

ful bomber-pilot of Hitler's Germany escaped through Rome.⁵⁴ Pope Pius XII himself intervened for the Governor of Wartheland, Arthur Greiser, whose murder commandos were accused of having killed over 800,000 Jews, Poles, and mentally ill in the extermination camp Chelmino. Pius XII filed a plea for clemency in favor of Arthur Greiser to the Polish Government.⁵⁵

On March 16, 1994, the *Chicago Tribune* announced that a trial against Paul Touvier, former intelligence aide to Klaus Barbie, head of the Gestapo and "Butcher of Lyon," was about to reopen in Paris. After the war Touvier had been condemned to death twice but he "succeeded in avoiding arrest by taking refuge with his family and among sympathetic Catholic organizations, at one time hiding in the Vatican." After the French Christian philosopher Gabriel Marcel filed a plea for clemency, Touvier was paroled in 1971, but outraged Jews and Resistance groups forced him into hiding anew, "again aided by right-wing Catholics." Finally he was arrested in 1989 in a monastery in Nice and in 1992 a French court ruled that Touvier's alleged personal ordering of the execution of seven Jews did not constitute a crime against humanity. A national uproar compelled review of the decision. Touvier now is waiting for the trial, hoping to prove that he "merely" acted on the orders of Nazi superiors.⁵⁶

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⁵⁴Ernst Klee, *Persischeine und falsche Pässe. Wie die Kirchen der Nazis halfen* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag), 1991, 26.

⁵⁵Klee, *Persischeine*, 67.

⁵⁶Sharon Waxman, "War Crimes Case Puts France on Trial: Nazi Collaborator's Day in Court may End '50 Years of Amnesia," in *Chicago Tribune*, March 16, 1994, 1, 11.

The Dreyfus Affair and the Influence of the International Press

BY AMY LINDEMAN

The late nineteenth century became a significant turning point in France and around the world. French society was shifting from one era to another.¹ France claimed to be establishing democracy and its related institutions. However, many of its "traditional institutions," such as the church and the army, were pursuing a return to "traditional France." As a result, discrepancies arose between those in favor of a liberal democracy and those seeking tradition. Thus, the two emerged with two differing systems of values. In addition, France became xenophobic.² These conditions set the scene for a controversial crisis in France known as the Dreyfus Affair. Through the influence of the media, what began as an issue of military espionage and anti-Semitism became a battle against the institutions of traditional France.

The Dreyfus Affair began on October 15, 1894, when the army falsely arrested Captain Alfred Dreyfus for conveying military secrets to Germany. In September, General Mercier, the Minister of War, was informed that a note, known as the *bordereau*, had been discovered in the office of General Schwartzkoppen, a German ambassador to France. The document revealed that someone of high command in the French army was leaking information. General Du Paty de Clam discovered that Dreyfus' handwriting resembled that found on the *bordereau*. Dreyfus' peers found him guilty almost immediately. Not only was his handwriting similar to that on the *bordereau*, but many did not like Dreyfus, and higher officials had given him a poor evaluation in 1893.³ More importantly though, Alfred Dreyfus was a Jew from Alsace. The fact that Dreyfus originated from Alsace raised suspicion. Alsace, which lay on the border between Germany and France, often changed hands between the two countries. Therefore, many questioned his patriotism to France.⁴ Growing anti-Semitism in France contributed immensely to Alfred Dreyfus' conviction.

Hatred of Jews in France became a more pressing issue in 1870 during the Franco-German War. Algerian natives began a revolt within their country at this time. France decided to take measures to strengthen their influ-

¹Jeffrey Mehlmam, *L'Affaire*, trans. Jean-Denis Brechin (New York: George Braziller, 1986), 537.

²Frederick Busi, "A Bibliographical Overview of the Dreyfus Affair," in *Jewish Social Studies* XI (1978), 33.

³Mehlmam, 63.

⁴*Ibid.*, 533.

ence in Algeria by enfranchising the Jews in that area. However, they did not include other foreigners living in Algeria. This policy created a strong anti-semitic feeling in Algeria. Author Édouard Drumont quickly spread a similar feeling throughout France. Drumont published works inspired by gossip that conveyed the idea that Jews in France were attempting, by secret use of the power of their wealth (which they acquired from the rise of industry), to gain control of the French government. Drumont also credited Jews with the corruption in the government and exploitation in the work sector.⁵ Anti-Semitism also grew in the 1880s as a result of the "Jewish Invasion" in France, wherein Jews fled to France from Russia, Germany, and Hungary to escape persecution.⁶ Prosecutors continued to use these anti-semitic views against Alfred Dreyfus throughout the case.

As the case against Captain Dreyfus continued, the military refused to explain to their prisoner the basis for his retention and interrogation.⁷ They set the trial for December 19, 1894. Meanwhile, the Section of Statistics secretly fabricated a dossier against Dreyfus. At this time the army held a position in France of prestige and integrity. Many believed that the case would undermine the nation's trust in its army. Therefore, they found it necessary to do everything possible to ensure a conviction.⁸ Just following the trial, while the military judges deliberated, General Du Paty de Clam took it upon himself to send an envelope to the judges that contained fabricated evidence against Dreyfus. Thus, the court-martial unanimously found Dreyfus guilty. The judges sentenced him to perpetual exile on Devils' Island and to military degradation.⁹ Throughout the case, officers presented faulty evidence to ensure the conviction of Captain Dreyfus. However, this evidence also presented a turning point in the case that would result in a pardon.

In 1896, shortly after the French government made General Picquart head of the Intelligence Bureau, the Dreyfus case took a new direction. Two years after Dreyfus' guilty verdict, Picquart found fragments of a telegram, the "*petit bleu*," that proved Dreyfus' innocence. A French infantry officer named Esterhazy was actually the traitor.¹⁰ The present Minister of War and higher officials did not want to see another Dreyfus Affair, so they demanded Picquart to ignore his findings.¹¹ As one French officer declared, "I am convinced of Dreyfus' innocence, but if his verdict were up to me, I would convict him again for the honor of the army."¹² That is exactly what happened. Alfred Dreyfus' brother, Mathieu, and his supporters, known as the "Dreyfusards," managed to secure a retrial. The army held the trial in

⁵The Dreyfus Scandal," in *Current History* 9 (1899), 510.

⁶Mehlman, 26.

⁷Ibid., 71.

⁸Ibid., 53-4.

⁹Ibid., 95.

¹⁰Ibid., 143.

¹¹Ibid., 157.

¹²Ibid., 536.

September 1899, and once again the reputation of the army took precedence over an innocent man's freedom. The court convicted Dreyfus a second time.¹³ Fortunately, this was not the end for Dreyfus. René Waldeck-Rousseau, the Premier of France during the second trial, believed in Dreyfus' innocence. He also wanted to preserve national unity while bringing the army under control. He therefore requested a pardon. The judges of the court-martial also showed discontent with their past decision.¹⁴ They saw a pardon not only as a response to an unjust verdict, but also as a way to suppress the violent uprisings that had troubled France since the second verdict's announcement. On September 19, 1899, they granted Dreyfus a pardon. But he and his supporters were not satisfied. As a result, the Dreyfusards split when many believed that Dreyfus should have sacrificed himself for their cause and not have accepted the pardon.¹⁵ For five years Dreyfus worked at getting a reversal of the verdict of Rennes, the courts' second declaration of guilt. In July 1906, the court voted to set aside the judgement of Rennes, and it proclaimed Captain Dreyfus' innocence. After twelve long years, the affair finally came to an end.¹⁶

The role of the press proved significant throughout the affair. In the beginning, the press promoted anti-Semitism. In 1894, all the French newspapers expressed similar themes of hatred of the Jews and love for the nation and the army.¹⁷ The press exercised a major influence on the political life of a nation.¹⁸ One might conclude that the entire turbulence was both caused and resolved by the power of the press. *Libre Parole* swung public opinion against Dreyfus. When General Mercier first learned of the *bordereau*, the press hounded him and pressured him into declaring that he knew for certain of Dreyfus' guilt.¹⁹ Had Mercier not felt pressured, the whole affair might not have existed. In the same manner, Emile Zola's "J'accuse" clearly convinced the public of Dreyfus' innocence and the need for a retrial.²⁰ The press not only kept the public informed, but also encouraged their involvement in national politics, thus highly politicizing the nation.

The Dreyfus Affair furthered the decline of many of France's "traditional institutions," such as the army and the church. However, the affair strengthened the new Republic, and in the process may also have prevented the rise of democratic socialism in France.²¹ In the election of 1899, the Government Republicans, who supported the new regime and would also

¹³Ibid., 422.

¹⁴Ibid., 430.

¹⁵Ibid., 449.

¹⁶Ibid., 475.

¹⁷Ibid., 78.

¹⁸Ibid., 517.

¹⁹Is a Dreyfus Case Possible in America?" in *Independent* 61, 167.

²⁰Bust, 35.

²¹Edward M. Earle, *Modern France: Problems of the Third and Fourth Republics* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1954), 188.

become Dreyfusards, defeated the reactionaries.²² The government Republicans promoted the overthrow of traditional institutions. One of their goals became to secularize education in France. As one might expect, the church strongly opposed the plan. The army joined the church in its opposition as it distrusted such democratic ideas.²³ The Catholic Church enlisted anti-Semitism to encourage the hatred of foreigners and members of Parliament since both disturbed the "traditional balance."²⁴ The Catholics also used the Dreyfus Affair to undermine the present government. Political forces within the church accused Dreyfusards of plotting to divide and disarm France.²⁵ This accusation resembled the one that Edouard Drumont had used against Jews.

The Dreyfus Affair also had an impact on foreign nations. In 1898, the League for the Defense of the Rights of Man and Citizen organized to promote a retrial which they believed would prove Dreyfus' innocence. The syndicate carried the League's message throughout France. It used numerous British and foreign newspapers to present evidence of Esterhazy's guilt.²⁶ The British wanted to promote justice in France and did so through the press. During Captain Dreyfus' first conviction, the French press and the public were convinced of Dreyfus' guilt. They dwelled upon only those acts that seemed connected with the treason. This, however, did not convince many foreigners. In January 1895, Lucie Dreyfus, Alfred's wife, published a story about her husband's degradation in the French newspaper *Le Figaro*. The French populace, however, believed that Dreyfus "got what he deserved." Many English and Americans viewed the story as a last attempt for appeal from an innocent man.²⁷ The English continued to view the affair as the personal tragedy of Alfred Dreyfus. They found the politics, scandals, and controversy surrounding the affair to be chaotic and confusing. As justice appeared to be the most important issue of the affair to the English, France declared order as its major issue of concern.²⁸

Americans also became involved in the affair because of the press. Alfred Dreyfus greatly appreciated the support he found in the *New York Times*. A Parisian journalist found Walter Littlefield's article in the *Times* to be the most "intelligent" works of its time. Littlefield's article helped to gain not only French support, but also American sympathies for the cause.²⁹ The Dreyfus Affair interested Americans for a different reason than the English. They feared a similar situation could erupt in

²²Euzi, 33.

²³*Ibid.*, 35.

²⁴Meahman, 519.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 347.

²⁶Joseph O. Baylen, "Dreyfusards and the Foreign Press: The Syndicate and the Daily News February-March 1898," in *French Historical Studies* 7 (1971), 338.

²⁷Alfred Dreyfus, *Lettres d'un Innocent*, trans. L.G. Moreau (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1899), vii.

²⁸"End of the Affair," in *Livings Age* 32 (1906), 441.

²⁹Editorial, "Dreyfus in Switzerland," in *New York Times*, August 28, 1906, 5.

America.³⁰ Although America was not plagued with political bouts between the church and state or the army and government, it did suffer from a similar form of racial prejudice. Many believed that under certain circumstances this hatred could develop into a disastrous situation similar to the Dreyfus Affair.³¹

The Dreyfus Affair that troubled France for more than a decade served as a warning to nations around the world who suffered from a disease similar to the anti-Semitism then plaguing France. The affair enhanced the role of the press in national politics, which is still prevalent today. It also witnessed many changes in France's internal politics with the decline of the church and the army. The nation split, but was then reunited under the republic, which in turn would be strengthened by the whole affair.

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³⁰"Is a Dreyfus Case Possible in America?," 156.

³¹*Ibid.*, 167.