



## REPRESENTATIONS OF GERMANY AND THE GERMANS AMONG FORMER CONCENTRATION CAMP PRISONERS IN FRANCE (1945-1975)

### Abstract

Using approaches from perception research (*Perzeptionsforschung*) and discourse analysis, this thesis intends to draw a map of the imaginative world linked to Germany and the Germans among former concentration camp prisoners in France between 1945 and 1975. It seeks to show that it was not the concentration camp experience and its after-effects, but the affiliations of those survivors with different social groups and the values and orientations of the latter which determined their representations of the eastern neighbours. Hence, this particular experience neither generated unprecedented visions of Germany and the Germans, nor of Nazism or the Nazis. Nevertheless, social and political transformations in France and in Germany during the two post-war decades as well as the evolution of the relations between these two nations have contributed to the creation of several patterns of thought among them. Those were, on the one hand, an interpretive model distinguishing between Germans and Nazis and, on the other hand, two topoi linking the memory of Nazi crimes and the attitude towards the Germans.

Therefore, this thesis will consider not only the impact of discourses circulating within a social group and in society at large, but also the context of the creation, modification and disappearance of representations of others. Furthermore, these inquiries elucidate the links between the experience of the past, the perception of the present and expectations for the future.

Finally, this study intends to show that the analysis of perceptions and representations should not be an end in itself, but that it is inseparable from the study of individuals and groups who carry and express them.

**Keywords:** deportation, concentration camp system, Holocaust, Cold War, representations, memories, patriotism, antifascism, anti-totalitarianism, French-German relations