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Joseph N. Moody

DREYFUS AND AFTER

THE Dreyfus Affair has produced such an enormous literature that there would seem little room for further discussion. It might be argued also that the injustice done to a Jewish captain of the pre-1914 French Army has been dwarfed by the inhumanity of gas chambers, brain-washing, and forced labor camps, with their millions of victims. It might even be alleged that preoccupation with this false charge of treason in the past is unrealistic in our day when such charges seem the normal stuff of partisan politics.

Yet it is these very considerations that sustain our interest in the Affair.¹ The insecurity of the human person in his dealings with the political community, the perennial predicament of the individual faced with the reality of power, these are themes forced upon us by our times. But here we not only have a vivid instance of this confrontation of person and power; we are drawn irresistibly to a case abundantly documented, played out by the most varied characters, and having all the components of a detective thriller. The drama of an individual reveals issues sometimes obscure in abominations committed against a nameless mass, while the still continuing consequences of the Affair imply the tremendous importance of every human being.

Precisely those aspects of the story which add to its appeal introduce also the possibility of distortion. Since the victim is one man, readily identified, we are likely to conclude that the culprit, or culprits, should be equally easy to discover. We should like to settle down as we should with the latest mystery tale and, after an exciting

1. Two volumes on the theme appeared last year: Nicholas Halasz, *Captain Dreyfus: The Story of a Mass Hysteria* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955); and Guy Chapman, *The Dreyfus Case: A Reassessment* (New York: Reynal, 1955)—the first excitingly written, perhaps too excitingly; the second far superior in scholarship, scope, and tone.

chase, point an accusing finger at the villain. Not even the complexity of the case dulls our appetite. Though we know that there were three courts-martial and three civilian trials, spread over twelve years, and that there was every possible complication of domestic and foreign policy, we expect this profound drama to be solved, and neatly.

A FIRST SKETCH

IT WAS in the summer of 1894 that the French Ministry of War became aware that some French Army officer was transmitting information to the German Embassy in Paris. There had fallen into the hands of the counter-espionage section² of the General Staff an unsigned letter or "list," the famous *bordereau*, enumerating documents the writer intended to send to the German military attaché, Colonel Max von Schwartzkoppen. A precipitate and thoroughly incompetent investigation—featuring disagreements among the handwriting experts consulted—seemed to point to Alfred Dreyfus, a captain of artillery, the only Jewish probationer attached to the General Staff. Arrested for high treason in October 1894, Dreyfus was court-martialed, being convicted in December and sentenced to deportation for life. In March 1895 he was interned on Devil's Island, while his family and a few others continued their struggle to have the verdict revised. The Court of Appeals had already rejected any efforts for revision, for it could deal only with matters of law, not of fact, and, so far as it knew, the law had not been flouted. Not until new facts were available could anything be done.

At last, in March 1896, something new was found. In the wastepaper of the German Embassy, routinely "delivered" to the French counter-espionage section, Colonel Marie-Georges Picquart, the section's newly appointed head, discovered the minute fragments of a letter, a *petit bleu*.³ Written by von Schwartzkoppen, but never sent, to a French officer on the General Staff, Major Ferdinand Walsin-Esterhazy, it made clear beyond doubt that Esterhazy had a treasonable connection with von Schwartzkoppen. Furthermore, the *borde-*

2. Euphemistically called the Statistical Section. The fact that the case originated in this section, the members of which worked in secret and knew they would be disavowed if their activities became public, had an important bearing on the case.

3. A special delivery letter on thin blue paper, restricted to local Parisian use.

reau, looked at with unprejudiced eyes, could be seen to be in his handwriting. But Picquart's superior officers, General Charles Le Mouton de Boisdeffre and General Charles-Arthur Gonse, the chief and deputy chief of the General Staff, forbade him to pursue his investigations and had him transferred to a remote station in Tunisia.

However, before leaving France for North Africa, Colonel Picquart confided his discoveries about Esterhazy to a friend and lawyer, M. Louis Leblois. Leblois in turn spoke of these grave suspicions to the vice-president of the Senate, Auguste Scheurer-Kestner, who also came to believe in Dreyfus's innocence and began to persuade other senators and men of influence.

At last, in November 1897, a banker discovered by chance that the *bordereau* (of which facsimiles were for sale) was in the handwriting of Esterhazy, with whom he had done business. This crucial discovery was passed on to Dreyfus's brother Mathieu, who in turn communicated with the Minister of War, charging Esterhazy with the treason of which his brother had been convicted. The General Staff could not afford to overlook the accusation, so Esterhazy was court-martialed. But even less was the General Staff ready to admit its error; hence his acquittal was a foregone conclusion.

Just two days later, on January 13, 1898, Emile Zola, in his famous open letter to the President of the Republic, *J'Accuse*, charged the Ministry of War with contempt for truth and justice, and with letting Dreyfus suffer for a crime he had never committed. The Ministry of War then demanded that Zola be tried for libel. In February 1898 he was convicted and sentenced to a year's imprisonment (though he took refuge in England instead). To stifle the growing demand for revision, Godefroy Cavaignac, the Minister of War in the new cabinet of Brisson, made public in July 1898 a letter, ostensibly from von Schwartzkoppen to the Italian military attaché, Colonel A. Panizzardi. Known as the "*Canaille de D*" letter, that "scoundrel D," it seemed to make Dreyfus's guilt inescapable. But by August it became clear that this letter was a forgery—and only one of many—by the deputy director of the counter-espionage section, Colonel Hubert-Joseph Henry; arrested, he committed suicide in prison.

This suicide marked a new stage in the Affair. The government was forced to act on Mme. Dreyfus's request for a reopening of her husband's case. After several months of investigation, the conviction

of 1894 was annulled and a new court-martial ordered. Dreyfus was brought back from Devil's Island to stand trial; in September 1899, a verdict was delivered, even stranger than the first, finding him guilty, though with extenuating circumstances, and condemning him to ten years' imprisonment. Only a few days later, the government set aside this decision by pardoning Dreyfus, who was at once released from custody.

Years later, in 1903, as the full facts were gradually discovered, a new and definitive hearing became imperative. Finally, in July 1906, the Court of Appeals totally quashed the 1894 verdict, and Dreyfus was completely rehabilitated with the rank of major, though he resigned soon afterwards. Recalled to the Army during World War I, he served competently, being promoted to lieutenant-colonel, and then lived in retirement till his death in 1935.

THE BACKGROUND

THE REPUBLIC

THE background of the Dreyfus Affair was nothing less than the calamitous nineteenth-century history of France. It had not been the original intention of the men of the French Revolution to establish a Republic or to suppress the Church. Their aim was a moderate overhaul of the French political and social structure, but their efforts were negated by foreign war, internal opposition, and conflicting views among the reformers. In theory romantic, idealist, and perfectionist, the Republic's actual pursuit of its goals hardened the internal division of France, *les deux Frances*, making deeper and deeper the chasm between the defenders and antagonists of the Republican ideal. The succeeding regimes of Directory, Consulate, Empire, Restoration, and Bourgeois Monarchy might be considered varying, and ultimately unsuccessful, attempts to find a formula that would preserve the basic changes of 1789 while disavowing the more radical proposals identified with the Republic. Yet the extreme spirit of 1792, which, among other things, led to the execution of king and queen, remained alive during this half-century of experiment, to come forth again in the crisis of 1848, when the Bourgeois Monarchy of Louis Philippe was overthrown. The Second Republic that followed failed to retain the loyalty of the conservative majority of the French peo-

ple, and failed even more lamentably to deal with the needs of the industrial working class.

When the Second Empire (1851-70) collapsed with the defeat of Napoleon III in the Franco-Prussian War, Republicanism was given another opportunity as the "government which divides us least." This new Republic was something quite different from the romantic and revolutionary Jacobinism of its beginnings, placing its trust in a parliamentary regime which contained strong safeguards against the executive power along with equally strong checks upon the direct intervention of the popular will. This conservative Third Republic, pledged to the maintenance of the established social order and of the individual liberties enshrined in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, often showed itself markedly anti-clerical. As the century drew to a close, the Republic slowly won wider support, though it still failed to win the hard core of the traditional opposition.⁴

THE CATHOLICS

The Great Revolution had left a legacy of unsolved questions. First among them was the role of the Catholic Church, to which the overwhelming majority of Frenchmen belonged. Between the First Republic and the Church there was the barrier of blood shed in the name of liberty. In the 1840s the common fight of Catholics and Republicans against the Bourgeois Monarchy led to a *rapprochement*, and for a time in 1848 it appeared that those who had been enemies for so many years had made peace. But when the majority of Catholics swung to the support of Louis Napoleon's Second Empire, the Republican opposition which developed showed strong anti-clerical tendencies. Once the Republicans had gained, in 1879, secure control of the political machinery, they turned upon the Church, which appeared their most redoubtable adversary. The "laic laws" of the 1880s imposed severe penalties on Catholic education, and so greatly intensified the anti-Republican feelings of the majority of Catholics.⁵

4. This background may be found in D. W. Brogan, *France under the Republic* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1940); more analytically in David Thomson, *Democracy in France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946); and perhaps most fully in Jacques Chastenet, *Histoire de la Troisième République* (Paris: Hachette, 1952-55).

5. See Evelyn M. Acomb, *The French Laic Laws* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941). For a survey of the general politico-religious situation, see Joseph N. Moody, "From Old Regime to Democratic Society," in *Church and Society* (New York: Arts, Inc., 1954), pp. 95-186.

A sharp change in the trend of Catholic opinion in France occurred when Leo XIII inaugurated the *Ralliement* with the publication of his encyclical *Au milieu des sollicitudes* in February 1892.⁶ Having realized that "the cause of the Most Christian King was as dead as that of the Most Serene Republic of Venice,"⁷ he worked to disentangle Catholics from the Monarchical cause. His encyclical was a clear call to the faithful in France to make peace with the Republic, to rally to its support as the legitimate government, and to work against the anti-clerical laws solely by constitutional means. The Pope's directive met a mixed reception among French Catholics: considerable numbers abandoned Monarchism, reinforcing the tiny group of Catholic Republicans, while intransigent Monarchists stubbornly opposed the papal admonition. The waning support for their cause had already led them to accept the timorous Republican adventurer, General Boulanger, in the '80s; now their despair at this new reverse predisposed them to more risky expedients. This mood of desperation on the Right explains in part some of the more bizarre features of the Affair.

The peace gestures of Leo XIII had an equally mixed reception among the Republicans: the Moderates, frightened by growing social unrest, welcomed the *Ralliés*; the Radicals repulsed them as "reluctant Republicans" who aimed to infiltrate and destroy the Republic as the heir of the Revolution. Yet the *Ralliement* contributed to the improvement of Church-State relations in France, and the period 1891-98 saw a new peaceful spirit, which seemed to promise well for the future.

To bring about such an improvement in the face of the intransigence of a great body of French Catholics tried the wise diplomacy of Leo XIII and his Secretary of State, Cardinal Rampolla. In April 1895 the French Parliament passed a law imposing a tax on the properties of the religious orders, exempting only those engaged in charity and foreign missions. While the justice of such a tax is still a subject

6. See Edouard Lecanuet, *L'Eglise de France sous la Troisième République* (Paris: Ancienne Librairie Poussielgue, 1907), II, 377-418 and 513-558. In a succinct summary of the obstacles to the *Ralliement*, Adrien Dansette, in his splendid *Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine* (Paris: Flammarion, 1951), II, 283-284, wisely notes that it would have taken a generation of peace to eliminate the rooted prejudices of either side.

7. Dominique Cardinal Ferrata, *Mémoires. Ma Nonciature en France* (Paris, 1922); as cited by Robert F. Byrnes, *Antisemitism in Modern France*, Vol. I (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1950), p. 185.

of debate, specialists agree that it merely revised existing legislation, in some respects bettering it. But the passage of the law brought to the surface the internal split among French Catholics which had been widened by the policy of Leo XIII. The influential *La Croix*,⁸ which had given formal adhesion to the *Ralliement* but was always ready to cast doubt and ridicule on the intentions of the Republicans, led the attack on the government in the bitterest terms and demanded resistance by the religious congregations. Openly Royalist journals, such as *La Vérité Française*, seized on the issue to appeal for Catholic support. Cardinals Langenieux and Richard wrote approvingly of defiance. Bishop Fuzet of Beauvais and other exponents of moderation were vilified in the extremist press as apostates. The religious orders themselves were in a dilemma. The five congregations of men authorized by law and all the congregations of women were in favor of compliance, realizing that disobedience would provoke reprisals. But the non-authorized orders decided on resistance. The violent polemic which followed, with the partisans of "resistance" being pictured in the Rightist press as martyrs, made an unfavorable impression on public opinion, which assumed that the orders were able to pay and resented the "pious" protestations which they believed masked political objections. Ultimately the state had its way, but the papal policy of conciliation was seriously weakened. As Bishop Fuzet remarked, the Right would have the ship driven on the reefs to avoid the storm.

THE ARMY

To understand the Dreyfus Affair one must appreciate the role of the Army in the Third Republic. The Republic itself had been born out of defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. The enormous growth of German power after the unification of the German States alarmed the French, and their sense of insecurity was intensified by the isolation to which Bismarck's diplomacy had condemned France—an isolation which had been dramatically broken by the Russian alliance on the very eve of the Dreyfus Affair. Hopes of revenge had withered in the two decades after defeat by Prussia; the Republicans, the party

8. See Lecanuet, *La Vie de l'Eglise sous Léon XIII* (Paris: Alcan, 1930), pp. 221-233.

of national resistance in 1870-71, had even come to accept the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, though their patriotism remained strong. Conversely, it was the Right which adopted nationalism as a creed and sought emotional outlets in Déroulède's League of Patriots. In its demand for revenge against Germany, it unquestionably was seeking to exploit the delicate international situation in order to embarrass the Republic.

Both Left and Right understood the national danger to the East and hailed the Army as the hope of France. Embodying the revolutionary principle of "the nation in arms," it was a citizen army in which all served, a microcosm of the nation. The professional officer class, however, was drawn chiefly from the political Right. The tendency of the aristocratic elements to favor "the honorable profession" had been strengthened as nineteenth-century bourgeois France gradually closed the doors of opportunity to the sons of the old families. Since pay was poor and promotion slow in peacetime, and since France had not developed the social prestige of the reserve officer as had Germany, the bourgeoisie offered no great competition for positions in the officer corps. Approximately one-third of the officers, including the notorious Colonel Henry, rose from the ranks. However, it was the mainly aristocratic graduates from the military academy of Saint-Cyr who set the tone of the service and had the best opportunities for advancement. Most of the Army officers were Catholics, some only nominally, though a majority practiced their faith—a sharp contrast with those in elective office or in certain branches of the administration where the practice of religion was normally a handicap. As a group, the officers scrupulously remained outside of political conflict, and regarded the Army as a thing apart.⁹ In the crisis of the '80s, they gave no encouragement to General Boulanger in his aspirations to political power. But their hearts were on the Right, as their background and connections would indicate.

THE JEWS

The Army officers shared the anti-Semitism that came to infect much of French society in the late 1880s. The reason for this relatively

9. Raoul Girardet, *La Société militaire dans la France contemporaine* (Paris: Plon, 1953), notes that officers who were closely connected with civilian groups were adversely noted in their fitness reports.

sudden outburst of ill-feeling toward the Jews is, despite exhaustive study, something of a puzzle.¹⁰ Never was the remark truer that if the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him, for in France anti-Semitism was clearly the product of social tensions which had nothing to do with the Jews.

The Jews were only 0.13 per cent of the French population, numbering less than fifty thousand in 1872 and reaching about eighty thousand in 1900. Before 1871 the only compact body of Jews had been in Alsace. When this province was lost in the Prussian War, a considerable number of Alsatian Jews, including Alfred Dreyfus, had chosen French citizenship. There was also a slight influx from Central Europe in the years before the Affair, but the figures just given show that it was not very large. Almost all the Jews lived in a few urban centers. Virtually all were Republicans in gratitude to the Revolution for their emancipation and civil rights. Most of them were poor, but a few had gained important economic positions. A considerable number had distinguished themselves in literature, the press, the theater, the professions, and politics. Yet, fantastically, the anti-Semites charged that the Jewish population was four or five or even six hundred thousand, that its wealth was enormous, and that the administration of the French *départements* had fallen into Jewish hands, over one-quarter of the prefects and sub-prefects being Jews. Such was the myth of "Jewish power" in France.

THE ANTI-SEMITES

In 1886, with the publication of *La France Juive* by Edouard Drumont, French anti-Semitism raged into the open.¹¹ These two volumes were a bitter denunciation of the Jews as the main source of France's ill fortunes, spiced with scorn for the nobility and upper

10. The best study is that of Professor Byrnes, referred to in note 7.

11. To give some notion of the author and his book: early in life Drumont had fallen away from the Church, and later associated himself with occultist movements. When he returned, it was without a clear and firm understanding of the faith, rather with the emotions of what some of his friends, and even he himself, described as a "historical Catholic"—hardly a reassuring religious career. Not ungifted as a journalist, he blamed his failure to receive the prominence he craved on the Jewish owners of his newspaper, on "forces beyond his control." The anti-Semitism of his book was openly racist: the idealistic Aryan against the materialistic Jew. The Aryan race alone was the bearer of justice, goodness, and liberty, and the Jews were by nature spies, traitors, criminals, and carriers of disease. Their fingers were, of course, everywhere; for instance, every Protestant was half-Jew, and Protestantism merely a Jewish device for the conquest of Christian society. For further material, see Byrnes's excellent study, I, 137-155.

bourgeoisie who were vainly seeking to re-establish an anachronistic old regime. The author declared himself in favor of a vague socialism joined to a strong nationalism. His subsequent books and his newspaper *La Libre Parole* encouraged a furious anti-Semitic campaign with leagues, student demonstrations, and various virulent manifestations, all of them sharply divergent from the French tradition.

Drumont's campaign won considerable support in the ranks of French Socialism, which, since Proudhon, had had an anti-Semitic strain.¹² In addition, Drumont's rather bogus working-class sympathies appealed to some Socialists, though others rejected them. He also won a considerable segment of Republicans from the lower middle class, which remained the backbone of his movement. But unquestionably the most vocal support for Drumont came from Catholic publications and organizations. Those of Monarchist persuasion, though resentful of Drumont's criticisms directed at themselves, found in anti-Semitism a potent new weapon against the hated Republic, especially after it was learned that a few Jews had been involved in the notorious Panama Scandal, wherein some legislators had been bribed to obtain permission for a bond issue. Catholics noted that some Jews had been prominent in the political circles responsible for the anti-clerical laws of 1879-84, and, more fundamentally, were bewildered by the disaster that had befallen their cause and so were susceptible to the thesis of a "plot." Unwilling to ascribe to Frenchmen the waning of royalism and the attacks upon the Church, they found it comforting to ascribe them to a "conspiracy of aliens" or "subversives."

Despite honorable exceptions, the extent to which Catholics had succumbed to anti-Semitism in the late '80s is distressing. *La Croix*, *Univers*, the *Revue du Monde Catholique*, and the violently Royalist *La Vérité Française* were solidly in the anti-Semitic camp. More painful was the concurrence of the venerable organ *Le Correspondent*, once the review of Montalembert, Dupanloup, and Falloux, which could look on so long a record of reasonableness and moderation.¹³

12. To give an example: the most influential anti-Semitic book prior to Drumont's was *Du Molochisme juif* (Brussels, 1884), a posthumously published work by an atheistic Communard of the 1870s, Gustave Tridon. To him the Jews were "parasites" and their religion "idolatrous," and it was their pernicious Semitic spirit, so manifest in both Judaism and Christianity, that was the cause of capitalism and its ills. See Byrnes, *op. cit.*, I, 157.

13. Fairness requires that it be added that moderation was still the temper of this review. For instance, Louis Joubert, its *gérant*, writing the *chronique politique*

Equally sad was the attitude of the Christian Democrats who had received a strong impetus from the *Ralliement*. They already had a penchant for anti-Semitism because of the false identification of the Jews with high finance, an error once frequent among French social reformers. In the period before the Affair they became closely associated with Drumont and accepted his thesis of "Jewish finance-capitalism."

This large-scale surrender of vocal Catholic opinion to the crudities and illogicalities of anti-Semitism is one of the sad chapters of Catholic life in modern France. Even granted the chafing and desperation a nagging anti-clericalism provoked in Catholics of those days, their acceptance of a position so contrary to their faith remains indefensible. It is a commentary on the deficiencies of the religious education of the period and on Maritain's observation that if the meaning of Christianity does not fully penetrate into souls because they have not yet been spiritually purified, then it is indeed easy for human weakness to merge religion with prejudice or with political nostrums.¹⁴ Certainly anti-Semitism contributed to Catholic blindness in the Dreyfus Affair; although Drumont's campaign had slackened by 1894 and he himself had admitted its failure, its passions were readily rekindled once the Affair reached its political stage.

A SECOND LOOK

THE background sketched above is necessary for a further elucidation of the Dreyfus Affair. Yet the material must be kept in perspective.

on January 25, 1891 (No. 126 new series, p. 407), quotes approvingly Archbishop Meignan's advice to love those who have "different opinions than ourselves and may be nearer to God than we think." He then praises Lacordaire who wished to place Christian liberty under the protection of civil liberty. "What other source of protection is there?" he adds. On February 10, 1891, he speaks of the two Republics, one moderate, pacific, and conciliatory, the other the Republic of blood, and adds that Catholics can be reconciled to the former. Speaking of the Dreyfus Affair on pp. 605-606 of the issue of November 10, 1897, the same commentator writes: "M. Scheurer-Kestner has said to several persons behind closed doors that he had proof of the innocence of Captain Dreyfus. We do not know if he has, *we would be happy if he had*, but we only assert that if he possesses the secret that would be the salvation of an innocent man, he would be most culpable not to produce it at once."

14. See, for instance, his *Ransoming the Time* (New York: Scribner's, 1941), p. 128; also in *I Believe*, ed. by C. Fadiman (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1939), pp. 209-210.

These predispositions do not warrant the assumption that the case was in its origins a plot to overthrow the Republic. Initially it was a simple error of a military court, anxious to uncover a traitor on the General Staff in an atmosphere fraught with danger to the nation. It showed a humanly understandable desire to reach a quick solution of an embarrassing and explosive problem. Hasty decisions reached in such an atmosphere are not an exclusive fault of the military; civilian courts have given some conspicuous historic examples.

Anti-Semitism played only a limited, and largely unconscious, role in the genesis of the Affair. But it became an increasing factor as controversy developed over the court-martial. Once serious doubt was thrown on the verdict, all the latent passions and tensions in French society exploded, and groups sought to use the case to discredit the enemy on the Left or on the Right. To understand this phenomenon, we need only remember the passions aroused in and by our recent Congressional investigations; yet our post-World War II society, while disturbed, has never been so seriously divided on fundamentals as was the French in the 1890s. The conversation between General Gonse and Colonel Picquart on September 15, 1896, is a frightening illustration of the will to preserve the group at the expense of the individual:

Gonse: "Why are you so concerned that Dreyfus should leave Devil's Island?"

Picquart: "Because he is innocent."

"It is a matter which cannot be re-examined. Both Generals Mercier and Saussier are involved."

"But the man is innocent."

"That is of no concern. There are other considerations which must be weighed."

"But if the Dreyfus family should discover the real culprit what would be our position?"

"If you say nothing, no one will know."

"My general, what you say is abominable. I do not know what I shall do, but I will never carry this secret into the grave."¹⁵

This dramatic confrontation reaches the core of the issue, as well as the human obstacles to its just solution. After 1896 the problem

15. *La Révision du procès Dreyfus à la Cour de Cassation. Compte rendu sténographique in extenso* (Paris: Stock, 1898), p. 114.

was simply this: Should an innocent man, condemned as a traitor, be retained in prison with his good name traduced in order to shield "the honor of the Army" and to avoid embarrassment to the nation's foreign policy? But while the issue was simple, some were prevented from seeing it because of political conflict or special interest; many more were blinded because the truth was not revealed all at once but was ferreted out piecemeal in circumstances which made it easy for emotions to cloud reason.

THE UNANIMOUS VERDICT

As said before, the case against Captain Dreyfus began with the discovery that certain Army secrets were being passed to the German Embassy in Paris, a discovery alarming both because of the loss of confidential material and because of the fear that the enemy to the East might precipitate a crisis before the newly signed Russian alliance became operationally effective. Panic urged an over-hasty inquiry. Not a member of the old officer caste, an over-ambitious student of military affairs, a little too devoted to his work and too interested in departments not his own, inclined to be boastful and talkative, Dreyfus seemed a likely villain to the heads of one of the divisions of the Ministry in which he had recently worked. But his personal shortcomings did not sum up to a motive, for he was rich, happily married, patriotic, and devoted to the Army. However, three of the several handwriting experts called in, including the famed criminologist Bertillon, identified, or tended to identify, the script of the *bordereau* as that of Dreyfus. The Minister of War, General Auguste Mercier, was having difficulties with the Chamber on other issues—for he had rebuffed an inventor who then betook himself and his invention to Germany; he had ordered the discharge of some sixty thousand soldiers without notifying the Senate, the Chamber, or even the President of the Republic; and he had brought on himself the ire of the Left by insisting that a newly elected deputy, previously excused from military service, now serve in the Army. When his secret order to arrest Dreyfus on suspicion was revealed in Drumont's *La Libre Parole*, which screamed that the case would be hushed up because the officer was a Jew, Mercier and the Cabinet grew fearful and decided on a court-martial.

The court, composed of military men of reasonable probity, did not include a single artillery officer who might have detected flaws in the evidence, for some of the disclosures involved technical matters of

that branch. Dreyfus was ably defended by a distinguished lawyer, Edgar Demange, a believing and practicing Catholic. A majority of the officers called to testify as character witnesses voiced their dislike of his manners but spoke well of his work. When the hearing, held in secret, appeared to be going unfavorably for the prosecution, the judges were privately shown a collection of documents assembled by the Statistical Section, none of which was damning to the accused, but which were accompanied by a commentary and a biographical sketch designed to reinforce the case for the prosecution. They portrayed Dreyfus as a gambler deep in debt, and with other discreditable motives for the crime of which he was accused. This file was fraudulent, however, having been "gathered" by the then director of the counter-espionage section, Colonel Jean-Conrad Sandherr. It is more than doubtful that General Mercier knew the file to be a forgery, for he was clearly convinced of Dreyfus's treason. None of the judges was sufficiently versed in procedure to know that the introduction of these documents without showing them to the defense was illegal both in military and civil law. Small wonder, then, that the court returned a unanimous verdict of guilty, sentencing the accused to degradation and deportation for life.

Though there was fraud and illegal procedure, there is no evidence of a plot to convict an innocent man. The majority of the military involved acted honorably, convinced that they were dealing with one of their own who had betrayed his country. The public supported the verdict with near unanimity, relieved that the threat of treason had been lifted. Of the press, only the ultra-Royalist Paul Granier de Cassagnac, in *L'Autorité*, expressed doubts. The great Clemenceau regretted that Dreyfus had not been shot. Jaurès, later to become the founder of the French Socialist Party, declared in the Chamber of Deputies that the traitor had escaped this penalty only because he was a rich bourgeois, and chided the government for protecting cosmopolitan speculators masked as patriots. Beyond his family and intimate friends, only his counsel Demange retained faith in the convicted man who had been sent to solitary confinement on Devil's Island.

THE CASE CLOSED

The second stage in the Affair extends from this trial in December 1894 to the publication of *J'Accuse* on January 13, 1898. The predominant characteristic of this period was the unwillingness of the

Army command or the Republican government to reopen the case. As new evidence was slowly unfolded, those involved in the original trial became conscious of their personal stake in preventing revision. It was this which led to the uncritical acceptance of the fantastic evidence against Dreyfus periodically manufactured by Colonel Henry. Even those Army officers not personally involved were predisposed, on grounds of Army honor, to accept the case as *res judicata*, as a matter already adjudicated and not subject to further litigation. Meanwhile doubts were spreading in some civilian groups on the legality of the procedure, and this led some to believe in Dreyfus's innocence.

The decisive step was the discovery of the true culprit by Colonel Picquart, a practicing Catholic and, like Dreyfus, an Alsatian. In the traditional manner of his province, he did not think too well of Jews. When one of the judges at the first court-martial remarked that he could find no motive for Dreyfus's crime, Picquart is supposed to have replied: "Ah! but you don't know these Mulhouse Jews!"¹⁶ Once the fateful *petit bleu* had aroused his suspicions of Esterhazy—who, inquiries showed, was engaged in all kinds of shady dealings, having been at one time a shareholder in a fashionable house of prostitution and being always hopelessly in debt—and once he had been struck by the resemblance between Esterhazy's handwriting and that of the *bordereau*, Picquart examined the secret dossier on Dreyfus which had been shown to the judges in the trial of 1894 and recognized its obvious forgeries. But, as we have seen, when he attempted to persuade his superiors that the case against Dreyfus was without foundation and that the real traitor was Esterhazy, he met not only indifference to the truth but the strongest opposition to his continuing his inquiries into the closed case.¹⁷

At this point the role of his subordinate, Colonel Henry, must be

16. Chapman, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

17. A word must be said here in praise of this hero of conscience. While for most of the defenders of Dreyfus, he was more a means than a person, an issue that served their cause, for Picquart, who had no "cause," there was only an innocent man and justice. James Grossman has put it well: "Picquart was anti-Semitic, disliked Dreyfus, had been an official observer at the court-martial, and had believed him guilty. But he respected a fact, and no prejudice could stand in the way of its logical operation. Many men of genuinely liberal beliefs were helped to the truth about Dreyfus by their prejudices. Picquart is one of the few men who came to the truth in spite of his prejudice, and once he came to it, he never swerved from it" ("The Dreyfus Affair Fifty Years Later," *Commentary*, XXI, 1, January 1956, p. 27).

specially noted. Henry was a professional soldier, up from the ranks, cunning and ambitious, and passionately devoted to the service. He had realized for some time that a revelation of the weakness of the evidence against Dreyfus would react unfavorably on the Army, and also on himself because of his manipulations with the secret file. So all on his own and deliberately, he had set out on a course of forgery, which, although designed to protect his chiefs and himself, actually involved them more deeply. It seems certain that there never would have been that national uproar over revision of the verdict against Dreyfus had it not been for the pernicious intervention of this one man. In deceiving the Army and the public—many, to be sure, were only too willing to be deceived—he prepared disaster for himself and for many others who had no part in his forgeries.

An analogy might be helpful. The French Right, which rejected the Revolution of 1789, has always interpreted it in terms of "plot." The villains vary with the special animus of the investigator—they may be the intellectuals, the bourgeoisie, or the Freemasons—but they are always identifiable, and the causation is reduced to simplest terms. A century and a half of close study of the Revolution and its times has led scholars of every variety to reject the *complot* thesis in favor of what is termed *les circonstances*. By "circumstances" is meant the complex fabric of ideas, internal opposition, foreign and domestic war, human error, and dominant personalities, all of which are integral to any satisfactory explanation of the Revolution. On a smaller scale the same is true of the Affair. Henry was neither its cause nor an adequate explanation of its development. But his role was central, and his decisive intervention does not fit any simplicist explanation.

THE MOVE TOWARD REVISION

Sentiment for the captive on Devil's Island grew but slowly in civilian France. The first to denounce the injustice publicly was the courageous and brilliant Jewish writer, Bernard Lazare, who, on November 6, 1896, published a penetrating pamphlet, *La Vérité sur l'Affaire Dreyfus*.¹⁸ Its immediate reception was cool. Jaurès remained indifferent; Clemenceau refused to read it; and Zévaès, of the Socialist *Petite République*, was abusive; most Jews, particularly influential Jews,

18. Péguy pays the highest tribute to Lazare in *Notre jeunesse, Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1916), IV, 68-69 and 75-76.

disliked the pamphlet and would have preferred to have the case forgotten. The Chamber, convinced of Dreyfus's guilt, rebuffed efforts to reopen the case, only five members failing to stand with the government after the debate. But individuals began to drift into the revisionist camp, the most important being Clemenceau, who found access to the public in the newly established journal, *L'Aurore*. Indiscretions on the part of Henry and Esterhazy and the renewed interest of the press finally brought the case to the general public.

It might be helpful to review the status of the case on the eve of Zola's intervention. It had not yet hardened into a contest between Right and Left, and the bulk of the Republicans were still anti-Dreyfusard,¹⁹ as were most of the responsible Republican politicians in the Chamber and Cabinet. The latter, with the full approval of the Prime Minister, Méline, had definitely closed the door on revision. The Army had not only taken its stand against revision; it had gone too far to turn back without serious damage to several men of high rank. It is important to bear in mind that the Army men involved did not reach this stage by careful plotting—they were notably careless in consultation—but through a sense of corporate solidarity, which confused Army honor with the reputation of a handful of officers. Catholics in general were inclined to support the Army, and the leading Catholic journal, *La Croix*, was noisily anti-Dreyfusard. The outstanding Catholic leader and *Rallié*, Albert de Mun, vehemently defended the Army, in which he had served in the war of 1870. The hierarchy was discreetly silent, perhaps from fear of unpopularity if they questioned the administration of justice in the Republic, which many of them were known to dislike.²⁰

On the other side, sentiment for revision was growing.²¹ It was

19. It was still possible to be wrong in good faith, as was the Freemason and Republican Camille Pelletan. See his correspondence with Jaurès, in *La Dépêche de Toulouse*, December 26, 1900. Incidentally, this anti-clerical paper, the leading journal in the Southwest, was anti-Dreyfusard to the end.

20. So declared Cardinal Richard, Archbishop of Paris, when invited by some Parisian professors to lend his name to revision; see Lecanuet, *Les Signes avant-coureurs de la séparation* (Paris: Alcan, 1930), pp. 184-185. Some priests protested against the excesses of *La Croix* but in vain; see Abbé Pichot, *La Conscience chrétienne et l'Affaire Dreyfus* (Paris: Société d'éditions littéraires, 1899), pp. 28-30.

21. Léon Blum in *Souvenirs sur l'Affaire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1935), pp. 45-46, is critical of some features of the handling of the revisionist case in its early stages, especially the failure to bring the ensemble of doubts and counter-evidence to the public in a single, striking form. For his remarks on Zola, see pp. 133-134.

based on a conviction that the proceedings of 1894 were irregular rather than on a belief in Dreyfus's innocence, and had been strengthened by the court-martial of Esterhazy, which, though ending in his acquittal, revealed to the public some of the more suspicious activities in the Statistical Section. What was still lacking was a unifying impulse that would draw together these varied strands of opinion. This was provided by the furor aroused over the publication of *J'Accuse* in *L'Aurore*, which sold two hundred thousand copies in the first twenty-four hours.

A NEW DIRECTION

The year and a half between Zola's intervention and the second court-martial brought the Affair to the center of the stage of French public life, reviving all the basic divisions in the body politic. Zola had charged the General Staff—"that house of Jesuits," as he called it—with the condemnation of a man they had known to be innocent. To him it was all a clerical and reactionary plot, smacking "of unbridled nightmare, of the Spanish Inquisition"; having already struck one victim, it threatened all anti-clericals. However, he had courageously achieved an imaginative reconstruction of the Affair that was correct in major outlines, though inexact in detail and without basis for its wider attributions,²² and had raised the question of justice for an innocent man to a new political and socio-religious level. He thus enlarged the area from which recruits to revision could be drawn and made the Affair a subject of world attention.

Immediately, however, the impact was not so clear. The ranks of the Army stiffened, for now the whole top level of command was under attack. Violence erupted in the streets, with organized anti-Semitic gangs seeking victims. Still, the mass of the people were unaffected, and even the informed divided on other than strict party lines. An old Royalist like Buffet could speak for Dreyfus, while the leading Freemason, Brisson, and the anti-clerical Republican Berthelot maintained their anti-Dreyfusard positions. The government continued its refusal to reopen the case, in which it had the support even of a substantial part of the Left, for politicians were still concerned about the place of the Army and fearful of civil war.

22. For a critical contemporary estimate, see Francis Charmes, in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, February 1, 1898, pp. 712-713.

But a new direction had been given to the movement, and it was strengthened by Zola's trial, an examination of which reveals how slowly the basic facts of the Affair were available to the public. Clemenceau, for instance, in his defense of Zola, emphasized that he did not know whether Dreyfus was innocent or guilty, but that he was certain the procedure of condemnation had been illegal—a fair measure of the facts then known. The trial of Zola marked the great surge of intellectuals to the defense of Dreyfus. Literary and scientific circles and the faculties of the great Parisian schools, particularly of the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*, had read enough to become convinced of the injustice which had been done. It was from these groups that a substantial part of the membership of the League for the Defense of the Rights of Man and the Citizen was recruited. Organized by the reputable Catholic scholar, Paul Viollet, it grew directly from the Affair.²³

While the intellectual world had become passionately involved, the general public was still unaffected, so that the elections in the spring of 1898 gave no sign that the Affair had influenced practical politics. The Radicals remained unyieldingly anti-revisionist. The most notable feature of the elections was the effort of the Catholic Right, led by *La Croix*, to defeat the *Ralliés* and the moderate Republicans.²⁴ The result of this folly was a new Chamber with a somewhat weakened Center and with slightly more strength on the extremes, a shift which was enough to topple the government of Méline, whose attitude toward revision was completely negative, but who had worked for religious peace.

The new Radical ministry of Brisson, with the strongly Republican Cavaignac as Minister of War, showed no disposition to change the policy of its predecessor toward the case. On July 7 Cavaignac admitted in the Chamber that Esterhazy was the author of the *bordereau* and had been wrongly acquitted. But he went on to cite three documents, among them one of Henry's forgeries, the "*Canaille de D*" letter, to justify his conclusion that he was "completely certain of Dreyfus's guilt." The Radicals and Socialists applauded, and the

23. Viollet subsequently resigned when the Committee of the League refused to include religious educators among those whose rights the League should defend. The League went on to become a powerful center of anti-clericalism and within five years was, as Chapman has pointed out, "as fanatic and as treacherous as its enemies" (*op. cit.*, p. 203).

24. See Dansette, *op. cit.*, p. 259, and Lecanuet, *Les Signes*, pp. 122-129.

grateful deputies voted, 545 to 0, with three abstentions, to have his speech posted outside the town hall in the thirty-five thousand communes of France.

Just a month later, things began to change. In August 1898, when Henry's forgeries were exposed and he committed suicide, the Chief of Staff, Boisdeffre, who had played an important role in the Franco-Russian alliance, resigned. The move for revision was now irresistible and the Affair about to become the great political issue. Yet even at this stage the reaction of the government was tardy: Brisson was undecided and Cavaignac was still convinced of Dreyfus's guilt!

THE BREAK AND ITS AFTERMATH

Henry's exposure and suicide were followed by the flight of Esterhazy, who, from the safety of London, confessed his guilt. The case was broken but not the Affair, for too many had gone too far to retreat gracefully. The Army and its supporters, including the bulk of articulate Catholics, had allowed themselves to be deceived by a handful of officers and journalists; unwilling to see themselves as dupes, they refused to change their attitude toward Dreyfus and had added a new injustice—the disgrace of Picquart, who, in January 1898, had been jailed on the specious grounds that he had transmitted confidential papers to a civilian, M. Leblois. As the anti-Dreyfusards became more strident, the increasing number of citizens rallying to the revisionist cause adopted anti-militarism and anti-clericalism almost automatically.

In the fall of 1898, the Criminal Appeals Court agreed to hear the arguments for revision. But the government maneuvered to have them heard before all three sections of the Court of Appeals, hoping that the combined court would reject the plea. However, the parade of witnesses before the tribunal revealed the major outlines of the case to all who would see, and the forty-six judges unanimously decided to return it to another court-martial for retrial. Unfortunately, their judgment was so phrased that the new court would be forced to decide between General Mercier, who had been Minister of War in 1894, and ex-Captain Dreyfus. This was to prove too much for the seven officers who were to sit in judgment on Dreyfus, now returned from four years of solitary confinement. Meeting at Rennes in August 1899, this second military tribunal reviewed (for what was now

a world audience) the confused record of the Affair, and their verdict was—five for guilt and two for innocence! In the minority were Colonel Jouast, the respected president of the court, and Major de Bréon, the only member who was a devout Catholic.

More than two months before this verdict, there had occurred a political change that was to affect profoundly the destinies of the Third Republic. The six Republican ministries which had governed France since the arrest of Dreyfus had been either hostile to the innocent man or indifferent to his fate. But in June 1899, the energetic Waldeck-Rousseau formed a "ministry for the defense of the Republic." For the first time in the history of the Affair, the issue was posed in clear political terms between the Right and the Left, between the Party of Resistance and the Party of Movement. Till this moment, Republicans had been found in both camps; now they were nearly all Dreyfusard and were in a position to use the power of government to punish their old enemies. Significantly, too, for the first time in European history a Marxian Socialist, Millerand, had taken a portfolio in a bourgeois government with the approval of the majority of his party.

It was in this atmosphere that the Affair was finally liquidated. But not until 1906, seven years after Rennes, was Dreyfus fully vindicated by a decision which completely reversed the verdict of Rennes. Long before that, however, Waldeck-Rousseau's government of Republican Defense had been succeeded by the government of Combes. Trained for the priesthood, he had rejected the Church's teachings and become fanatical in his opposition to her. "He had one and only one idea, the battle with the Church. For matters of finance, of foreign policy, of defense, of social welfare, he cared nothing."²⁵ The religious orders were banned in France, and the Concordat of 1801 was repudiated. The Church-State problem which had developed in the course of the Revolution of 1789 had now reached its denouement in the aftermath of the Affair.

SOME CONSEQUENCES

THE foregoing account makes clear, I hope, that the Dreyfus Case was not a simple matter of anti-Semitism, but the culmination of a

25. Chapman, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

century of conflict in France. Anti-Semitism was unquestionably present in the Affair; it would be true to say that it permeated every detail. But behind it, and giving it meaning, lay the traditional cleavage in French society and political life. The Affair was not a plot, neither of the Army, nor of the clergy, nor of the Jesuits.²⁶ In broad terms, it was a mirror of a century of French history, and its conclusion the triumph of much that animated the Revolution of 1789.

This larger significance may be grasped from a summary of the consequences of the Affair.

(1) It wrecked the *Ralliement*, initiated by Leo XIII, and ended a decade in which the Third Republic had followed *l'esprit nouveau*, the new spirit of peaceful relations. True, the *Ralliés* had been relatively weak and had met opposition on the Right and even from *La Croix*, superficially committed to the papal directives. True, too, the spirit of accommodation had been strained by the tax on the property of the religious communities. But the new policy had borne considerable fruit and there had been a serious possibility of a union of conservative Catholics with bourgeois Republicans in the face of the Socialist threat. All this was ended by the Affair which brought the religious conflict to its highest pitch of intensity since 1793-94.

(2) The Affair acted as a centrifugal force on the Republican parties. Though they had been diverging sharply on social policy since the 1880s and, as we have seen, took various positions during the Affair on Dreyfus's guilt, in 1899, after the case was broken, they were able to achieve near unanimity on the proposition that the Church must be punished and the Army brought under Republican control. The first step was the seizure of *La Croix* and the other publications of the Assumptionists, who deserved no sympathy, and received little, even from the hierarchy. Then the campaign moved inexorably to a breaking off of relations with the Vatican. The Army proved more resistant, and the revelation in the Chamber that Combes's Minister of War was using the Masonic lodges and the League of the Rights of Man to spy on the personal opinions

26. That the Affair was not a Jesuit plot must be upheld against those who make too much of a single utterly indefensible article in *La Civiltà Cattolica* for January 1898, which charged that the movement for revision was a plot hatched at the Zionist Congress in Basel. It echoed such rantings of Drumont as that Jews directed all French policy and that the Jew was created "to serve as a spy wherever treason is in preparation." Still, "one foolish anti-Semitic article does not make a campaign." So Chapman, who reminds us that Georges Sorel, no friend of the Church, thought of it as a counterattack and that a few days earlier *L'Univers Israélite* had published a no less violent polemic against the Church (*op. cit.*, p. 201).

of Army officers led to the fall of the Combes ministry in 1905. With it, the Republican bloc broke apart.

(3) The Affair marked the failure to found a conservative party loyally dedicated to the support of the Republic. The consequence of this failure was that French parliamentary life was deprived of a healthy balance between two political tendencies, one in power, the other in opposition. Only such a balance could have kept political divisions in France from periodic degeneration into irreconcilable conflict. The primary responsibility for this failure rested with the intransigents of the Right; but certainly, a share belonged to the Left when, after August 1898, the noble motives of the earlier revisionists were somehow compromised by men who used the Affair for political ends.²⁷

(4) The Republic was immensely strengthened by the Affair; some analysts would even say that it was founded in the course of this national crisis. Consequently, the Left became the dominant factor in French politics till the outbreak of World War I. The entrance of Millerand into the cabinet of Waldeck-Rousseau was a decisive event in the history of European Socialism. Of equal importance was the increase in the bourgeois and intellectual components of French Socialism, with all that this implied for the future history of the Left. In addition, Jaurès became a national figure of importance and was able to establish his moderating, democratic influence as the dominant trend in French Socialism until his assassination in 1914. The Affair affected other political groupings too. The record of the Radicals in the early stages of the Affair was somewhat less than notable. But since their strength lay in the provincial centers, which were less responsive to the case, and since their major bond was anti-clericalism, they managed to increase their prestige in the aftermath of the Affair. They became in effect the balance wheel in the subsequent Parliaments of the Third Republic. Personalities were affected as well as political groups. Méline, whose record outside the Affair was excellent, went into eclipse, while Clemenceau returned from political oblivion. These are but two instances of how political fortunes were made or unmade by the case.

(5) Conversely, the Affair marks the end of the old Royalism, and of the old Nationalism as represented by Déroulède. Legitimism had, in fact, ceased to be a political possibility by 1890; but the Affair gave it the *coup de grâce*. Yet, though disappearing as a genuine political force, it survived as a sect, with its unrepentant partisans regrouping in a new formation with a new spirit. Significantly, the spring of 1899 saw the

27. Brilliantly examined by François Coguel-Nyegaard in *La Politique des partis sous la III^e République* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1946), pp. 98-123.

first issue of *L'Action Française* under the direction of the nationalist Republican Henri Vaugois and the extreme Royalist Charles Maurras. The facility of the latter in inventing explanations for any aspect of the Affair had established him as the darling of the extreme Right. *L'Action Française* represented a new phase in the Party of Order: its leaders were predominantly agnostic and positivistic, though they "favored" the Church as a force for stability and order, as a link to the past and its culture; instead of a return to the old traditionalism, they were to become godfathers to Fascism. After 1936, they were agreeable to co-ordinating French policies with those of Hitler, and contributed not a little to the philosophical foundations of the Vichy government.

(6) The Affair ended for several decades the possibility of an influential Catholic party left of Center. One of the casualties of the Affair was the Christian Democrats, predominantly anti-Dreyfusard. Marc Sangnier's social movement *Le Sillon* lived on for a while; a remnant of Catholic Republicans survived, but their political influence was negligible until World War II provided the climate for a second try.

(7) The Affair established the reputation of intellectuals for prescience in matters outside their immediate competence, a factor which has been luminously explored in Raymond Aron's *L'Opium des intellectuels*.²⁸ What Albert Thiebaudet has termed *la République des professeurs*—based on the reputation of the university faculties, and particularly that of the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*, for objectivity and devotion to truth above party spirit—owes much to the Affair.

(8) The impact on the Army is more difficult to weigh. Anti-militarism had been virtually nonexistent before the Affair, except on the extreme Left. Now anti-militarism became common in many Republican circles, particularly among school teachers, though its depth may be questioned in light of the ardent response of 1914. Further, the Army resented efforts to "republicanize" it and there was bitter ill-feeling against suspected informers. Candidates for Saint-Cyr dropped to about forty per cent of the number before the Affair. But again, resentment in the officer corps did not interfere with its performance in 1914, even though efforts to promote Republican officers had not been conspicuously successful.

(9) While the Affair injected new poison into French political life, one consequence was most happy: organized anti-Semitism disappeared as a power, *La Libre Parole* faded after 1904, and Drumont died in 1917 in complete obscurity. It is even more gratifying to note that the Affair was the last instance in French history of anti-Semitism to which any

28. Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1955.

number of priests succumbed. As Hannah Arendt writes in "From the Dreyfus Affair to France Today": "They [the leaders of Vichy] sought to mobilize the Catholic clergy against the Jews, only to give proof that the priests have not only lost their political influence but are not actually anti-Semitic. On the contrary, it is the very bishops and synods which the Vichy regime would turn once more into political powers who voiced the most emphatic protest against the persecution of the Jews."²⁹

CATHOLICS AND THE AFFAIR

A FINAL question must be put. Since the principal victim of the Affair was the Church, to what degree did Catholics bear the moral burden for the retribution visited upon her after 1899? I hope that the following points are justified in light of the narrative above:

(1) The chief moral responsibility among Catholics was the yielding of so many to anti-Semitism during the decade before the Affair.

(2) There is no evidence whatsoever of a sinister "clerical plot" to use Dreyfus to discredit the Jews or to overturn the Republic; but once the Affair had developed, quite a few Catholics tried to use it to these ends.

(3) The overwhelming majority of Catholics were anti-Dreyfusard, some for political reasons, some because of affection for the Army. While the Catholic Dreyfusards were a small minority, they form a list that is imposing, if not in numbers, then in weight. There were the Abbés Pichot,³⁰ Serres, Frémont, Grosjean, Brugerette, Vignot, Birot, Martinet, de Bréon (brother of the minority judge in the Rennes trial), Jean Viollet, and P. Maumus—to mention only those priests prominent in letters and journalism or in public affairs. Further, intellectuals of the same persuasion united for the defense of justice in *Le Comité catholique pour la Défense du Droit*, founded by Paul Viollet after his resignation from *La Ligue des Droits de l'Homme*. It had two hundred members from univer-

29. In *Essays on Antisemitism*, ed. by Koppel S. Pinson (New York: Conference on Jewish Relations, 1946), p. 179. While admiring Miss Arendt's scholarship, I dissent strongly from some of her conclusions, particularly her imputation of an active anti-Dreyfus role to the Jesuits. While she can cite the authority of Joseph Reinach's *Histoire de l'Affaire Dreyfus* (Paris: Editions de la Revue blanche, 1901-11), to which I, as every student of the Affair, am indebted, she ignores the evidence of Louis Caperan, *L'Anti-clericalisme et l'Affaire Dreyfus* (Toulouse: Imprimerie régionale, 1948), especially pp. 263-276. See also Chapman's discussion referred to in note 23.

30. Author of *La Conscience chrétienne et l'Affaire Dreyfus*, cited in note 20.

sity circles. *La Quinzaine* was the organ of Catholic champions of justice for Dreyfus, and it has already been noted that the contradictory Paul de Cassagnac of *L'Autorité* was the first revisionist. Catholic journalists on *Figaro*, *Soleil*, and a few provincial papers such as *Salut public de Lyon* defended the innocent man. Even *L'Univers*, which had been the *enfant terrible* of the Catholic press, remained moderate and faithful to the papal plan of conciliation during the Affair.³¹

(4) In spite of this courageous minority, the majority Catholic press succeeded, unfortunately, in identifying Catholics with the anti-Dreyfusards in the eyes of non-Catholics.

(5) No less unfortunate was the malevolent influence this extremist press exercised on Catholic opinion. Much has been made, and rightly, of the three thousand priests who subscribed to *La Libre Parole* and of the three hundred who contributed to the fund for Henry's widow. Indeed, one would be too many; yet it must be borne in mind that there were fifty thousand priests in France, and that three hundred represented but three or four per diocese.

(6) An analysis of the principal figures involved in the Affair breaks down the thesis of a "clerical plot." The governments which, for four years, blocked revision included not a single practicing Catholic; in fact, they were generally anti-clerical in composition. Mercier, the 1894 Minister of War who bears so heavy a responsibility, was no more than a "conventional" Catholic, married to an English Protestant. Henry, the major villain, had only the most tenuous contacts with religion; Esterhazy had none. However, Boisdeffre, Chief of Staff, was a devout Catholic and a friend of the Jesuit Père du Lac. Still other officers in key positions were practicing Catholics, including Picquart. But, contrary to general opinion, few of the officers on the General Staff were trained in Jesuit schools.³² Hence no particular pattern of the Affair can be drawn on a religious basis.

(7) The hierarchy rigorously abstained from any intervention in the Affair. That is the simple fact. It is possible, however, to give it varying interpretations: Caperan, for instance, argues that it stemmed from a desire not to add to the divisions within the country and from hesitation

31. See the article on September 1, 1898, by Pierre Veuillot.

32. De Mun, in a letter to the *London Times*, and again in a Congress at Lyon on May 25, 1894, gives evidence that only nine or ten per cent of the officers on the General Staff were trained by the Jesuits, and that only one officer involved in the Affair was a Jesuit product (Boisdeffre) and he only for two years compared with eight spent at the Lycée d'Alençon; of the others, neither Mercier, Gonse, Henry, Paty du Clam, Picquart, or Esterhazy had any Jesuit schooling. See de Mun's *Combats d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Lethellieux, n.d.), VII, 25-27.

to question the justice of the Republic;³³ others would see the silence of the bishops as approval of the campaign against Dreyfus. Certainly it is regrettable that when the moral issues became clear, the leaders of the Church in France did not speak out. While their conduct might be called correct, it was timid.

To summarize: It is difficult to make general statements about French Catholics in the Affair. There were Dreyfusard Catholics; there were ever so many more anti-Dreyfusard Catholics; and there were the vast majority of Catholics who, like the simple people of France of every opinion, remained completely outside the controversy. On the other hand, Catholics who made their views known and remained obdurate after the evidence was in, were articulate and numerous enough to bring reprisals on the whole Catholic body.

There are some lessons Catholics might learn from the Dreyfus Affair:

All must suffer for the indiscretion of the few, unless the fanatics and extremists, who are never lacking in a social body, are *explicitly* repudiated. Silence will not do when moral issues are involved.

Catholic journals should review their positions critically from time to time. This was Abbé Pichot's warning when he pointed out that the attitude of *La Croix* might have been defensible at the beginning of the Affair, but should be re-examined in the light of the new revelations. If the paper had proofs of Dreyfus's guilt unknown to others, it had an obligation, Pichot reasoned, to make them known.³⁴

An innocent man must never be sacrificed for the supposed national interest, even though an apparent case might be made along lines of national safety. Péguy saw this clearly at the time of the Affair;³⁵ others did not then, and do not now.

33. *Op. cit.*, pp. 243-246.

34. Pichot, *op. cit.*, p. 20. The newspaperman's obligation toward truth in matters great and small has been a frequent concern of Pius XII. "To ascertain truth and to be fearlessly faithful to truth in all that you write and speak is not an easy task," the Pope said in one of his many addresses to journalists, "but it is a precious service as well as a bounden duty." See *The Pope Speaks*, II, 1 (First Quarter 1955), pp. 71-72.

35. "In reality the true position of the people who opposed us was, for a long time, not to say and to believe Dreyfus guilty, but to believe and to say that innocent or guilty, the life and salvation of a people, the enormous salvation of a people could not be troubled, could not be upset, could not be compromised, could

The existence of enemies of the Church on one side should not, of itself, persuade Catholics to choose the other. This most frequent logical fallacy played an important role in the disaster suffered by French Catholics at the turn of the century.

The Catholic press is a necessity, but, since it speaks in the Catholic name, it has a frightening responsibility. The Affair reminds us that the Catholic press can err, and err gravely. It must seek the truth in fear and trembling.

Above all, the Affair reminds Catholics that anti-Semitism is a betrayal of the very heart of their faith, and that it is at the same time a real and concrete danger to the Church. We can rejoice that French Catholics have learned this lesson, and have learned it marvelously well.

not be risked for one man, for a single man. Tacitly they meant: the temporal salvation. And precisely our Christian *mystique*, our Christian ideal, culminated so perfectly, so exactly with our French *mystique*, with our patriotic *mystique*, in our Dreyfusist *mystique* that what must clearly be recognized is that our point of view focused nothing less than the eternal salvation of France. What indeed was it that we said? Everything was against us, wisdom and law, I mean human wisdom, human law. What we did was in the order of folly or in the order of holiness, which are alike in so many ways, which have so many secret correspondences, in the eyes of human wisdom, underneath the human scrutiny. We moved, we went at odds with wisdom, with law; at odds with human wisdom, with human law. . . . We said that a single injustice, a single crime, a single illegality, particularly if it is officially recorded, confirmed, a single wrong to humanity, a single wrong to justice and to right, particularly if it is universally, legally, nationally, commodiously accepted, that a single crime shatters and is sufficient to shatter the whole social pact, the whole social contract, that a single legal crime, a single dishonorable act will bring about the loss of one's honor, the dishonor of a whole people. . . . Following a Christian tradition in the deepest, the liveliest, the most orthodox sense, situated in the center and in the heart of Christianity, we meant no less than to rise, I don't say to the conception, but to the passion, to the anxiety for eternal salvation, the eternal salvation of this people. . . . Quite at bottom we were the men of eternal salvation and our opponents were the men of temporal salvation. Such was the true, the real division in the Dreyfus case. Quite at bottom, we did not wish France to be constituted in a state of mortal sin" (*Cahiers de la Quinzaine*, Paris, 1900-14, XI, 12, pp. 208-212. These passages can also be found in the bilingual edition of excerpts from Péguy's works, translated by Anne and Julian Green under the title *Men and Saints*, New York: Pantheon, 1944, pp. 108-115).