

Captain Dreyfus was a Jewish French army officer. He was unjustly accused of spying for Germany. It was a political scandal.



Paris 1895: Degradation of Alfred Dreyfus

The young artillery officer Alfred Dreyfus was arrested in 1894 and accused to be a spy. He was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment on Devil's Island, the French penal colony in South America.

His family and friends, including the novelist Emile Zola, challenged the sentence, but the authorities refused a new trial until 1899. Anti-Jewish feeling was so strong in the French army that his second trial was a mockery. It was known that he was innocent but the military establishment tried

to conceal it. Dreyfus was the ideal accused. His family spoke German, he spoke French with a German accent and he was a Jew. This time the army court sentenced him to ten years imprisonment, but the French president pardoned him a few days later.

Fact was that somebody had communicated **French military secrets to the German Embassy** in Paris. When Dreyfus was on Devil's Island in French Guiana, evidence came to light identifying a French Army major named Esterhazy as the real culprit. After high officers suppressed the new evidence, a military court acquitted Esterhazy after the second day of his trial. The Army accused Dreyfus of false documents.

J'accuse was an open letter in favour of Dreyfus published in a Paris newspaper by the writer **Émile Zola**. Progressive activists put pressure on the government to reopen the case. The affair divided France deeply into two opposing camps: the conservative, pro-army, mostly catholic "anti-Dreyfusards" versus the anticlerical, pro-republican Dreyfusards. There were riots in the streets and French politics embittered and allowed the radicals to come to power.

In 1906 his case was reviewed and, at last, Dreyfus was declared innocent, and returned to the army. In World War I he commanded one of the forts defending Paris.

to accuse: to charge, to blame
guilty: responsible
to sentence: to condemn
penal colony: prison
novelist: writer
to challenge: to refuse
trial: examination

mockery: farce, swindle
innocent: not guilty
establishment: institution
to conceal: to hide
court: tribunal
to pardon: to forgive
case: process

evidence: proof, confirmation
culprit: criminal
suppress: hide
acquit: set free
divide: separate
riot: uprising, tumult
embittered: poisoned

Odd one out:

Captain	Major	Colonel	Bishop	General
Christian	Jew	Muslim	Hindu	German
mockery	jest	degradation	joke	farce
peace	artillery	cannons	guns	missiles
arrest	novel	jail	prison	penal colony
false	innocent	wrong	fake	forged
riots	rebellion	fight	happiness	uprising
conceal	cover	show	hide	suppress
spy	secret agent	scout	detective	politician
pardon	excuse	forgive	examine	let off
affair	scandal	event	fort	matter