

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 8

“J’Accuse...!”

Transcript

(Provided by listener Joseph M.)

[music: Fanfare]

The time is a lazy summer evening in August, 1894. The place is an empty office in a nondescript building in Paris, dimly lit by the setting sun. A cleaning woman by the name of Marie Bastian enters and begins to tidy up. But Marie Bastian is no ordinary cleaning woman. She is an agent of what is coyly called the Statistical Section, but is actually the French counterintelligence agency. And this is no ordinary office. It is the office of one Maximilian von Schwartzkoppen, the German military attaché. The Statistical Section already knows that Schwartzkoppen is employing spies to collect information on the latest generation of French artillery. That is why part of Madame Bastian’s duties is to collect the contents of Schwartzkoppen’s wastepaper basket every night, and deliver them to the Statistical Section. On this particular summer night she will make the most important find of her career, and what she finds will all but tear France apart, exposing bigotries and hatreds that have been simmering for a hundred years.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening Theme]

Episode 8: *J’Accuse...!*

[music: Valse de Paris, plays over the narration]

Paris in August 1894. Center of arts and culture, capital of a world-spanning empire. The five-year-old Eiffel Tower dominates the city skyline. Claude Debussy is putting the finishing touches on his masterpiece *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*. Pierre de Coubertin is busy organizing his International Olympic Committee. And underneath it all, Paris is seething with rightwing resentments that are about to shake the Republic to its foundation.

The torn up document that Madame Bastian had turned over to the Statistical Section, once they pieced it back together, proved to be a handwritten letter to the German military attaché listing five French military documents the writer was passing on. This letter has come to be called the

Bordereau. A bordereau is a memorandum, often an inventory listing other documents, but when we talk about this case, the Bordereau is that letter found by Madame Bastian. The writer of the Bordereau signed the document with the letter "D." Besides that and the handwriting, there was nothing to indicate who it had come from.

From the diversity of the documents listed in the Bordereau, the investigators at the Statistical Section concluded two things, the writer was an officer serving on the French General Staff, and from the fact that three of the documents related to French artillery, they concluded the officer must have come to the General Staff from an artillery unit. Actually, neither of these conclusions stands up under close scrutiny, but then very little about this investigation does.

But these are two sensitive subjects in French military circles. It is widely believed that the reason why France lost so badly to Prussia back in 1870 was because first of all, Prussian artillery was superior, and second, Prussian military organization, particularly the Prussian General Staff. France has been working to improve its military in both areas, so this Bordereau touches on some very sensitive nerves.

You might think that the best way to proceed with this investigation would be to collect handwriting samples from officers who potentially fit the description of the suspect, and then compare them to the handwriting of the Bordereau. This in fact was not done. Remember that it would have been very difficult to do this in 1894 in a world with no internet, no scanners, no fax machines, no photocopiers. Even the filing cabinet has yet to be invented. And the cutting edge data storage and retrieval device of the age is the pigeonhole. So it would have been difficult, although not impossible, to collect those handwriting samples. Instead what the investigators did was look over lists of names of artillery officers who might possibly be the suspect, and they hit upon the name Alfred Dreyfus.

One of these investigators, a Major du Paty, fancied himself a handwriting expert. So he got hold of a sample of Dreyfus's handwriting, looked it over, and declared it to be the same as the handwriting of the Bordereau. Well, it was kinda close anyway. Du Paty figured this would be enough to have Dreyfus arrested, and confronted him with the charge. In the honor-bound world of 1894, du Paty imagined that the quickest and easiest way to settle this problem would be to confront Dreyfus with the charge. He apparently believed that Dreyfus would break down and confess and put an end to the whole affair right there. And so du Paty confronted Dreyfus privately, in a closed room, thoughtfully providing a loaded revolver, so that after Dreyfus broke down and confessed it would be easy for him to take the honorable way out, and avoid the humiliation of a trial.

But that's not the way it played out. Dreyfus vehemently insisted that he was innocent, and that if the investigators would do more checking they would find out that he had not had access to

most of the documents mentioned in the Bordereau, and also denied that the handwriting of the Bordereau was anything like his own. So Dreyfus was imprisoned, where he continued to protest his innocence so instantly and so sincerely that even his jailors believed him.

The Statistical Section referred the matter up the chain of command to General Raoul de Boisdeffre, the chief of the General Staff, and to General Auguste Mercier, the Minister of War. Mercier hesitated. There was very little evidence against Dreyfus other than the Bordereau. When handwriting experts outside the military were consulted they gave conflicting opinions on whether this handwriting matched Dreyfus's. Investigators searched Dreyfus's home, but were unable to find anything incriminating. Not even a supply of paper that matched the paper the Bordereau was written on.

Captain Alfred Dreyfus was born in 1859 in Alsace. You remember Alsace, right? The French region that Germany annexed after the Franco-Prussian war? Dreyfus's family had been uprooted by the annexation and had moved to Paris when Alfred was still a child. Like many Alsatians, and indeed like many French in general, Dreyfus held a grudge against the Germans over this. He'd enlisted in the military. He was a married man, with two young children, very formal and proper in his manner. He had two brothers who were businessmen, and Alfred owned a share of the business. His share of the business generated him a larger income than his army pay. If you think about this for a minute you'll see this is not the profile of a security risk. It's pretty much the opposite.

But Dreyfus had three strikes against him. First some of his army colleagues found his prim-and-proper manner off-putting. Second, as an Alsatian, he spoke French with a German accent. Third, he was Jewish. This was enough to attract the attention of the investigators, and enough to convince the army that he was guilty.

General Mercier's hand was forced a couple weeks after Dreyfus' arrest, when another investigator, a Major Henry, leaked the story to a Paris newspaper, *The Free Word*, Édouard Drumont's anti-Semitic newspaper which was still riding high following its reporting on the Panama Canal scandal a few months earlier. The Dreyfus story was like bacon-flavored crack to *The Free Word* and its readers. Of course a traitor in the French Army would be a Jew. Of course he was in league with the Germans, and of course the Minister of War is afraid to prosecute, or more likely the minister himself is on the Jews' payroll, you know they have all the money. And you know they'll spend whatever it takes to undermine France.

Other newspapers picked up on this story. And the headlines grew increasingly outlandish. Dreyfus had already confessed, Dreyfus had been corresponding with Kaiser Wilhelm himself, and the French Army had the letters. No they didn't, but that was only because the Kaiser had demanded that they be returned under threat of war. Mercier had to do something, because he

was looking like a coward and a traitor himself. He publicly proclaimed Dreyfus' guilt, and a court martial was convened in December.

Dreyfus and his attorney welcomed a court martial. They wanted it made public that Dreyfus had not confessed. That he protested his innocence. And they wanted it known that the entire case against him rested on one letter of questionable attribution. The army was fully aware of the weakness of its case. So they held the trial in secret, and presented the judges with a dossier of evidence that was not made available to the defense. Over the heated objections of Dreyfus's lawyer, the army insisted that an open trail would mean war with Germany and the safety of the nation was at stake. In the topsy-turvy world of the Dreyfus case, even the absence of hard evidence was used against him. He must be a master spy to have left so thin a trail. The trial was a farce; Dreyfus was convicted.

He was forced to submit to a ceremony of degradation where he was publicly stripped of his medals, his stripes and his sword. The crowd outside the parade ground cried out "Death to the Jews!" But the death penalty had been abolished for treason, because of France's, shall we say, unhappy history with political executions. There was actually a move in the Chamber of Deputies to reinstate the death penalty for treason just for Dreyfus, but it failed. The convicted man was sent away to life in prison to France's notorious penal colony Devil's Island, in French Guiana, where he was held in a small stone hut, stifling in the tropical climate, cruelly treated and vilified by his jailors. Harsh conditions even by Devil's Island standards.

One of those in the crowd that cried out "Death to the Jews" that day was Theodor Herzl, Paris reporter for the Viennese newspaper *Die Neue Freie Presse*. Later he would report on the shock that he felt on hearing the words "Death to the Jews" from a mob in France. Republican France. The first country in Europe to give equal rights to the Jews. The nation that gave the world "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity". The country that had put forth the Declaration of the Rights of Man over a hundred years ago. And here it was, crying out for Jewish blood.

Two years later, Herzl would publish a book, *Der Judenstaat (The Jewish State)*. In it, he argued that Jews in Europe were condemned forever to be an oppressed and persecuted minority, hiding in the shadows, fearful of attracting attention. It would only be in a Jewish state that Jews could fulfill their potential. To be free, to be not just peasants, or merchants, or professionals, but to be soldiers, and lawmakers, and statesmen. Roles that were impossible for them in Europe.

Herzl organized the World Zionist Congress, which met for the first time in the Swiss city of Basel in 1897, and has been meeting regularly ever since. In 1901 he met with the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II, and offered Jewish assistance in paying down the Empire's out-of-control foreign debt in exchange for the right to settle in Palestine. The Sultan refused the offer.

In 1903 Herzl approached the British Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, with a proposal that the Jews be allowed to settle on the Sinai Peninsula. You may recall from Episode 1 that Egypt was officially part of the Ottoman Empire, but the British were running the place. The Sinai was the part of British Egypt closest to Palestine, close enough to interest the Zionists. Chamberlain liked the idea, but the British authorities in Cairo did not. Chamberlain came back to the Zionists with a counteroffer: what about a Jewish homeland in Uganda, one of the British territories in East Africa? The Zionists turned him down. The British government was perplexed. With all of the terrible persecution in Russia (which at the time had the largest Jewish population in the world, but was determined to change that), resulting in floods of Jewish émigrés from Russia looking for a place of refuge. They were settling in Britain and America by the hundreds of thousands. Wasn't there an immediate need for some place, any place, for these poor, persecuted people?

This led to a meeting between the British Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, and a British Zionist leader, Chaim Weizmann. Weizmann himself had been born in Russia and emigrated to Britain, where he taught chemistry at the Victoria University of Manchester. Weizmann struggled to find a way to explain to Balfour why the Zionist movement was so focused on Palestine. Finally he asked the Prime Minister, "If I were to offer you Paris instead of London would you take it?" Balfour replied "But Dr. Weizmann, we already have London." "And we had Jerusalem, back when London was a swamp."

Meanwhile, back in Paris, the Dreyfus case had been all but forgotten. Only Dreyfus's lawyer, his wife, Lucy, and his brother Matthew persevered in a lonely and hopeless fight to exonerate him.

Enter Lieutenant Colonel Marie-Georges Picquart. Picquart was born in 1854. Like Dreyfus he was an Alsatian, also driven out of his homeland by the German annexation when he was still a child. He worked in the Statistical Section, and was involved in a small way in the Dreyfus investigation. He had been personally convinced of Dreyfus's guilt at the time, and there was actually some evidence that Picquart was something of an anti-Semite himself.

In 1895, Picquart had advanced to become chief of the Statistical Section. And in 1896 under his supervision, the Statistical Section began another investigation into possible treason by a different French Army officer. Now the document that began this investigation is known to history as the *Petit Bleu*, because it's a little slip of blue paper. In those days if you wanted to send a telegram they gave you one of these little blue slips, and you filled out the text of your message and the information on whom you wanted to send it to and that person's address. This particular little blue slip had been filled out by Maximilian von Schwartzkoppen. You remember him, the German military attaché known to be employing spies. Naturally it found its way via Madame Bastian to the Statistical Section.

Schwartzkoppen's cable had been addressed to Major Ferdinand Walsin Esterhazy. Esterhazy was born in 1847 in Paris, the son of an army general, and the grandson of a man who was the illegitimate son of one of the Hungarian Esterhazys. That's an old noble family in Hungary. Grandpa Esterhazy used the name and grandson Esterhazy parlayed the name into a marriage to the daughter of an Aristocratic family in France. He liked to call himself Count Esterhazy, although that was just a scam. He was a drinker, a womanizer, a stock speculator, a compulsive gambler, perpetually in debt. He was the polar opposite of the steady, conservative Captain Dreyfus. As an army officer, Esterhazy was known to go missing from his unit. He also had a habit of showing up for army artillery tests, even when he hadn't been invited. Hmmmm. This fits the profile of a traitor very nicely, don't you think?

The Statistical Section investigated Esterhazy, and Picquart soon made a shocking discovery. Esterhazy's handwriting was a perfect match to the Bordereau. He showed this to du Paty, the self-proclaimed handwriting expert. Du Paty took a quick look at the two documents and told Picquart that all this proved was that the Jews had been training someone to imitate Dreyfus's handwriting. Picquart wasn't buying it. He went to his superiors with his conclusion: Dreyfus was innocent and Esterhazy was the author of the Bordereau. To Picquart's amazement the only response was "What's it to you if the Jew remains at Devil's Island?" "But he's innocent!" "The affair cannot be reopened, General Mercier himself pursued the case."

Picquart pointed out that it would be better for the army if the army corrected its own mistake than if it sat around doing nothing until some outside person, like say someone in the Dreyfus family, found out the truth and exposed the Army's mistake. "But if you say nothing, no one will ever know." Well Picquart lost it at this point and said, "I will not take this secret to my grave."

Picquart was instructed to return to the Esterhazy investigation and forget about Dreyfus. Meanwhile, Major Henry, one of the main investigators of the original Dreyfus case—the guy who leaked the story to *The Free Word*?—well, he also happened to be friends with Esterhazy. And he went out and warned Esterhazy that he was under investigation. As a result Esterhazy began covering his tracks better, and Picquart's investigation ground to a halt. Major Henry then began forging documents meant to confirm Dreyfus's guilt and exonerate Esterhazy in the event Picquart ever made good on his threat.

Meanwhile, the Paris newspaper *Le Matin* got hold of a copy of the Bordereau, and printed an image of it in the paper. This began a revival of public interest in the case. Ordinary French citizens could now examine the handwriting for themselves. And many concluded that it didn't look very much like Dreyfus's handwriting and took note of the fact that the Bordereau, you know, didn't actually have Dreyfus's name on it or anything. The generals summoned Picquart, reprimanded him for leaking the Bordereau to the paper, which he had not done, and as well for

snooping into the private affairs of a fine, upstanding officer like Major Esterhazy. Picquart was transferred from the Statistical Section to a native regiment in Tunisia, to get him out of Paris and out of the way.

It's quite a difference isn't it, between the harsh treatment Dreyfus got, and the TLC the generals lavished on Esterhazy, especially when you consider which one of them was actually the traitor? But Esterhazy was *one of us*. He was in an aristocratic family. He was the son of a general, Catholic, well liked. Dreyfus was a commoner, the son of a peddler, a Jew, and rubbed some people the wrong way. You know, it's not what you did, it's who you know.

You might think it was crazy to let a traitor run loose, rather than sully the reputation of a couple generals who seem borderline senile anyway. But that is the Dreyfus Affair in a nutshell. People like Picquart, who supported reopening the case, they were loyal to the Army, but they were more loyal to France, and beyond France, to the truth itself. And that turns out to be a better form of patriotism than the kind of patriotism that puts France first, which is how the other side saw things. They saw republican rabble ready to tear down the last tradition left in the nation, the Army. The Army that had served the Revolution, and that had made France the most powerful country in Europe (until Germany came along.) And, as the generals thought, the Republic was going to repay this loyalty with the back of its hand. It had already disempowered the aristocracy, disestablished and looted the Catholic Church, and now they were slinging mud at the last institution that represented the "real" France. If the Army fell, what would become of France? And in particular, what would stop the Germans from marching through Paris once again? Is nothing sacred anymore?

In a move worthy of a second-rate spy thriller, Picquart wrote up an account of what he had found and gave it over to his lawyer with instructions that it be forwarded to the President of France in the event of his "untimely demise." But the Army had discovered that he had done this. They had Picquart arrested, tried, and sentenced to prison.

The lawyer meanwhile, had passed on the information Picquart had given to him to a friend, the Vice President of the Senate, Auguste Scheurer-Kestner, yet another Alsatian. Scheurer-Kestner was a longstanding republican and a respected elder statesman. He took the issue to the floor of the Senate, challenging the government position. And what he got for it was to be booed in the Senate chamber and to be vilified in the press as a German sympathizer and a traitor with a suspicious last name. And he lost his position as Vice President of the Senate.

But the publicity that he stirred up attracted more supporters to the cause. Including Georges Clemenceau, the former member of the Chamber of Deputies who was now a journalist, and also the novelist, Émile Zola. The highest ranking Army officers swore to Dreyfus's guilt, while Dreyfusards, as they came to be called, like Clemenceau and Zola, were accused of being part of

the syndicate, an international conspiracy of Jews and leftists and Germans and the Kaiser Wilhelm, and basically anyone else the army didn't like, all banding together with the goal of destroying France.

The newspapers in Paris were overwhelmingly anti-Dreyfus. One of the few exceptions during this time was *Le Figaro*, which in November, 1897 published a facsimile of a letter written by Major Esterhazy to one of his many spurned mistresses some years before, and which the spurned mistress now gave up to the public. Not only was the handwriting clearly a match for the Bordereau, but the language in the letter was unbelievable. Esterhazy had written scathingly about his superiors, whom he called cowardly and ignorant, the French Army, and the French nation in general. Incredibly, in one passage Esterhazy fantasizes about being a German cavalry officer, riding his horse through the streets of Paris cutting down Frenchmen with his sword and gleefully imagines Paris being sacked and burned by a hundred thousand drunken German soldiers. This was everything a Dreyfus supporter could have hoped for, and most of them thought that the battle was now over, but they underestimated their opposition.

Other newspapers denounced *Le Figaro* for publishing what was obviously a forgery wrought by the syndicate. The paper got so many angry letters from the French right, and lost so many readers, that it backed off from the Dreyfus case. The army did an investigation and announced that there were no grounds to reopen the Dreyfus case, or to prosecute Esterhazy, to which Esterhazy, playing the role of wounded innocent, responded by demanding a court martial anyway so that he could have the opportunity to prove his innocence. The army complied, holding a quickie court martial in January, 1898 in which a minimal prosecution was offered, and Esterhazy was acquitted. The right wing declared victory.

It took the Dreyfusards 36 hours to make their counter-attack. Upon hearing the verdict, Émile Zola locked himself in his study, and worked 24 hours straight on an essay in the form of an open letter to the President of France, Félix Faure, laying out the case for reopening the Dreyfus investigation in every detail and accusing some of France's top generals of active participation in the cover-up. It was published under the headline "*J'accuse...!*" In about 780 point type. Georges Clemenceau came up with the headline. It's because the end of the essay includes a string of paragraphs that each begin "I accuse...", "I accuse...", "I accuse...", which is what *J'accuse* means in French. To this day, that headline, *J'accuse...*, is still quoted when people make a dramatic accusation.

Now, with all the debate over this case raging for years now, Zola's article changed approximately zero minds in France. But that wasn't the point. The point was, with these bald accusations of criminal behavior laid out on paper, in public, against some of the highest ranking officials in the Army and in society, those accused would have no choice, under the honor-bound system of the day, but to prosecute Zola for libel. Which they promptly did. And this was

entirely the plan because now for the first time the facts of the Dreyfus case would be litigated not in a military court controlled by the generals, where the rules of evidence can be bent and secret documents admitted, but in a civilian court, where everything would be laid out in a public forum.

Or at least that was the plan. But the generals outflanked Zola. The libel prosecution was based on one particular allegation in the *J'accuse* piece, that the generals had conspired to acquit Esterhazy at his court martial. So by focusing the facts of the case on Esterhazy rather than on Dreyfus, the prosecution left Zola with no grounds to introduce evidence concerning Dreyfus's innocence, since the case was all about Esterhazy. It went to trial in February, 1898. France's highest ranking Army officers swore under oath that everything that they had done was by the book, while the owner of *The Free Word*, Édouard Drumont, paid crowds to assemble outside the court and chant anti-Semitic slogans.

The Free Word also published the names and addresses of every member of the jury, along with dark suggestions of what might happen to them if they dared vote to acquit. Zola was not permitted to present the case for Dreyfus's innocence and was convicted on a vote of 7-5, which is actually pretty good when you consider all the pressure the jurors were under, and he fled France for Britain to avoid prison. Colonel Picquart was court martialed again. This time for supposedly forging the *Petit Bleu*.

But the involvement of a writer like Émile Zola with an international reputation began to attract attention in the foreign press. Right-wing French, by the way, dismissed Émile Zola on the grounds that he was really an Italian. Zola is an Italian last name, and he bears it because his father was from Italy, although Zola himself was born and raised in France. The French right of course was happy to claim Émile Zola as a Frenchman when he was winning international acclaim, but when he started making political trouble, he was an Italian.

But you know, these kinds of arguments weren't cutting much ice in the international press. The idea that a man of Émile Zola's standing could be bribed by some shadowy syndicate of Jews and Germans to make false accusations against the French Army and ruin his career, because what, Jews rule the world? This was, shall we say, unpersuasive in places like London, or Rome, or New York.

Now, back when the Dreyfus case first became public, the German government in Berlin of course queried its Paris embassy and asked them whether Dreyfus really was a German spy. The embassy told them no he wasn't and they had no idea who he was or had any dealings with him. And so the German government had of course been denying any involvement in this affair from the beginning. They even went so far as to take out newspaper ads in Paris papers to give the

German side of the story. Naturally these denials were easily dismissed in France. But not so much in other countries.

Kaiser Wilhelm was related to practically every monarch in Europe. And you know sometimes they got together for holiday dinners. And by now he was getting asked repeatedly by his relatives about the Dreyfus Affair. Wilhelm strenuously and sincerely denied that Germany had anything to do with it. And so his relatives went back home and passed those denials on to their governments. Soon French representatives in capitals across Europe were being called to account for their country's crazy insistence on keeping an obviously innocent man in prison.

The prosecution of Zola attracted more intellectuals and artists in France to the cause, including Marcel Proust, Anatole France, Claude Monet, and Jacques Bizet, the son of the composer.

There was an election in May, 1898 and a new government afterward. The new government had a new war minister, Godefroy Cavaignac. Cavaignac was a civilian who came to office convinced of the guilt of Dreyfus and of Picquart, but he wasn't willing to let Esterhazy off the hook so easily. He and his staff reviewed the case file, and discovered Major Henry's forgeries. Henry was arrested, he confessed at once, and unlike Dreyfus, took the honorable way out when provided with a loaded pistol. When Esterhazy found out about Henry's confession and suicide he fled the country. Cavaignac resigned, as did his successor. France has now had seven war ministers in the four years since Dreyfus was arrested.

You're probably thinking "Okay by now they surely have to give in." Well no, although the government now had no choice but to permit an appeal of Dreyfus's conviction to move forward. Protestors gathered outside Picquart's prison and shouted "Vive Picquart!" *The Free Word* countered by raising money for Colonel Henry's widow to file a libel suit to clear her husband's name. General Mercier contributed 100 francs.

In February, 1899, President Faure, the addressee of *J'accuse...*! died while having sex with his mistress in the Elysée Palace as I explained back in Episode 1. There were many snide remarks made about this incident at the time, but first prize has to go to Georges Clemenceau whose comment on the whole business was that President Faure "wanted to be Caesar, but he was only Pompey." It's funny because if you say it in French, Pompey is a homonym for the French past participle of "pumped" and in French to pump someone is a euphemism for—I'm going to stop right there, but if you really want to know you can google it.

But the sudden death of the President benefitted Dreyfus since Faure had been a staunch opponent of reopening the case. The Chamber of Deputies elected the President of the Senate Émile Loubet, to succeed Faure. Loubet was a republican through and through. The right called his election a challenge to the Army and a victory for Jewish treason. Right-wing army officers

attempted a coup on the day of Faure's funeral, but it fizzled. In June, Dreyfus's conviction was overturned on appeal and a new court martial ordered. The next day, Esterhazy, from his exile in England, gave a newspaper interview in which he confessed to being the author of the Bordereau.

Dreyfus had been in solitary confinement in Devil's Island for close to five years now and had barely an inkling on how many prominent French people had taken up his cause, or of the intensity of the rage on the other side. At the same time, most of his supporters, the Dreyfusards, only knew the man on whose behalf they've been fighting from old photographs. The sight of Dreyfus in the flesh was a shock. The years of imprisonment under conditions amounting to torture had taken their toll on the man. He could barely walk. He could barely talk. But he maintained his dignity, and denied the accusations with a fervor that was impossible to dismiss.

But General Mercier was there too, adamant as ever that Dreyfus was the traitor. In this affair someone is surely guilty, Mercier declared, and it is either him or me. The Army wasn't done yet. The confessions of Esterhazy and Henry were ruled inadmissible, because they were not available to testify in person. Yet Dreyfus's accusers took the stand, soldier after soldier, and testified to documents the court was not permitted to see and facts passed on to them by sources they would not identify. A week into the trial, one of Dreyfus's lawyers was shot outside the court by a young man who cried out, "I killed the Dreyfus!" as he ran away. He was never caught. "I killed the Dreyfus." Dreyfus is no longer a man. He is an idea. He is a movement. The trial took a month, and to the astonishment of the world, Dreyfus was convicted again.

But at this point the French government had finally had enough. Perhaps it was the shock of Dreyfus's pitiable state, which disturbed even some of his accusers, or Esterhazy's confession, or the coup attempt and the shooting and the threat of continued violence if the case dragged on. Because Dreyfus still could appeal, and Picquart already had an appeal pending, and so did Zola. And then there was Madame Henry's libel suit, and god knows how many more lawsuits coming out of this thing. Or maybe it was the attention the rest of the world was giving to the case. Anti-French protests had broken out on five continents. The Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg declined an invitation to come to Paris and conduct a concert of his compositions, citing the Dreyfus Affair. There was talk in many countries of boycotting next year's Paris Exposition.

The government introduced and passed a bill granting amnesty to everyone involved in the Dreyfus case from any and all crimes excepting only murder and treason. Neither side was satisfied with the amnesty because both believed that terrible crimes had been committed by their opponents, which would now go unpunished. But from here on out, the debate over the Dreyfus Affair would take place in newspaper columns, not in courtrooms, or in the Chamber of Deputies.

Dreyfus himself did not benefit from the amnesty since the charge against him was treason. But President Loubet pardoned him on September 19. Georges Clemenceau objected vehemently to the pardon. He wanted Dreyfus to turn it down and keep fighting. But given the man's poor health, he had no choice but to accept, although he did accept on the condition that he could continue the fight to clear his name. Dreyfus remarked, "The government of the Republic has given me back my freedom. It is nothing to me without my honor." Sadly, Senator Auguste Scheurer-Kestner, one of Dreyfus' first supporters, died the same day the pardon was issued.

Dreyfus continued the fight for his honor until July, 1906, when a military commission fully exonerated him and he was reinstated to the Army at the rank of major. Unfortunately, the years in prison had taken their toll, and he retired the following year at the age of 48.

In the end, the Dreyfus Affair hugely embarrassed the political right in France. The upholders of traditional values had proven to be liars and perjurers. The aristocrats had proven to be more corrupt than the republican rabble they regularly denounced. The staunchest patriots had dragged the reputation of the nation through the muck they themselves had created. As a result, the French right would be eclipsed for two generations and the Republic was finally secure.

Anti-Semitism was alive and well in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. But it is changed from Europe's historic form of anti-Semitism. Indeed the very word "anti-Semitism" is a 19th century German invention. It used to be called *Judenhaas* (Jew hatred) but that wasn't sophisticated enough for 19th-century elites. And so they started calling it "anti-Semitism". Traditional European anti-Semitism was based on religious hostility. But for the past 400 years, as we begin the twentieth century, Europe is becoming more secular, and more religiously tolerant. You might think that would be good for European Jews. But what actually happened is that religious *Judenhaas* became social and cultural anti-Semitism.

There's a couple of reasons for this. One is nationalism; I talked about nationalism back in Episode 2, and noted it has its good and bad points. Nationalism makes it possible for the first time in 1800 years of Jewish diaspora to talk about a Jewish homeland and be taken seriously by heads of state. On the other hand, defining a nation by the ethnicity of its citizens makes Jews foreigners in the lands of their births. The other factor is the social changes brought about by the industrial revolution. By the early twentieth century there's a new class of rich people and a new category of working poor. And Jews were in both categories, and both categories were dangerous to the established order.

The poor were organizing. There were labor unions, there were socialist movements, there were communist movements, there were anarchists, and Jews were represented in all of these movements. The new rich included people who had gotten rich in ways that hadn't existed a hundred years ago. Department stores, stock speculation, bond underwriting, insurance, science

and technology. With traditional avenues of advancement closed to them, European Jews with education and talent flocked into these new fields. And many of them prospered.

This was threatening to the traditional aristocrats, the counts and the barons, and their hangers on who had made their money the old fashioned way, by owning immense estates and making thousands of people who lived on them pay rent for the privilege. By the early twentieth century, these aristocrats with their thousand-year pedigrees were seeing their own wealth and prestige superseded by peddlers, moneylenders, commoners, Jews.

We reach new heights of anti-Semitism in 1903 when a document first appears in Russia, entitled *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The origin of this document is obscure, although it is widely believed to have been created by the Russian secret police. Written in the style of the minutes of the World Zionist Congress which were being put out after every meeting of that body, the protocols purport to lay out the Jewish plot to take over the world. The genius of the *Protocols* is that they use both the imagery of rich Jews dominating the world with their wealth and influence, as well as fist-waving revolutionary working-class Jews agitating to overthrow the established order.

If you are a member of the aristocracy, or one of their hangers on, and are wondering why you or your friends no longer have the power or standing that your grandparents had back in the good old days, it's a seductive little conspiracy theory, because it ties the communist threat and the capitalist threat into one neat little paranoid bundle. We can see here the beginnings of a new political movement. A movement that combines nationalism, traditionalism, anti-leftism, and anti-Semitism into a whole new way of understanding the modern world. One opposed to both the capitalist world order and the socialist challenge to it. And we can see how easily it catches fire, even in republican France. Will France fall victim to this again, or perhaps one of the great powers? Like Russia or... Germany? Stay tuned.

We'll have to stop there for today. If you like *The History of the Twentieth Century* I hope you'll take a moment and give us a good rating and review at the iTunes store, this will help other people find *The History of the Twentieth Century*, people who hopefully will enjoy it as much as you do. I hope you'll join me next week on the *History of the Twentieth Century*, as we take a look at some of the questions bedeviling modern science at the turn of the century. Now seems like a good time to bring this up, because the most prominent scientist of the age happens to be working right here in Paris. We will take a close look at *her* research, next week on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and a couple more things. You might be interested to know that Alfred Dreyfus came out of retirement and served in the French Army during the Great War. He died in 1935 at the age of 75. Colonel du Paty also returned to the army during the war. He was wounded in action in 1914

and died of those wounds two years later. Georges Clemenceau returned to politics, and became Prime Minister of France. His First minister of war was none other than General Georges Picquart who, like Dreyfus, had been exonerated and reinstated in the Army. Picquart died in 1914 after being thrown off a horse just weeks before the Great War broke out.

Émile Zola returned to France after the amnesty. He died of carbon monoxide poisoning in 1902, the result of a blocked chimney. His death is generally believed to have been an accident. Although some people maintain, to this day, that he was actually murdered for his role in the Dreyfus Affair.

[music: Closing Theme]