007, was the highlight of an already long term relationship that had involved actors on a private level as well as on the level of civil society and the state. In 1985, one of the survivors of the massacre, Robert Hébras, was invited to the peace talk organised by the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). He was seated next to Willy Brandt and therefore spent the whole day with the former German chancellor.<sup>71</sup> On this occasion, Hébras met Fritz Körber, member of the SPD and of the *Bezirkstag Mittelfranken* (District Council of Central Franconia). Körber was member of the commission for partnership and international understanding in the *Bezirkstag Mittelfranken* and also the political commissioner for this field since 1982. He had started traveling to Limousin with youth groups from the local *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* (Workers Welfare Association, AWO) one year before.<sup>72</sup> Since he planned to visit Oradour again just a few weeks later, he asked Hébras if he could give the youth group a guided tour through the ruins. Hébras accepted and from that day on, they became friends.<sup>73</sup> When Körber later became mayor of Schwaig, he organised an exhibition on Oradour in his hometown and invited Hébras and Frugier.<sup>74</sup> Körber left his position as mayor in 2006 but the contacts continued on the political and on the private level. In 2007, Körber was at the head of the invited group, including the choir of Schwaig and the chamber orchestra of Fürth. In this gesture of reconciliation even representatives at a higher state level became involved with the German Consul General sending representatives to Oradour to attend the concert.<sup>75</sup> This example draws our attention to the continuous and complex interconnection between the private, the public, and the state in processes of reconciliation.

The second example demonstrates that the politically highest-ranking contact between Oradour and Germany has its origins in private contacts

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71 Robert Hébras, interviews with the author, 7 May 2008 and 14 May 2008.

72 Fritz Körber, e-mail to the author, 31 October 2011.

73 Fritz Körber, interviews with the author, 31 May 2010 and 2 June 2010.

74 Rede von Bürgermeister Körber zur Eröffnung der Fotoausstellung ‘Oradour-sur-Glane – Ruinen als Mahnmal’ am 18.10.2005; Begrüßung von Bürgermeister Körber zum Abend der Vorträge mit Bürgermeister Raymond Frugier und Robert Hébras aus dem Limousin am 21.10.2005 im Schwaiger Schloss, both given to the author by Fritz Körber.

75 Andreas Sichelstiel, Europahymne Höhepunkt, *Pegnitz-Zeitung*, 21 May 2007.

and in activities by actors from civil society. Florian Förster worked as a volunteer for the Protestant organization *Aktion Sühnezeichen* (Action Reconciliation, ASF) in the *Centre de la mémoire d'Oradour-sur-Glane* (CMO), which officially opened in 1999. In the light of this experience, he suggested to the vice-president of the German Bundestag Gerda Hasselfeldt to officially visit Oradour. Förster and Hasselfeldt had met before on several occasions. The director of the CMO agreed upon inviting Hasselfeldt and, she then became the first representative of the German state to officially visit the village.<sup>76</sup> Here again different levels of society and state became involved. Hasselfeldt advocated that Oradour be one of the destinations of the youth exchange organized by the German Bundestag on the Day of remembrance of the victims of National Socialism in 2009. During her second visit to Oradour with the mayor of Dachau, Peter Bürgel, in 2009,<sup>77</sup> a friendly match between the Oradour and Dachau soccer teams had been organised.<sup>78</sup> A year later, it was Hasselfeldt's and Bürgel's turn to welcome a delegation from Oradour for a rematch in Dachau.<sup>79</sup> When Peter Bürgel was the first local German politician to officially attend the commemorative ceremony on June 10, official political and private contacts played an important role again. Peter Bürgel had accepted a private invitation to spend a few days with Raymond Frugier at his seaside house after the commemoration.<sup>80</sup>

By welcoming the different delegations and politicians in an official manner, Frugier, as head of the village, spoke in the name of Oradour. In this sense and by applying the criterion of "trustworthy and cooperative relationships", it could be argued that Oradour had reached the decisive stage of reconciliation with Germany. It is here that we reach a crucial point in

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76 Gerda Hasselfeldt, interview with the author, June 2008.

77 Besides her position as vice president of the *Bundestag*, Hasselfeldt is representing the constituency of Dachau-Fürstenfeldbruck at the German Parliament for a long time. Therefore she is closely linked with the Bavarian town of Dachau. Concerning her constituency: [http://www.hasselfeldt.de/de/main/im\\_wahlkreis\\_2.htm](http://www.hasselfeldt.de/de/main/im_wahlkreis_2.htm), accessed 31 May 2011.

78 Press release *Bundestagsvizepräsidentin Hasselfeldt*.

79 Laurent Borderie, Foot et émotion pour l'USO, *Le Populaire*, 2 July 2010.

80 Benoît Sadry, e-mail to the author, 27 April 2010 and 3 June 2010.

the analysis: What is actually meant when we are talking about reconciliation with ‘Oradour’?

## **“ORADOUR, THAT’S COMPLEX...”: DIMENSIONS OF ‘ORADOUR’**

“Oradour, that’s complex...”, is the title of one chapter of Jean-Jacques Fouché’s book about the *martyred village*.<sup>81</sup> The statement accurately captures the complexity involved when trying to define the meaning of ‘Oradour’ in the context of reconciliation processes. “Reconciliation”, Straßner writes, “takes place on the individual level between perpetrators and victims as well as on the collective level”.<sup>82</sup> As far as the German actors are concerned, none of them were men who had participated in the massacre. The actors were part of a collective, which Straßner describes as “the environment concerned by the effects or affects [of the past wrongs], or the society as such”.<sup>83</sup> As far as ‘Oradour’ is concerned, the name takes on several meanings. Oradour represents two *places*, the ruins of the previously existing town as well as the new village nearby. On a *symbolic level*, Oradour can be understood as a *lieux de mémoire* (Pierre Nora). Additionally, it became a “common term” “designating the massacre of a civil population without being able to defend itself by a military force”.<sup>84</sup> Oradour as the addressee of gestures of reconciliation could be representative of the *victims who died* in the massacre and who were addressed with gestures like laying down commemorative wreaths in the destroyed village or the local cemetery. However, the commitments for reconciliation with Oradour were foremost directed to the *survivors* of the massacre, e.g., *people living there and having been touched by the atrocities*.<sup>85</sup> At this point, additional as-

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81 Fouché, *Oradour*, 16. Fouché quoted the mayor of Saint-Junien and General Council of the canton to which Oradour belongs. What the mayor wanted to say exactly wasn’t clear.

82 Straßner, *Versöhnung*, 29.

83 *Ibid.*, 27.

84 Fouché, *Oradour*, 8.

85 Fritz Körber for example, said in an interview that he had tried for years to establish contacts with the inhabitants of Oradour; Sichelstiel, *Europahymne*. An-

pects need to be considered. The people living in Oradour today can be seen either as individuals or as part of different collectives. On the individual level, there are the survivors of the massacre, the victims' relatives, their descendants, and those who moved to Oradour after the massacre and who are without any connection to the crime. On the collective level, we can distinguish between different groups. Firstly, there is the municipality that includes all the individuals mentioned above. Secondly, as we have seen, the parish seems to be, or seems to have been at a time, a relevant collective as well. In addition, there is the ANFM whose active members were personally affected by the massacre or were related to a victim.<sup>86</sup> Taking into account that only opponents themselves can reconcile<sup>87</sup> one has to reconsider the question about who was involved in the reconciliation processes and who was excluded. This question is of great significance, especially with regard to Frugier's active policy of reconciliation initiated in 1995: Is mere symbolic politics as initiated by mayor Frugier at stake here, is this initiative supported by people other than the mayor, and, above all, who are the people involved?

As has been pointed out, mayor Frugier was the engine and protagonist of most of the initiatives aimed at reconciliation from 1995 onwards. His role as an actor is ambivalent since on the one hand he is the representative of a town in which today the people having been touched by the crime are in the minority.<sup>88</sup> On the other hand, Frugier was himself – in contrast to his

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other example is the already cited disappointment of the pilgrims of *Pax Christi* contained in their statement that their “secret wish for inhabitants of the village to share the Eucharist with us did not come true”. I include here those affected by the massacre, who moved away from Oradour but remained active in the ANFM or the local environment, as did for example Robert Hébras.

86 The conditions for the kindredship have been expanded since 2001. Benoît Sadry, e-mail to the author, 17 October 2011. The different statutes of the association from 1944, 1988 and 2001 can be found in ACMO, 5FP1. The statutes from 1944 have been given to the author by Benoît Sadry. Besides from the ANFM I will elide here different other associations in Oradour.

87 Friese, *Politik*, 89.

88 Meyer, *Wandel*, 374-375. The number of inhabitants grew from 1,145 in 1946 to 2,060 in 2000. Most of the new inhabitants haven't been touched by the massacre.

predessor in office – affected by the massacre. When the German troops arrived in Oradour on June 10, 1944, Frugier's father took his wife and children and fled to the forest. From their hideout, a provisory built cabana in which they stayed for about two weeks, the then four-year-old Frugier saw the church of Oradour burning. Although, the family survived, Frugier feels that the crime left its marks on him.<sup>89</sup> But in public Frugier rarely speaks about his personal experience, although it would extend his policy of reconciliation and his actor role for the dimension of the personally affected. This reluctance may have been nourished from a certain respect for those who more narrowly escaped death than he himself. His reluctance may, however also be seen against the background that he is barred from active membership in the ANFM to this day because no member of his immediate family was murdered and the house of the family escaped the destruction.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, because Frugier operates his reconciliation policy – at least officially – in the role of mayor, Robert Hébras' support of Frugier's policy plays an important role, particularly since Hébras is one of the five men who survived the shootings and managed to escape.<sup>91</sup> Those five men as well as Marguerite Rouffanche, the only women to escape the massacre in the church, had been named “miraculeux”, which means “miracles”.<sup>92</sup> After the death of Madame Rouffanche in 1988, Robert Hébras became the “incarnation of Oradour”.<sup>93</sup> For years now, he is a much or even the most sought-after interlocutor for journalists, mostly neglecting those who sur-

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89 Raymond Frugier, interview with the author, 23 July 2011.

90 Frugier lost distant relatives in the massacre, the place where the family lived, however, was not destroyed. After the modification of the statutes of the ANFM in 2001, Frugier became some sort of honorary member of the association, but he is still excluded from active membership. Benoît Sadry, e-mail to the author, 15 June 2011, 15 June 2012.

91 Robert Hébras, *Oradour-sur-Glane. The tragedy. Hour by hour* (Montreuil-Bellay: Editions C.M.D., 1994).

92 Farmer, *Oradour*, 129-130, 138.

93 Oradour-sur-Glane. Profession rescapé, *Libération*, 29 September 2011, <http://www.liberation.fr/societe/01012362613-oradour-sur-glane-profession-rescape>, accessed 16 December 2011.

vived because they flew in time or managed to hide without being discovered by the SS.<sup>94</sup>

Robert Hébras' way to reconciliation with Germany was a long one. In 2003, he explained in a discussion that soon after the massacre he had felt a lot of hate. He concluded that not all people should pay for a massacre they were responsible for just gradually. In retrospect, he saw a turning point in the invitation he received to attend the SPD peace talk by Willy Brandt.<sup>95</sup> Looking at the life of Robert Hébras, one can find several examples of "trustworthy and cooperative relationships" with Germans and his commitment to reconciliation takes on different forms. He has been conducting guided tours through the ruins of Oradour for French and German schoolchildren or other delegations. He has also been working with the *Centre de la mémoire d'Oradour-sur-Glane* where he is constantly available to talk to young people about his experiences, and he has traveled to Germany several times to talk to young people here.<sup>96</sup> Finally, yet importantly, he has played an important role in the policy of reconciliation developed by Raymond Frugier since 1995. The two men form some kind of dual spearhead of the reconciliation process. They often traveled together to Germany or Robert Hébras guided the invited delegations through the ruins of his hometown.<sup>97</sup> His warm-hearted attitude and his openness made a strong

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94 Referring to the problems between different groups of survivors for example: Fax Jérôme Durix, Directeur départemental, [Ministère des] anciens combattants, 9 October 2000, ACMO, 1ETUD13.

95 Zeitzeugengespräch mit anschließender Fragerunde Robert Hébras, Überlebender des Massakers der SS 1944 in Oradour, in: *Pädagogik wider das Vergessen. Dokumentation. Aus der Vergangenheit für die Zukunft lernen?! Eine Fachtagung zur Bedeutung der Internationalen Jugendarbeit im Kontext von Gedenkstätten und Dokumentationszentren zur NS-Vergangenheit vom 29.05.-1.06. 2003*, ed. Bezirksjugendring Mittelfranken, 10-13.

96 Robert Hébras, interviews with the author, 7 May 2008 and 14 May 2008. Meyer, *Wandel*, 394-395, 431.

97 Meyer, *Wandel*, 394-395, 431; Bundestagsvizepräsidentin Hasselfeldt in Oradour, *Dachauer SZ*, 5 September 2007, 1. Erfahrungsbericht zur 4. Truppenwehrübung des Pionierbrückenbataillon 704 (GerEinh) vom 3.-9.09.2006 in Frankreich mit offiziellem Besuch der Gedenkstätte "Centre de la mémoire d'Oradour", 29, given to the author by Wolfgang Eckhardt.

impression on his guests.<sup>98</sup> But is he representative of all those who have been touched by the massacre? This question gains strength if one considers that Hébras had to leave the presidency of the ANFM in the 1990s. Among other reasons, he was criticized for being to open towards Germany.<sup>99</sup> We know that Hébras is not the only person who was affected by the massacre and who openly favored reconciliation,<sup>100</sup> but after all, the hesitation of the ANFM when it comes to Germany is remarkable.

The standpoint of the ANFM since 1995 vis-à-vis Frugier's policy of reconciliation has been indistinct.<sup>101</sup> When the Bavarian minister Bocklet was welcomed by Frugier in 2000, the ANFM stayed away and told the press that they were not in favor of such an initiative. The president of the association, Claude Milord, added, that there had not been a German apology for the massacre yet and that this was taken badly.<sup>102</sup> Even if the expected apology did not come,<sup>103</sup> one year later the President of the ANFM stressed the need of the Association for more openness – also towards Germany: "Our association has more than ever to accept its responsibilities, maintain its presence and its role when it comes to [...] relations and exchanges with German associations in the name of memory and of Oradour."<sup>104</sup> This new policy found its expression in 2004, when Claude Milord supported the invitation of a German delegation to attend the annual commemoration ceremony in June. However, not all the members of the associ-

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98 Bundestagsvizepräsidentin Hasselfeldt in Oradour; *Erfahrungsbericht*, 44-45.

99 Meyer, *Wandel*, 366.

100 Camille Senon, interviews with the author, 6 and 12 May 2008; Albert Valade, interviews with the author, 17 and 18 October 2007, 10 May 2008; Marcel Darthout, interviews with the author, 15 October 2007 and 5 May 2008.

101 Meyer, *Wandel*, 431-435.

102 Lucas Delattre, A Oradour, dernière étape de la réconciliation franco-allemand, *Le Monde*, 30 May 2000.

103 In fact the Bavarian minister Bocklet apologized for the massacre but apparently this was not the apology expected, as one of the survivors explained. In his speech on 8 May 2000, the German Chancellor Schröder recognized the massacre but this recognition did not become known in Oradour before June 2001. Meyer, *Wandel*, 433.

104 Claude Milord, réélu président de l'Association des familles de martyrs, *L'Echo*, 8 April 2002, quoted in Meyer, *Wandel*, 364.

ation shared his position as could be read in the press and seen in a local television show.<sup>105</sup> In 2007, the question of inviting a German choir to give a concert of reconciliation met with resistance, obviously from some members of the ANFM. However, toward the German press its president tried to dispel this impression.<sup>106</sup> In 2007, the president of the ANFM did not attend Gerda Hasselfeldt's reception whereas he did attend it two years later. However, he did not send a representative to Dachau in 2010.<sup>107</sup> Once more in 2011 when the mayor of Dachau attended the commemorations of June 10 in Oradour the critical voices came from within the ANFM.<sup>108</sup> To sum it up, although, the president of the ANFM is increasingly more present at the receptions organized by the mayor, the Association still remains passive. On behalf of the ANFM he tolerated such gatherings, and supports them sometimes. The ANFM itself does not, however, act as the initiator of such relations with Germany. Even if the association has also shown itself increasingly more open toward Germany, this new openness has to date not led to "trustworthy and cooperative relationships" to use Straßner's words.

The most intricate question is what underlies this hesitation. Officially the president of the ANFM is repeating how difficult and delicate relations or efforts of reconciliation are when it comes to Germany. Here he refers particularly to those families who never integrated<sup>109</sup> the loss of their beloved ones, and to mothers who lost their children in the massacre. Fur-

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105 Meyer, *Wandel*, 434; Oradour 2004 – Erinnerung von André, [http://drafid.org/?Oradour\\_04\\_Andre](http://drafid.org/?Oradour_04_Andre), accessed 23 April 2011.

106 Sichelstiel, *Europahymne*; Andreas Sichelstiel, *Versöhnung mit Feingefühl*, *Pegnitz-Zeitung*, 26–28 May 2007, 11.

107 Concerning 2007 and 2009: Information given to the author by Elisabeth Wohland, member of Gerda Hasselfeldt's staff; concerning 2010: Speech delivered by Raymond Frugier, Visite à Dachau, 22–23 mai 2010 d'une Délégation d'Oradour-sur-Glane, given to the author by Raymond Frugier.

108 Marianne Buisso, 67ème anniversaire du massacre d'Oradour-sur-Glane, 11 June 2001, <http://limousin.france3.fr/info/67eme-anniversaire-du-massacre-d-oradour-sur-glane-69163509.html>, accessed 15 December 2011.

109 Milord used the French expression "n'ont jamais fait leur deuil". Using the term "integration" I refer to Hansjörg Znoj, *Komplizierte Trauer* (Göttingen: Hogrefe, 2004), 35, who states: "Mourning is understood as the active integration of loss."

thermore, he indicates inter-generational discussions within the associations but is anxious to assure that the ANFM does not put today's Germany on a par with Nazi-Germany.<sup>110</sup> Apart from that, not much is known about the critical voices from within the association – names are never given, details are never referred to. Most of the members of the ANFM remain in the background and do not raise their voice in public.<sup>111</sup> Critical voices in public are rare as was the statement in 2004 of a survivor whose sister was murdered in the church: "I won't go to the commemoration. The mayor has invited Germans!"<sup>112</sup> Thus, vital questions concerning those opposed to reconciliation within the ANFM stay in suspense: Are those who oppose numerous? What actually disturbs them and for what reasons?

The most significant source we can refer to is a discussion on the eve of the massacre's 60th anniversary, organized and broadcasted by the local television. Apart from mayor Frugier, the ANFM-President and the last two *miraculeux* still alive, Robert Hébras and Jean-Marcel Dartout, several women affected by the massacre had also been invited.<sup>113</sup> In some of their statements it has not only become obvious that the trauma of the massacre still has an extremely emotional impact on them, but also the limits of reconciliation and particularly the conflict between cognition and emotion have become visible for some of them. Renée Maneus for example survived as a child while being hidden with her mother and sisters but lost other members of her family. She reported that in theory she of course knew that kind Germans exist and in fact, she personally knew at least one. Nevertheless, it took a long time for her to accept Germans. What Renée Maneus describes here can be seen as an example for the limits of the *will* to reconcile. Reconciliation is not something that can rationally be decided upon. Some

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110 Questions à ..., ANFM, *Bulletin d'information*, January 2003, ACMO, 5FP6; L'avenir: Avec l'Allemagne?, *Le Populaire*, 11 June 2004; Sichelstiel, Versöhnung.

111 Meyer, *Wandel*, 366.

112 Béatrice Jérôme, Les élus alsaciens participeront aux cérémonies, *Le Monde*, 9 June 2004.

113 The following statements are taken from: Tulle et Oradour, Table ronde, France 3 Limousin, 2004, ACMO, V4.5.2/03.

people *cannot* reconcile even if they would like to.<sup>114</sup> Aline Perney, who lost her four-year-old child and other family members on June 10, 1944, stated that even if she would be a religious person, it would be impossible for her to forgive those who killed her beloved ones. Nevertheless, whereas others would agree with her when it comes to the perpetrators,<sup>115</sup> she is able to describe the impossibility to respond positively to those Germans who had not been involved in the crime:

“I went to Germany, believe me, when I met them I knew that they weren’t those who committed the massacre. They apologized but it was stronger than me, it gave me goose flesh, I turned my back on them, I couldn’t. I can’t, it’s impossible.”

Not only forgiving, even *accepting* a German delegation in Oradour was impossible for her. The point of conflict is not how to deal with the perpetrators of the massacre among the different actors in Oradour but how to deal with the other Germans. Jean-Marcel Dartout, one of the *miraculeux*, is one of those persons who cannot understand why some people cannot make a difference:

“Sixty years ago, I know it well, me too I lost people in Oradour! Me too, I have mourned the loss of a wife! Me too, I have mourned the loss of a mother! Me too, I suffered! However, the Germans who come to Oradour today are not those who killed my mother and killed my wife, thus I can receive them. *Voilà*, [that is] my position.”

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114 Thomas Hoppe, *Erinnerung, Gerechtigkeit und Versöhnung. Zur Aufgabe eines angemessenen Umgangs mit belasteter Vergangenheit – eine sozialethische Perspektive*, in: *Versöhnung, Strafe und Gerechtigkeit. Das schwere Erbe von Unrechts-Staaten*, ed. Michael Bongardt and Ralf K. Wüstenberg (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht 2010), 29–53, here: 45; Straßner, *Versöhnung*, 2.

115 This is even the case for Robert Hébras as he explained during an interview in December 2011. *Un procès des suspects allemands ‘improbable’*, 8 December 2011, video *Réaction de Robert Hébras, rescapé d’Oradour*, <http://limousin.france3.fr/info/un-proces-des-suspects-allemands-improbable-71548619.html?onglet=videos>, accessed 17 December 2011.

Demeanor and statements made by the President of the ANFM during the local television discussion in 2004 revealed his difficult position: What looks like an unclear policy of the ANFM since 1995 seems to be the result of the difficulty to integrate various opinions.<sup>116</sup> Compared with the policy of the mayor this policy takes more account of those who are more hesitant. As the Association is going ahead slower than the mayor, those members of the ANFM who support an active reconciliation policy find a leader in Raymond Frugier rather than in the president of their association. As both collectives overlap, members of the ANFM can, depending on the subject area, switch to another collective relevant to them. When in 2010, the mayor traveled to Dachau, the ANFM did not send a representative. Nevertheless, several of those accompanying the mayor were members of the ANFM.<sup>117</sup> Since several participants of the delegation have been affected by the massacre personally or are members of victims' families, we can conclude that the reconciliation policy of mayor Frugier today is more than a symbolic gesture. However, as long as the ANFM does not engage in "trustworthy and cooperative relationships" a crucial part of 'Oradour' has not yet reached the state of reconciliation with Germany.

## CONCLUSIONS: A RIGHT TO IRRECONCILABILITY?

In 1948, Alfons Erb, an advocate of the Franco-German reconciliation and the founder of the *Maximilian Kolbe-Werk*, a relief organization for the survivors of concentration camps and ghettos, made an interesting observation. When Oradour refused the aid of the youth groups to rebuild their hometown, he criticized the German offer:

"Anyone who reads the above documents, will, profoundly moved, have the burning desire to contribute with all his or her might to make amends, especially with Oradour. It is therefore more so understandable that 'Benjamin' chose Oradour. However, this might have not been a lucky choice. Admittedly, everything that Germans

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116 Meyer, *Wandel*, 434-435, comes to the same conclusion.

117 This is the case for Robert Hébras and Albert Valade. Valade lost *inter alia* his sister in the massacre. It is also the case for Benoît Sadry, who is both district council in Oradour and deputy secretary of the ANFM.

can contribute by the suggested actions with regard to outwardly visible reparation, is in no proportion to what Germany and the Germans have done (it can all just be a humble contribution to reparation as well as to reconciliation). But this disproportion would have to emerge in the case of Oradour particularly blunt.”<sup>118</sup>

Erb pointed out the gap between a crime like the massacre in Oradour and every attempt to make up for it. Considering the hesitation of the ANFM and especially the difficulties of some of the surviving dependents when it comes to Germany, it has to be concluded that Erb’s analysis proved right until today. In spite of the multitude of gestures from within civil society, the stage of reconciliation the actors aimed at is not fully reached today. In this respect, we may consider that the greatest possible commitment does not necessarily lead to the greatest possible reconciliation, especially when a great deal of suffering lies beneath.

Different conclusions can be drawn from this result. One could be tempted to argue that against the background of such a horrible crime “trustworthy and cooperative relationships” are ambitious objectives and that a more minimal understanding of reconciliation seems reasonable. Indeed, in his reflections, Straßner refers *inter alia* to Tuomas Forsberg, who pleads for removing the idea of “mutual harmony or a togetherness of souls” from the concept of reconciliation. Instead, he simply refers to the “degree of tolerance or absence of severe disputes, between the antagonists”. This “can be concretely defined in terms of behavioral criteria such as lack of offensive conduct”.<sup>119</sup> Nevertheless, in the case of Oradour it seems that this operation would mean to neglect the important outcome that “trustworthy and cooperative relationships” are impossible and undesirable for some of the survivors or surviving dependants. Therefore, the conclusion to be drawn here is a plea for a right to irreconcilability.

Giving reasons for their commitment or policy, different German actors in the Oradour case as well as mayor Frugier stress the link between reconciliation and peace for the future.<sup>120</sup> According to Straßner, the possibility

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118 Alfons Erb, *Oradour gestern und heute, Dokumente und Erwägungen*, *Dokumente*, 4, 2 (1948), 86-93, here: 92.

119 Straßner, *Versöhnung*, 27.

120 For example Fritz Körber in Sichelstiel, *Europahymne*, and Wolfgang Eckhardt in *Erfahrungsbericht*. Raymond Frugier doesn’t use the word reconciliation

to reconcile plays a “central role, to make a peaceful living together possible”.<sup>121</sup> Thus, the notion of reconciliation is highly normative. This “moral surplus”<sup>122</sup> of reconciliation is accompanied by the negative connotation of irreconcilability. The necessity of a plea for a right to irreconcilability is however closely linked to one specific aspect of reconciliation. As Straßner explains, reconciliation processes are “highly complex internal processes that cannot be demanded”. Reconciliation, he says, “is always voluntary”.<sup>123</sup> This voluntary nature has to be emphasized as the victims had been robbed of their self-determination by the perpetrators during the massacre. Their freedom of decision-making is therefore an essential part of regaining this self-determination.<sup>124</sup> This is why it is regrettable that the president of the ANFM is apparently giving less or little voice in public to those who do not agree with the policy of mayor Frugier.

A further argument for the right to irreconcilability becomes apparent if, after having studied Oradour, we put the individual case back into the national and international context of Franco-German reconciliation. As we have seen in the beginning, Pierre Lellouche used Oradour to symbolize the Second World War as a chapter that had been closed by the Franco-German reconciliation. Because today the Franco-German friendship can be considered solid and robust, relevant actors should be able to accept the refusal of “trustworthy and cooperative relationships” from those who suffered and

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tion but means what Straßner defines as such. For example: Raymond Frugier, *Le mot du maire*, in: *Oradour-sur-Glane. Bulletin Municipal, Le Radounaud*, December 2005, Archive of the municipality of Oradour-sur-Glane.

121 Straßner, *Versöhnung*, 23.

122 Ibid., 33.

123 Ibid., 28-29.

124 My thanks go to Prof. Hans Günter Hockerts who drew my attention to this important aspect. The American psychiatrist Judith Herman is stressing a similar point concerning the process of recovery after endured traumas: “The trauma evokes in the victim a sense of powerlessness and loss of control. For the recovery it is therefore essential that the patient regains his/her strength and the control about him or herself and his life.” Judith Herman, *Die Narben der Gewalt. Traumatische Erfahrungen verstehen und überwinden* (Paderborn: Junfermann, 2006), 221.

are just not in the position to reconcile. In other words, the French-German reconciliation does not need to be crowned by a totally reconciled Oradour.

Furthermore, concerning the national level it has to be emphasized once more that while actors from within civil society committed themselves to reconciliation with Oradour, the contribution of the German State was limited. It is here that signs and gestures are still missing. Last autumn the legal authorities of Germany reopened preliminary proceedings in the Oradour case 67 years after the crime. Despite of the great dedication of the public prosecutor in charge, it is likely that these preliminary proceedings will be abandoned, as were the twelve others before.<sup>125</sup> At least the crime of Oradour gained once more attention and perhaps thoroughly carried out investigations are in some way a compensation for some of the survivors and the surviving dependants. Apart from that, the German State has not exhausted its possibilities to support reconciliation yet. As the generation of the contemporary witnesses is nearly gone, there is almost no time left.

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125 Razzia bei mutmaßlichen SS-Kriegsverbrechern, 5 December 2011, <http://www.wdr.de/themen/panorama/massakeroradour100.html>, accessed 18 February 2011; Karen Krüger, Oradour, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 7 January 2012.

