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## Mass Culture, Mass Parliamentary Politics, and Modern Anti-Semitism: The Dreyfus Affair in Rural France

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NANCY FITCH

BETWEEN 1986 AND 1988, A STATUE HONORING Captain Alfred Dreyfus gathered dust in a foundry, since no one wanted the memorial to the Jewish army officer unjustly accused of selling secrets to the Germans in 1894. The placement of the statue should have been a trivial issue. It proved otherwise. Although the French government had rehabilitated Dreyfus in 1906, when sculptor Louis Mitelberg tried to put his statue in the Ecole Militaire, which is where the army originally stripped Dreyfus of his rank, the minister of defense objected. The government suggested locating it in front of the Ecole Polytechnique, where Dreyfus received his military training. The school refused. Mitelberg proposed placing it opposite the Palais de Justice, where the French court of appeals overturned Dreyfus's court martial. The conservative government of Premier Jacques Chirac hesitated to move it there. Finally, almost immediately after socialist François Mitterand reinforced his power by defeating Chirac in the French presidential elections of 1988, Mitterand had the monument lifted onto a pedestal near a statue of Popular Front hero Léon Blum in the Garden of the Tuileries in Paris.<sup>1</sup>

Few modern French figures have been more controversial than Dreyfus. Hundreds of books and articles have appeared on the Affair linked to his name since the army first convicted him in 1894. Dreyfus became a symbol of government witch hunts, of anti-Semitism, and—in his pardon—of the success of liberal humanism and democratic institutions at work. Until recently, few historians have been able to write about modern France without discussing the Affair.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, in spite of the controversy, which still seemed to plague France in the late 1980s, several historians have recently challenged the significance of the Affair as a turning point in modern French history and have questioned whether it split the nation as contemporaries had believed. They have argued that, on the contrary, a large majority of French, especially those who lived in rural France, remained

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley Meisler, "The Dreyfus Affair—It Never Dies," *Los Angeles Times*, October 30, 1986; and Stanley Meisler, "Paris Finally Finds a Place for Dreyfus Statue," *Los Angeles Times*, June 9, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Burns, "'Qui ça Dreyfus?': The Affair in Rural France," *Historical Reflections*, 5 (1978): 115.



indifferent to the Affair, that it was primarily a Parisian scandal.<sup>3</sup> For these historians, many if not most French people regarded the Jewish question as "a minor question or no question at all."<sup>4</sup> According to these historians, peasants—who constituted approximately half the French population in 1896—were not taken in by the anti-Dreyfusard argument that all French must fight against the international Jewish conspiracy. Nor were they affected by the Dreyfusard argument that conscientious people everywhere must stand up and preserve French legal institutions. Uninterested in the larger issues revealed by the Affair, peasants simply found it a convenient source of new epithets and invectives they could adapt for their own uses, invoking the names of personalities from the Affair in their local *fêtes*.<sup>5</sup>

At its simplest, the argument that most of rural France remained oblivious to the Dreyfus Affair seems to be part of an effort to demonstrate that peasants remained in a world of their own, remotely connected to that of urban France.<sup>6</sup> Although the number of literary and artistic references to the impact of the press in shaping the popular perception of Jews during the Dreyfus Affair is extraordinary, historians arguing for the isolation of rural France suggest that the influence of the mass distribution of printed material related to the Affair was minimal. In short, these historians seem to question whether one can speak of either mass politics or mass culture in *fin-de-siècle* France.<sup>7</sup>

The argument of peasant indifference to the Dreyfus Affair rests almost entirely on the conclusions of historian Michael Burns, who claims to have shown that "significant numbers of peasants remained indifferent to the Affair, not because they were unable to understand its complexities (urban folk suffered the same confusion), but because it failed to strike a relevant chord in villages and hamlets."<sup>8</sup> Ironically, Burns presents considerable evidence that news of the

<sup>3</sup> The most recent restatement of this argument appeared in Paula Hyman, "The Dreyfus Affair: The Visual and the Historical," *Journal of Modern History*, 61 (March 1989): 88–109. See also Michael Burns, *Rural Society and French Politics: Boulangism and the Dreyfus Affair, 1886–1900* (Princeton, N.J., 1984); Charles Sowerwine, "Review of *Rural Society and French Politics*," *Journal of Modern History*, 58 (June 1986): 560–62; Eugen Weber, "Comment la Politique Vint aux Paysans: A Second Look at Peasant Politicization," *AHR*, 87 (April 1982): 386; Eugen Weber, *France: Fin-de-Siècle* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), 124–25, 267 n; Eugen Weber, "Foreword," Norman L. Kleeblatt, ed., *The Dreyfus Affair: Art, Truth, and Justice* (Berkeley, Calif., 1987), xxviii; Edward Berenson, "Politics and the French Peasantry: The Debate Continues," *Social History*, 12 (May 1987): 213–29; Paul Mazgaj, "The Origins of the French Radical Right: A Historiographical Essay," *French Historical Studies*, 15 (Fall 1987): 292; Eugen Weber, "Reflections on the Jews in France," in Frances Malino and Bernard Wasserstein, eds., *The Jews in Modern France* (Hanover, N.H., 1985), 8–27; Roger Magraw, *France 1815–1914: The Bourgeois Century* (London, 1983), 275. See also Jean-Marie Mayeur and Madeleine Rebérioux, *The Third Republic from Its Origins to the Great War, 1871–1914*, J. R. Foster, trans. (Cambridge, 1984), 197–98; Jean-Pierre Peter, "Dimensions de l'Affaire Dreyfus," *Annales*, 16 (November–December 1961): 1141–67; Janine Ponty, "La presse quotidienne et l'Affaire Dreyfus en 1898–1899: Essai de typologie," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 21 (April–June 1974): 193–220.

<sup>4</sup> Wasserstein, "Preface," *Jews in Modern France*, x.

<sup>5</sup> Burns, *Rural Society*, 143–63, 169–70; Mayeur and Rebérioux, *Third Republic*, 44–45, 55; Jean Lhomme, "La crise agricole," *Revue économique*, 21 (1970): 550.

<sup>6</sup> Burns, *Rural Society*, 103, 140–42, 160, 164, 168–69, 172; and Burns, "'Qui ça Dreyfus?'"

<sup>7</sup> Philip Dennis Cate, "The Paris Cry: Graphic Artists and the Dreyfus Affair"; and Susan Rubin Suleiman, "The Literary Significance of the Dreyfus Affair," both in Kleeblatt, *Dreyfus Affair*, 62–95, 117–39.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Burns, "Review of Stephen Wilson, *Ideology and Experience: Antisemitism in France at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair*," *Social History*, 9 (May 1984): 258.



Affair reached the countryside and worked its way into local political disputes. Peasants read about it, talked about it, joked about it, fought about it.<sup>9</sup> His argument is not that peasants lacked knowledge of the Affair but that the rural response to it differed sharply from that in French cities. In particular, he argues that rural "reactions unfolded in the context of distinct local rituals far from the view, far from the understanding, of government officials and other, largely urban, observers." When they were interested in the Affair, peasants "articulated their interest through an ancient, particularistic vocabulary."<sup>10</sup>

There were isolated examples of rural demonstrations against reopening the Dreyfus Affair, and *revanchiste* anti-Dreyfusard veterans' clubs existed in parts of the countryside.<sup>11</sup> However, there is no reason to challenge Burns's argument that rural politics remained less driven by anonymous crowd behavior than the new urban politics based on leagues and mass movements. Thus, although Burns acknowledges that anti-Semitic propaganda reached the peasantry, his interpretation reinforces an important revisionist argument. This argument views the emergence of an anti-Semitic, nationalist politics—the formation of a "radical right"—in *fin-de-siècle* France as an urban movement grounded in one tendency of extremist, if disenchanted, left-wing politics.<sup>12</sup>

While one cannot dismiss the significance of the "radical right" in many French cities, a great deal of evidence also points toward its influence, especially in the form of organized political anti-Semitism, in the countryside.<sup>13</sup> The nationalist upheavals of the Dreyfus years had a political impact on rural France. Anti-Dreyfusard candidates with the help of the press deployed anti-Semitic themes in the legislative elections of 1898 in order to appeal to rural populations shaken by the economic downturn of the time. Finally, the political struggles of these years altered the nature of rural politics, primarily because anti-republican conservatives and conservative republicans used a metalanguage linking anti-Semitism to treason in order to succeed in the mass parliamentary politics of the late nineteenth century.

The effects of the *fin-de-siècle* political struggles in the countryside were evidenced in several important developments. In 1898, shortly after the worst rioting associated with the Dreyfus Affair, twenty-two anti-Semitic candidates were elected to the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>14</sup> Only five of these represented urban constituencies. Four were elected in Algeria. Rural voters returned the rest.

<sup>9</sup> See also the examples presented by Weber in "Comment la Politique Vint aux Paysans," 386–87.

<sup>10</sup> Burns, *Rural Society*, quotation from 136.

<sup>11</sup> There was, for example, a "journée anti-sémitique" in the village of Ronnet, in the Allier during January 1898. Someone in the same village began publishing an anti-Semitic newspaper in 1928. André Touret, "Les campagnes bourbonnaises sous la III<sup>ème</sup> République de 1871 à 1914: Etude économique et sociale" (Mémoire de Maîtrise, Clermont-Ferrand, 1974), 195; Archives Départementales de l'Allier [hereafter, ADA] M.9.c (4), "Listes des associations dans le département, 1899."

<sup>12</sup> Paul Mazgaj, *The Action Française and Revolutionary Syndicalism* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1979); Mazgaj, "Origins of the French Radical Right"; Philip Nord, *Paris Shopkeepers and the Politics of Resentment* (Princeton, N.J., 1986); Zeev Sternhell, *La droite révolutionnaire: Les origines françaises du fascisme, 1885–1914* (Paris, 1978).

<sup>13</sup> Nord, *Paris Shopkeepers*.

<sup>14</sup> These men identified themselves as members of the Anti-Semitic Party, although all of them explicitly rejected the idea that political parties could or should play a mediating role in politics. They saw themselves as and functioned more like an interest group.



Moreover, forty additional deputies who voted to disenfranchise the Jewish population of Algeria in February 1899 overwhelmingly represented rural areas and had themselves employed anti-Semitic or anti-Dreyfusard language in their campaigns of 1898. Collectively, they came from well over one-third of all French departments, largely from regions that Eugen Weber identified as among the most rural and often isolated parts of France: the West (the departments of the Seine-Inférieure, Côtes-du-Nord, Ille-et-Vilaine, Loire-Inférieure, Mayenne, Maine-et-Loire, and Orne), the Southwest (the departments of the Gers and Landes), the Southeast (the departments of the Var and Alpes-Maritimes), and the Massif Central (the department of the Corrèze).<sup>15</sup> Anti-Semitic rhetoric also emerged in several additional elections held in rural areas of the central departments of the Allier, Cantal, Cher, Creuse, Haute-Vienne, Loire, and Lozère; of the western departments of the Charente, Charente-Inférieure, Deux-Sèvres, Gironde, and Morbihan; and in much of rural Mediterranean France, where the popular Vigné d'Octon ran for election as an "Aryan."<sup>16</sup>

If we take into account the constituencies that returned committed anti-Semites in addition to those that elected deputies who appealed to anti-Dreyfusard nationalism or anti-Semitism in their campaigns, it is fair to conclude that the Dreyfus Affair probably affected most rural departments in 1898. As *La croix nantaise* editorialized, "In a Chamber where the Jews reign, . . . the entrance of these nationalists and anti-Semites is a little revolution."<sup>17</sup> This conclusion is not inconsistent with the argument that the impact of the Dreyfus Affair in the countryside depended on local concerns and was expressed in forms and

<sup>15</sup> Stephen Wilson, *Ideology and Experience: Antisemitism in France at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (London, 1982), 213–29; Robert F. Byrnes, *Antisemitism in Modern France*, Vol. 1: *The Prologue to the Dreyfus Affair* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1950), 256–57; Jean Pascal, *Les députés bretons de 1789 à 1983* (Paris, 1983), 337–83; André Siegfried, *Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest sous la Troisième République* (Paris, 1964), 78–96; and France, Chambre des Députés, 7th Législature, Session Extraordinaire de 1899, *Programmes professions de foi et engagements électoraux de 1898* (Paris, 1899), 165–66, 186–87, 277–83, 307–16, 379–81, 385–88, 416, 419–20, 469–72, 746–48, 754–55. This source is subsequently referred to as *Programmes, 1898*, although it is usually catalogued under the date 1899.

<sup>16</sup> Anti-Semitic rhetoric emerged in the elections held in all four of the departments Michael Burns used as case studies. Four committed anti-Semites were elected in the Gers. Two additional deputies who supported legislation restricting Jewish citizenship were elected from the Orne and the Vendée. Octave Chenavaz, president of an agricultural syndicate in the Isère, argued in his successful campaign that the Dreyfus Affair demonstrated the weakness of the government and the power of Jewish high finance in France. Representing the largely urban district of Grenoble, Alexandre Zévaès, also of the Isère, was the only victorious candidate to come out strongly in favor of Dreyfus in 1898. Anti-Semitism surfaced in an additional election held in the Gers and in elections held in the Marne and in the Savoie, where M. Forni of Albertville argued that voters must save the country from the cosmopolitan menace threatening France in the Dreyfus Affair. Even considering the self-proclaimed anti-Semites, those who supported legislation restricting Jewish citizenship, and those who employed anti-Semitic or anti-Dreyfusard rhetoric in their successful electoral campaigns, the significance of the Dreyfus Affair and anti-Semitism in the 1898 elections is still understated, since none of this evidence includes information on those who lost elections. France, *Programmes, 1898*, 26, 101–04, 126–37, 149–50, 195–97, 330–39, 415, 435–36, 517–18, 614–15; Leo A. Loubère, *Radicalism in Mediterranean France: Its Rise and Decline, 1848–1914* (Albany, N.Y., 1974), 160–61; Patrice L.-R. Higonnet, *Pont-de-Montvert: Social Structure and Politics in a French Village, 1700–1914* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), 129; Pierre Vallin, *Paysans rouges du Limousin: Mentalités et comportement politique à Compreignac et dans le nord de la Haute-Vienne (1870–1914)* (Paris, 1985), 227–28; Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 227–29; Burns, *Rural Society*, 14, 38–54.

<sup>17</sup> *La croix nantaise*, June 5, 1898.



language that resonated with regional populations. But we must also explore how national ideas shaped local politics and how local politics informed and influenced the development of powerful ideologies. Even in Paris, as Philip Nord has shown, the impact of the Dreyfus Affair depended on the intersection between larger, national ideologies and the local concerns of the lower middle and working classes.<sup>18</sup>

The Dreyfus Affair became an affair and not just an unhappy case of miscarried justice because it generated arguments and ideas that transcended the outbursts of anti-Semites. The fact that these arguments and ideas could be expressed in a myriad of particularistic vocabularies with numerous local nuances is precisely why the Affair could become the source of a powerful new nationalism with ramifications beyond France and into the future. Too often, historians have explained the emergence of new ideologies by analyzing the writings of the major figures who espoused them. These analyses tell us much about the ideologies but very little about how they worked. Only local studies can demonstrate where and why new ideologies were taken seriously or ignored.

The nationalist, anti-republican, and anti-Semitic ideas associated with the Affair were "received, rejected, or acted upon" in particularly significant ways in rural areas of the departments of the Gers and the Allier.<sup>19</sup> These departments represent extremes of developments echoed throughout much of the country. In no single department did anti-Semitism succeed as an electoral discourse better than in the Gers, where five out of five victorious candidates either resorted to anti-Semitic slogans or arguments in their campaigns or joined the group of committed anti-Semites in the Chamber of Deputies after the elections. In contrast, although the language of anti-Semitism and references to the Dreyfus Affair shaped much of the rhetoric of the 1898 elections in the Allier, they fell on so many deaf ears that anyone who examines the elections from the perspective of national success could easily miss the impact of the Affair in the department. In both departments, the perceptions of many voters were influenced by the impact of the low-cost and small-format press.

BY THE 1880s, CHEAP, MASS-PRODUCED NEWSPAPERS began to circulate throughout France. The development of the Linotype, the rotary press, and photogravure all made the new, inexpensive, mass-circulated newspaper possible. In 1858, the circulation of Parisian dailies collectively amounted to no more than 235,000 copies. By 1870, the circulation had risen to over one million. That figure doubled by 1880 and rose to five million by 1910. By this time, too, a lively provincial press had developed.<sup>20</sup>

Not only did newspapers begin to circulate on an unprecedented scale, they appeared in new forms as well. Even local newspapers produced in the 1870s had

<sup>18</sup> Nord, *Paris Shopkeepers*.

<sup>19</sup> Burns, *Rural Society*, 31.

<sup>20</sup> Theodore Zelden, *France 1848-1945: Taste and Corruption* (London, 1980), 192; Phillip Dennis Cate and Sinclair Hamilton Hitchings, *The Color Revolution: Color Lithography in France, 1890-1900* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1978).



little to say to ordinary people. Journalists based their arguments on historical references only the most educated could understand. The newspapers that became most popular after 1880, in particular *Le petit journal*, *Le petit parisien*, and the Catholic Assumptionist *La croix*, used accessible language and pioneered the use of illustration, especially the political cartoon. They were entertaining, combining fiction in the form of *roman-feuilletons* or serialized novels and sensationalist "true" stories (*faits divers*) based on extraordinary crimes and scandals, ideally involving well-known, "public" persons. They were also cheap, costing no more than a few *sous*.<sup>21</sup>

Not surprisingly, newspapers quickly acquired an influence in rural areas. Thanks to the public school reforms of the 1880s, rural illiteracy was all but eliminated even in the central and southwestern departments where it had previously been widespread.<sup>22</sup> Peasants in many departments, including those in the Gers and the Allier, were reading a wide variety of newspapers by 1898. In the Gers, several national, regional, and local newspapers distributed as many as 10,000 copies throughout the department, which boasted a population of no more than 230,000 people.<sup>23</sup> In the Allier, too, newspapers circulated in rural areas. A government survey completed in 1893 identified newspaper sellers in even the smallest rural villages. Here, readers preferred republican papers and the little weekly editions of the Parisian press. Priests gave away copies of *La croix* at Mass. In isolated hamlets, children distributed copies of *Le petit journal*, which serialized *La France juive*, a vitriolic book by France's most prominent anti-Semite, Edouard Drumont. Drumont's newspaper, *La libre parole*, sold well in the rural village of Saligny. While visiting the Allier, Dreyfus supporter Daniel Halévy met a peasant who possessed a copy of Drumont, several newspapers, and a Bible bought from a peddler. Several peasants on different occasions indicated that they enjoyed elections because candidates would give away or sell inexpensive newspapers.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, cultivators from several rural villages wrote letters to socialist weeklies that circulated in the countryside.<sup>25</sup> By 1910, *Le petit parisien* marketed 75 percent of its papers in the provinces. During 1911, *Le petit journal* sold about 80 percent of its 800,000 daily issues outside of Paris.<sup>26</sup>

Landlords in the Allier tried to prevent sharecroppers from reading anything

<sup>21</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848–1945*, 178–225; Jacques Lelong, "L'information dans la presse locale: Il y a un siècle (2–15 mai 1877)," *Notre Bourbonnais* (2<sup>ème</sup> trimestre 1977): 427–33; Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford, Calif., 1976), 452–70; Robert L. Hoffman, *More Than a Trial: The Struggle over Captain Dreyfus* (New York, 1980), 101–04; 145.

<sup>22</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 468–70; François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, *Reading and Writing: Literacy in France from Calvin to Jules Ferry* (Cambridge, 1982).

<sup>23</sup> Maurice Bordes, "L'évolution politique de Gers sous la III<sup>ème</sup> République," *L'information historique*, 23 (1961): 22; Bernadette Suau, "La Gascogne landaise," in Maurice Bordes, et al., *Histoire de la Gascogne contemporaine des Landes aux Pyrénées* (Roanne, 1983), 59–61.

<sup>24</sup> *L'indépendant*, September 19, 1889; ADA T.912, "Listes des vendeurs de journaux dans l'Allier, 1893"; ADA 4M non-classé, "Le sous-préfet de Gannat au préfet, 25 juin 1879"; Archives Nationales [hereafter, AN] F<sup>7</sup> 12460, "Anti-Sémitisme dans les départements"; Daniel Halévy, *Visites aux paysans du Centre* (Paris, 1934), 130–31; and *La socialiste de l'Allier*, May 1, 1898, May 6, 1898.

<sup>25</sup> *La socialiste de l'Allier*, 1898–1900.

<sup>26</sup> Byrnes argues that each sold a million papers in the provinces in the 1890s, but his figures cannot be correct. Data on newspaper circulation for 1898 is difficult to obtain. One only knows, for example, that *La croix du Nord* boasted of "an enormous circulation." Byrnes, *Prologue to the Dreyfus Affair*, 286–90; Ponty, "La presse quotidienne," 193–220.



other than *La croix*, a journal that, before becoming virulently anti-Semitic, promoted traditional values associated with the nobility and the clergy. Occasionally, landlords also gave away small, local propaganda sheets, but too many additional sources of information existed for them to control sharecroppers' attitudes. Thus when one sharecropper asked another how he had acquired his republican ideas in the censured environment of the rural Allier, the other responded, "My dear man, I have acquired the habit of reading my newspaper [*La croix*] topsy-turvy."<sup>27</sup>

Newspapers are significant in an exploration of rural anti-Semitism because, from its earliest stages, the case against Dreyfus was tried in the press, especially in *La croix*, which was so widely dispersed it could not be ignored.<sup>28</sup> In another time, the treason of a high army officer might have been treated as an internal army affair. But, even though the evidence against Dreyfus was nearly nonexistent and much of what the newspapers printed consisted of no more than rumors, over time the rumors published in newspapers acquired the force of truth. At the end of 1896, it seemed that almost no one outside of Dreyfus's immediate family believed he could be innocent. It was commonly understood that the entire department of the Landes "accepted Dreyfus's guilt." Even sharecropper Emile Guillaumin, who later argued against the anti-Semitic right, wrote to a friend in late 1897 that "Dreyfus is probably guilty, but if he is innocent, it is truly a major tragedy."<sup>29</sup>

After exhausting appeals to the army and several political representatives including the president of the Republic, the Dreyfus family recognized they could get no support for Dreyfus without access to the press. With this in mind, they took their evidence to the popular novelist, Emile Zola, who outraged the government in January 1898 by publicly charging the army's highest officers with concealing evidence in an open letter that appeared on *L'aurore's* front page. He described his public intervention in politics in the newspaper by pointing out that "what I do is only a revolutionary method of hastening on the explosion of truth and justice." Indicative of his success, this letter merely represented the first of Zola's public political interventions on the front page of *L'aurore*.<sup>30</sup>

Zola's letter set off anti-Dreyfusard disturbances and an extraordinary cultural production designed to satiate ordinary people's desire for news about the Affair. Newspapers probably constituted the most important commodity marketed, as they began in these years to replace the Chamber of Deputies as the chief site and instrument of public debate. Papers representing different political tendencies

<sup>27</sup> Emile Guillaumin, *En Bourbonnais* (Paris, 1902), 26, 26 n. Compare Burns, *Rural Society*, 134, where he states that *La croix* was "the only available paper" in the Allier.

<sup>28</sup> Burns is especially effective in discussing the role of *La croix* in disseminating anti-Semitic propaganda in the countryside. Burns, *Rural Society*, 131-37. See also Pierre Sorlin, "*La croix*" et les *juifs* (Paris, 1967), 42-44.

<sup>29</sup> Emile Guillaumin to Gillardin, November 28, 1897, ADA 47 J 120, "Fonds Guillaumin." See also the exchange between Georges Valois and Emile Guillaumin in ADA 47 J 90, "Fonds Guillaumin"; and Suau, "La Gascogne landaise," 56-57.

<sup>30</sup> Emile Zola, *Lettre à la France* (Paris, 1898), in Lee M. Friedman Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University, "pFc9.D8262.zzx, "Miscellaneous, Affaire Dreyfus"; D. W. Brogan, *The Development of Modern France, 1870-1939*, Vol. I: *From the Fall of the Empire to the Dreyfus Affair* (New York, 1966), 335-36; Jean-Louis Bredin, *L'affaire* (Paris, 1983), 476.



debated each other in front-page sections called *Echoes*.<sup>31</sup> Men and women in the countryside came to know life outside their local area through summaries of Parisian newspaper accounts. Newspapers allowed provincial men and women to become part of the crucial debates of the nation. Local commentary and events were relegated to back pages and fine print, if they appeared at all. No matter where one lived, politics took place in Paris.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, politics in the countryside could no longer be entirely driven by local issues.

While mass-circulation newspapers alone did much to make the Affair what it was, their presence was made all the more relevant by an explosion in the production of anti-Semitic images, the most successful of which were printed in color. The use of visual images probably increased the circulation of small, sensationalist newspapers. *La croix* began publishing anti-Semitic cartoons in almost every paper it sold.<sup>33</sup>

Although there can be no question that the production and consumption of cultural artifacts carrying political messages dates from the French Revolution or earlier, the new technology of the color print revolution combined with the growing mass market for artifacts differentiated the cultural production of the Dreyfus Affair from that of any previous event or election.<sup>34</sup> Most important, before the development of the new print technologies, it was difficult to produce the quantity of the cheap cultural commodities sold at the end of the nineteenth century. Most previous artifacts were in the form of images, songs, or almanacs specifically designed to promote a person or idea through identification with someone or something already known. As Burns has shown, "when a picture recalls old, familiar compositions, a deeper meaning is grafted to the subject."<sup>35</sup> For example, in the 1848 presidential election, Louis Napoleon combined his

<sup>31</sup> See Lelong, "L'information dans la presse locale"; Jacques Lelong, "La presse bourbonnaise et les lois laïques de 1880 à 1882," *Notre Bourbonnais*, 9<sup>ème</sup> série, no. 218 (4<sup>ème</sup> trimestre, 1981): 421-34; *La croix de l'Allier*, January 16, 1898; Bredin, *L'affaire*, 476; Weber, *France: Fin-de-siècle*, 240; Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 9-11; and Byrnes, *Prologue to the Dreyfus Affair*, 286-90.

<sup>32</sup> Burns points out that most Gers newspapers emphasized Parisian news; *Rural Society*, 135. See also Lelong, "La presse bourbonnaise"; Weber, *France: Fin-de-siècle*, 240; Zelden, *France 1848-1945*, 144-225; and Richard Terdiman, *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1985), 117-46.

<sup>33</sup> The analysis of *La croix* comes from my own reading of the newspapers from 1897 to 1900. See also Sorlin, *La croix*. Burns suggests that the illustrations may have been used to attract semi-literate peasants like those in the Gers, since he found more illustrations in *La croix du Gers* than he did in the other regional editions of *La croix* he examined. (See Burns, *Rural Society*, 135, 208 n.) But, curiously, the daily Parisian edition of *La croix* makes extensive use of illustrations, while *La croix de l'Allier* employed written text exclusively, at least before 1900. Since considerable evidence suggests that editors addressed *La croix de l'Allier* to rural readers and that the peasants of the Gers were more likely to be literate than their Allier counterparts, the relationship between the use of illustrations and their intended audience may be more complicated.

<sup>34</sup> References to and descriptions of the cultural production related to the Dreyfus Affair can be found in collections housed in the Archives Nationales, the Archives of the Prefecture of Police, Paris [hereafter, APPP], and departmental archives. Unfortunately, neither the police nor the prefectures routinely kept cultural artifacts with their notes about them. Hence, to find examples of the artifacts themselves, one must also consult special collections devoted to them. Many of the Dreyfus Affair artifacts discussed here can be found in the Lee M. Friedman Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University. The collection is classified by type of artifact and in some cases by title. Other examples of these artifacts can be found in collections housed in the Musée Carnavalet and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

<sup>35</sup> Burns, *Rural Society*, 69.



image (and, by implication, his politics) in print, poetry, and almanacs with that of his famous uncle. More significant, the Democratic-Socialists pioneered the creation of national electoral clubs and organizations and also used what Burns has called "associative composition" in almanacs, catechisms, and songs in 1849 to assimilate their fairly modern political ideology into traditional popular culture.<sup>36</sup> Finally, General Georges Boulanger combined the strategies of both Louis Napoleon and the Democratic-Socialists to deploy pictorial techniques that linked him to the heritage of the two Napoleons through local political distribution networks.<sup>37</sup>

The cultural artifacts produced during the Dreyfus years continued to employ "associative composition," this time to reconfigure the traditional stereotype of the "usurious Jew" into a powerful symbol that could represent any and all social dangers. They also cited known historical events, again placing a new ideology—in this case, one based on the Jew as a signifier of everything that threatened France—into a familiar tradition of popular culture.

However, in contrast to previous, politically oriented cultural production, the cultural artifacts sold in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair emerged from a relatively autonomous environment. Organizations, popular presses, and manufacturers produced anti-Semitic artifacts and newspapers because they sold well. They produced large quantities for mass consumption in a national market. It is not clear that they sought to sell an idea; more likely, they believed they could sell commodities because many found anti-Semitic and anti-Dreyfusard caricatures to be entertaining.<sup>38</sup>

Anti-Semitism was used to sell everything.<sup>39</sup> Stereotypes of Jewish usurers were sold as cartoons. Children ate chocolate wrapped in prints of popular Catholic and anti-Semitic figures and read illustrated books about the major issues of the Affair. They played with toys that allowed them to hang Dreyfus by the neck and drop Zola's pants. (See Figure 1.) Men rolled cigarettes in papers printed with

<sup>36</sup> Edward Berenson, *Populist Religion and Left-Wing Politics in France, 1830–1852* (Princeton, N.J., 1984); Burns, *Rural Society*, 69.

<sup>37</sup> On Boulangist images, see Burns, *Rural Society*, 60–80; Francis Bergeron and Philippe Vilgier, *Les droites dans la rue: Nationaux et nationalistes sous la Troisième République* (Grez-en-Bouère, 1985), 36; Georges Rougeron, "Les débuts du mouvement ouvrier en Allier," *Notre Bourbonnais*, 9<sup>ème</sup> série, no. 212 (2<sup>ème</sup> trimestre, 1980): 305; ADA T.345, "Imprimerie et librairie—Colportage." On Napoleon, see André Rossal, *Napoleon: 50 documents facsimilés* (Paris, 1969); and Armand Dayot, *Napoleon: Raconte par l'image d'après les sculpteurs, les graveurs et les peintres* (Paris, 1895).

<sup>38</sup> All theories of popular and mass culture are controversial. Considerable research has demonstrated that the Dreyfus Affair was intimately related to the desire to sell newspapers. Similar and relatively uncontested arguments have been made vis-à-vis the emergence of "yellow journalism" in the United States and the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, an event that also took place in 1898. See Peter, "Dimensions de l'affaire Dreyfus"; Byrnes, *Prologue to the Dreyfus Affair*, 286–90; Marcus M. Wilkerson, *Public Opinion and the Spanish-American War* (Baton Rouge, La., 1932); and Joseph E. Wisan, *The Cuban Crisis as Reflected in the New York Press* (New York, 1934).

<sup>39</sup> Dreyfusards responded in kind, not because they thought Dreyfusard products would sell well but because they found it imperative to resist commercially the commercial products of the anti-Dreyfusards. The press was overwhelmingly anti-Dreyfusard before September 1898. Weber, "Foreword" to Kleeblatt, *Dreyfus Affair*; Weber, *France: Fin-de-siècle*, 240; Norman L. Kleeblatt, "The Dreyfus Affair," in Kleeblatt, 1–24, esp. 2–12; Mayeur and Reberieux, *Third Republic*, 197, 200–01; Ponty, "La presse quotidienne," 198–99, 201. On the technological change that made the Affair possible, see Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Photo-Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, Harry Zohn, trans. (New York, 1969), 217–51; Cate and Hitchings, *Color Revolution*.





FIGURE 1: "The Last Judgment" was one of the most vicious paper novelties produced around 1898. One can pull on the man's arm to hang Dreyfus, the traitor. Dreyfus is labeled as a "dirty beast." The caption exclaims, "Extricate yourself here from [the beast's] infected paws!!!" It was one of many such artifacts produced during the Dreyfus Affair. Courtesy of the Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

visual stories of the Affair. One set of cigarette papers was called *les bordereaux*, after the *bordereau* or document that implicated Dreyfus. While men smoked up reproductions of the evidence used to convict Dreyfus, women cooled off with



fans illustrated with reprints of anti-Dreyfusard newspaper cartoons. People played with cards bearing the portraits of Dreyfus and Drumont and sent news to others on Dreyfusard and anti-Dreyfusard postcards.<sup>40</sup> The postcards took two forms. One consisted of photographs of significant events and people of the Affair, usually produced by the Dreyfusards. The other reproduced frames from anti-Dreyfusard posters as sets of cards that were collected. Illustrated broadsheets, songsheets, and board games recounted the Affair in great detail. "Wheel-toys," first introduced during the Boulanger period, circulated again during the Dreyfus Affair and provided multiple, popular interpretations of the Affair. Men, women, and children at local fairs in southern France purchased kaleidoscopes illustrating figures from the Dreyfus Affair for 2 sous.<sup>41</sup>

Anti-Dreyfusard graphic artists drew from a repertoire of cartoon images of Jews, most of which were familiar and demeaning. Many came from newspaper reproductions and derived their impact and authenticity from their newspaper associations. The imagery used in these artifacts was secular; even *La croix* used very little traditional Christian anti-Jewish caricature.

This does not mean, however, that anyone read these images literally. One of many examples of the impact of this cultural production can be seen in the action of a voter from the Allier who in 1898 cast as a ballot his own drawing mimicking a newspaper cartoon. France, embodied as Marianne in a Phrygian cap, crowns the controversial figure of Commandant Marie Charles Esterhazy, dressed in German military attire. An upside-down copy of "The Declaration of the Rights of Man" is pierced by a sword shaped like a cross, while blocked out in the large E of ANARCHIE are the names of bureaucrats usually identified with republicanism. The claim is that if France succeeds in exonerating Esterhazy, "anarchy will end up triumphant," ordinary republicans will be marginalized, and the Rights of Man will be destroyed. Marianne, *la gueuse* or the "slut" whom the "new right" identified with the left, has been transformed into a whore, whom the left can identify with the "new right." The ballot was evidently drawn by someone who understood well what was going on in the country and knew history. Yet it was probably produced by the same kind of republican peasant who read his newspaper "topsy-turvy."<sup>42</sup> (See Figure 2.)

The use of mechanical reproduction in newspapers and artifacts dramatically changed the complexion of rural politics. On the one hand, large landowners could not isolate peasants, sharecroppers, and day laborers from Parisian and provincial cultural production. It circulated everywhere. As a character in one of

<sup>40</sup> Revolutionary cards and games that were nearly identical to those that appeared during the Dreyfus Affair were displayed at an exposition on "A Revolução Francesa e o Brasil" held in the Biblioteca Pública do Estado do Rio de Janeiro in July 1989. But the individuals portrayed did not have to be labeled on these artifacts.

<sup>41</sup> Postcards that sold for 2 francs at the time they were produced in 1898 and 1899 sold for 60 or 70 francs in 1903. On postcards, see Xavier Granoux, "*L'affaire Dreyfus*": *Catalogue descriptif des cartes postales illustrées françaises et étrangères parues depuis 1894* (Paris, 1903), 1-5. See also Philippe Joutard, *La légende des camisards* (Paris, 1976), 314; and John Grand-Carteret, *L'affaire Dreyfus et l'image* (Paris, 1898), 35-58.

<sup>42</sup> The drawing is from AN C.5104, "Elections Legislatives, 1898." On Marianne as *la gueuse*, see Karen Offen, "The Political Career of Paul de Cassagnac" (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1971), 106; published in the Garland series as *Paul de Cassagnac and the Authoritarian Tradition in Nineteenth-Century France* (New York, 1991).





FIGURE 2: "Bountiful Anarchy will end up triumphant!" This figure was cast as a ballot by an Allier voter in the legislative elections of 1898. It was drawn in purple and orange crayon. Archives Nationales, Paris.

sharecropper Emile Guillaumin's novels said upon spying some colored posters in his Allier village, "Look! . . . those who can read have something to amuse them."<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, local notables did not always want to isolate peasants. Some, like Paul de Cassagnac, who published *Appel au peuple*, *L'électeur du Gers*, and *La voix du peuple* in the Gers, found the press as a site of politics consistent with their anti-parliamentarian positions. Others, like the *Progressiste* Camille Gabiat of the Haute-Vienne, found posters very useful. Gabiat profited from a poster that appeared throughout the Haute-Vienne on the eve of the 1898 elections. It accused his opponent, the Opportunist (republican) Henri Vacherie, of taking money from Jews to foment war and revolution. The previously popular Vacherie lost the election to Gabiat, and it may be, as one historian has suggested, that the posters and the anti-Semitic campaign associated with them undermined years of grass-roots organizing.<sup>44</sup> *La croix du Gers* reported that crowds loved the poster "La patrie en danger," which appeared in Auch (Gers) and featured anti-Semitic

<sup>43</sup> Emile Guillaumin, *The Life of a Simple Man*, Eugen Weber, ed. (Hanover, N.H., 1983), 186. See also AN F<sup>7</sup> 12463, "Le Commissaire spécial de l'Allier au Ministre de l'Intérieur," November 9, 1898; ADA T.338 "Colportage des journaux, 1835-1887"; ADA T.345, "Colportage"; ADA T.334, "Colportage/Police de la Press"; Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 464 n.

<sup>44</sup> Offen, "Paul de Cassagnac"; Vallin, *Paysans rouges du Limousin*, 195-98.



slogans to combat "juiverie" (the Jewish problem). It was so effective that the newspaper wanted to place it throughout the district of Mirande (Gers) on the eve of the 1898 elections.<sup>45</sup> Newspapers, posters, and other cultural artifacts thus helped to shape ideas and made it difficult for rural dwellers to believe that parliamentary politics were merely a question of delivering on local patronage.

Without these materials, the Dreyfus Affair would never have come into the countryside. Very few peasants had any direct contact with Jews, for of the estimated 71,000 Jews in the country in 1897, 45,000 lived in Paris.<sup>46</sup> Most of the rest lived in other French cities. Indeed, it was perhaps because of their lack of direct contact that those rural folk unfamiliar with Jews may have been far more willing than their urban counterparts to accept the most egregious and diabolic stereotypes that appeared in the products of mass culture.

Although anti-Semites were not the first politicians to draw on images from popular culture to structure new ideologies, they were among the first to take advantage of new mass marketing techniques that popularized these images. Those who evoked them spoke in a language already known, drawing on tendencies that already existed.<sup>47</sup> The success of the images, however, lay in the anti-Semites' ability to reconfigure some significant traditional associations. In the process, they kept those associations alive in popular memories but in new forms.

TO UNDERSTAND HOW THE DREYFUS AFFAIR entered the countryside, we need to know something about rural life in the *fin-de-siècle* departments where it became important. Although local peculiarities tend to undermine all generalizations, many rural French perceived that they were experiencing a crisis. In the 1880s and 1890s, both peasants and large landowners—especially those associated with viticulture—faced acute economic difficulties as a consequence of the late nineteenth-century depression. Some of the more dramatic economic changes affected the regions of France that produced anti-Semitic deputies in 1898.<sup>48</sup> For example, in the Gers, an isolated rural department in the southwest corner of France, phylloxera and black rot had wiped out nearly three-quarters of the department's vines by 1898, especially in Armagnac. Peasants without insurance or access to low-interest loans lost their farms. The demand for industrial products, especially those used in the commercial production of Armagnac, an *eau-de-vie* produced from Gers grapes, declined dramatically with the reduction in acreage under the vine. Emigration, the only way out for many, created labor shortages for those who did survive the crisis.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> *La croix du Gers*, March 13, 1898.

<sup>46</sup> Mayeur and Rebérioux, *Third Republic*, 200.

<sup>47</sup> Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 606.

<sup>48</sup> Herman Lebovics, *The Alliance of Iron and Wheat in the Third French Republic, 1860–1914: Origins of the New Conservatism* (Baton Rouge, La., 1988), 26–50; *La socialiste de l'Allier*, January 3, 1897, February 20, 1898; Bordes, "L'évolution politique," 19–22; Roger Brunet, *Les campagnes toulousaines: Etude géographique* (Toulouse, 1965), 367–400; Simone Derruau-Boniol, "Le socialisme dans l'Allier de 1848 à 1914," *Cahiers d'histoire*, 2 (1957): 115–61; René Secretin, "Le Boulangerisme dans l'Allier" (Mémoire pour la maîtrise et lettres, Clermont-Ferrand, October 1969), 12–31; Georges Courtes, *et al.*, "La Gascogne orientale," in Bordes, *Histoire de la Gascogne*, 210–14.

<sup>49</sup> Burns suggests that the agricultural crisis was severe in the 1880s but that conditions improved



Given the labor shortage, large landowners also found themselves in a crisis. Having made small fortunes selling grain and calves during Louis Napoleon's Second Empire, many were helpless when American and Argentinian farmers and cattle ranchers took advantage of refrigeration and favorable French trade agreements to dump products on European markets. Many landowners tried to sell out as fast as they could, and large properties began to disappear in many parts of the Gers. Remarkably similar conditions characterized the departments of the Allier, the Gironde, the Landes, and the Loire-Inférieure.<sup>50</sup>

Aggravated by the politics of the *Ralliement*, the movement launched when the pope encouraged all French Catholics to embrace the Republic, political failures accompanied many landowners' economic failures. Large landowners had tended toward conservative politics based on local social networks. Although many professed sympathy for monarchist and Bonapartist causes, they generally had avoided forming mass-based political parties with national programs and affiliations. Rather, they depended on prestige and patronage for rural votes.<sup>51</sup> In the Gers, for example, local notables were almost unchallenged after the collapse of the Second Republic until they lost their prestige along with their profits and

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during the 1890s. Using the same evidence he presents for the Gers, I am painting a much bleaker picture of the 1890s. He is correct in pointing out that at the end of the nineteenth century only 48,000 hectares in vines remained of the 108,000 cultivated in 1873. What he does not indicate is that the land in vines increased from 108,000 hectares to 122,000 hectares between 1873 and 1882. The land in vines then declined by 22 percent from 1882–1893 and by 49 percent from 1893–1902. These figures suggest that the crisis may have been even worse in the 1890s than in the 1880s. Wine production continued to decline in the 1890s, albeit not as rapidly as it had in the previous decade. The same can be said of property values. Prices for cereals and animals also continued to decline at the end of the nineteenth century, though perhaps not as rapidly as they declined earlier. Using data that Burns did not examine, I found that the price of wine in France actually increased in the 1880s, then fell fairly dramatically in the 1890s. Figures provided by historian Gilbert Garrier for the Beaujolais suggest that the purchasing power of the average vinegrower peaked in the 1880s, then fell precipitously in the 1890s, reaching a low point in 1898. Leo Loubère's data also demonstrates the significantly increased cost of producing grapes at the end of the century. Nationally, there was some temporary improvement in cereal prices in 1898 as a consequence of the Spanish-American War, but, in general, agricultural prices continued to fall until after 1900. Thus none of the data that either Burns or I examined suggests that "though not yet 'extremely favorable,' the situation in the rural Gers [on the eve of the Dreyfus Affair] was, beyond doubt, an improvement over the black decade of the 1880s"; see Burns, *Rural Society*, 38–42; Brunet, *Les campagnes toulousaines*, 382–83, 396–400; *La croix*, June 8, 1898; Bordes, *Histoire de la Gascogne des origines à nos jours* (Roanne, 1977), 366–68; Courtes, "La Gascogne orientale," 210–14; Leo Loubère, *The Red and the White: A History of Wine in France and Italy in the Nineteenth Century* (Albany, N.Y., 1978), 299; Gilbert Garrier, *Paysans du Beaujolais et du Lyonnais, 1800–1970*, Vol. II (Grenoble, 1973), 111–12, 117–22; Magraw, *France, 1815–1914*, 321–26; Lhomme, "La crise agricole," 521–53.

<sup>50</sup> Brunet, *Campagnes toulousaines*, 393; Bordes, *Histoire de la Gascogne*, 203–10, 366–68; Courtes, "La Gascogne orientale," 210–14. On the Allier, see ADA M.36.c, "Situation des ouvriers de l'Allier, 1884"; and *Bulletin de la Société de l'Agriculture de l'Allier*, from 1876, when it reported the arrival of "le Frigorifique," until 1914, when landlords debated the advantages and disadvantages of using foreign labor. On the Gironde, see Loubère, *Red and the White*, 337–38. On the Mayenne, see Michel Denis, *Les Royalistes de la Mayenne et le monde moderne (XIX<sup>e</sup>–XX<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (Paris, 1977), 447–58; and on the Landes, see Suau, "La Gascogne landaise," 59–61. Equally important in other regions were the rise of monopolistic processors of grain, cheese, and sugarbeets, who were driving out small independent competitors. Harvey Goldberg, "Jaurès and the Formulation of a Socialist Peasant Policy, 1885–1898," *International Review of Social History*, 2 (1957): 388.

<sup>51</sup> The *Ralliement* split the conservative vote by fostering the development of a conservative republicanism. See Bordes, "L'évolution politique," 21; Offen, "Paul de Cassagnac"; Siegfried, *Tableau politique*; and Denis, *Les Royalistes*, 447–58.



property at the end of the century. The Gers fell in 1892–1893 to well-organized republicans, who gained control of most of the department's municipal councils, the Conseil Général, and the department's five seats in the Chamber of Deputies. In their biggest victory, republicans elected an independent socialist, Thierry Cazes, to the Chamber from the electoral district of Lecture in 1893. In 1897, local notables even lost their department's senatorial races, elections they thought they were guaranteed to win. Republican successes seem to have rested on the emergence of organized political groups affiliated with fledgling national political organizations, which sponsored electoral rallies to promote Radical and socialist candidates.<sup>52</sup>

Similar changes began to occur in the Loire-Inférieure. Before the 1890s, all deputies elected from this solidly conservative bastion had held seats for at least ten years or were clearly on the right. Many were landlords; four had titles of nobility. Most were Catholic and Royalist, although some of them embraced Bonapartism. Eighteen of the fifty-one deputies elected in the Brittany departments were large landowners. However, in 1889, two left-leaning republicans won election in the Loire-Inférieure. In 1893, two additional republicans were elected, one of whom described himself as an independent socialist. In the 1898 elections, the anti-republican right regained a seat in the Loire-Inférieure, but the number of landowners among the Brittany deputies fell to nine out of forty-six. Lacking a candidate to run in the first electoral district of Nantes, a conservative coalition persuaded L.-M. Pucel to run as an anti-Semitic candidate, recognizing that at best he could generate a protest vote "for the good anti-Semites and the good French."<sup>53</sup>

The Allier—once a stronghold of conservatives and Bonapartists—had also changed dramatically by 1898. The alliance between the rural and urban working class had become remarkably well knit by the end of the century and enjoyed great political clout. The Catholic editors of *La croix* wrote that socialist discipline and cohesiveness both impressed and terrified them in an 1895 Allier electoral campaign, although the department's two socialist factions voting together on the second round of elections still lost by a small number of votes.<sup>54</sup> Even where the socialists had yet to penetrate, left-leaning Radicals had decimated conservative opposition. Conservative landlords who ran as quasi-official candidates nevertheless remained a potent force in local politics, partly because of socialist factionalism.

Nationally, the 1893 legislative elections, the last held before the Affair, were a disaster for conservatives. Only fifty-eight Royalists and Bonapartists and thirty-six *Ralliés* were elected. As William Irvine argued, the right was reduced to "an

<sup>52</sup> Bordes, "L'évolution politique"; Bordes, *Histoire de la Gascogne*, 331–84; and Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 223–24. On the deference paid to notables and priests in the Gers earlier, see Archives du Ministère de la Guerre MR 2280, "Mémoire sur le région d'Auch, 1822," and "Mémoire sur la route d'Auch à Toulouse, 1862."

<sup>53</sup> While this Nantes district contained a large part of the city, it also included an important viticultural region. *La croix nantaise*, February 6, 1898–June 5, 1898, especially May 5, 1898. See also Pascal, *Les députés*, 337–83.

<sup>54</sup> *La socialiste de l'Allier*, November 10, 1895; Derruau-Boniol, "Le socialisme dans l'Allier"; and Nancy Fitch, "Class Struggles in the Countryside: Social Change and Politics in Central France, 1200–1914" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1985).



inconsequential rump in a chamber now dominated by the Opportunists [republicans]."<sup>55</sup> In short, the personal politics of large landowners and their representatives came under attack from men beginning to identify with nascent political parties. The parties were learning how to use the techniques of political rallies, mass-circulation newspapers, and campaign tactics pioneered by the Democratic-Socialists in 1849 and honed by the Boulangists in 1889. Thus armed, the fledgling parties began to challenge the impressive political machines of justices of the peace, priests, rural police, and other bureaucrats.<sup>56</sup> The political crisis for local notables coincided with an acute economic crisis generated by natural disasters combined with international agricultural competition.

By 1898, several socialist factions loosely organized into political parties gained national prominence with their persuasive Marxist explanations of the economic crisis. They predicted an increasing concentration of capital and productive activity in agriculture as had occurred in industry. They effectively won over many urban workers, but their most impressive gains were in rural departments. Peasants read socialist and other political newspapers, attended political meetings, wrote letters to the editors of newspapers, and began to write their own political tracts.<sup>57</sup>

But, in 1898, socialists found it difficult to appeal simultaneously to their heterogeneous electorate, especially because of the divisions within the movement. By fixing the price of bread and meat, socialist municipalities fed the working class while economically squeezing bakers and butchers. While few urban workers objected to increases in the taxes on rural agricultural goods (*octrois*) to pay for social programs, the shopkeepers, artisans, and peasants in smaller towns and villages suffered. Most artisans wanted lower prices for articles of consumption, while small proprietors wanted higher prices for wine and grain. Shopkeepers, artisans, and peasants all remained generally skeptical of socialist plans for the eventual collectivization of the means of production and forced the socialist factions to reformulate their agrarian and commercial policies.<sup>58</sup>

However, the republican Opportunists and Radicals—the parties most associated with the rural vote—had little more to offer bakers, butchers, and peasants. In their most significant move, they engineered the approval of the series of tariffs associated with the government of Jules Méline. Their major goal was to keep foreign grain out of the country, a policy that largely benefited only the most substantial commercial producers, for peasants, especially vinegrowers, rarely

<sup>55</sup> William Irvine, *The Boulanger Affair Reconsidered: Royalism, Boulangism, and the Origins of the Radical Right in France* (New York, 1989), 165.

<sup>56</sup> An excellent example of the impact of the new politics can be found in Roland Treppe's exposé of the actions taken by the marquis de Solages to defeat Jaurès in 1898. Simply stated, the marquis was forced to adopt the campaign strategies of his opponents in order to win. See Roland Treppe, "Un campagne électorale étudiée d'après les archives privées," *Actes du 82<sup>me</sup> Congrès National des Sociétés Savantes, Bordeaux, 1957* (Paris, 1958), 471–90; Bordes, "L'évolution politique."

<sup>57</sup> *La socialiste de l'Allier*, January 3, 1897; Pierre Brizon, "Le monde rural en Bourbonnais," *Le mouvement socialiste*, 158 (July 1, 1905): 353; ADA T.912, "Listes des vendeurs de journaux dans l'Allier, 1893"; ADA 4M, non-classé, "Le sous-préfet de Gannat au préfet, 25 juin 1879"; Bordes, "L'évolution politique"; *La socialiste de l'Allier*, January 3, 1897; Magraw, *France 1815–1914*, 338. Compare Burns, *Rural Society*, 131–36, esp. 134.

<sup>58</sup> See *La socialiste de l'Allier*, 1895–1900, especially February 2, 1896, and July 4, 1897; *La démocratie du Centre*, May 2, 1898.



marketed—and indeed often bought—grain. Moreover, other countries reduced their demand for French products in retaliation. While imports fell 13 percent, exports fell 27 percent in the decade of 1886–1896, hitting wine, champagne, and brandy producers especially hard.<sup>59</sup> The Opportunists and Radicals had difficulty explaining to their constituencies why they could not reverse the economic crisis and why they supported imperialistic adventures in Indochina and Africa. Some opponents attributed the Radicals' failures to laziness, others to their association with "cosmopolitan" (Jewish) rather than local interests. The idea that the Radicals principally promoted cosmopolitan interests was reinforced by the visible support prominent Radicals like Georges Clemenceau gave to Dreyfus.<sup>60</sup>

The Dreyfus Affair thus came into the countryside in the midst of a fluid political environment integrally related to developments in commercial agriculture that upset the social and economic worlds of both small and large producers. By the 1890s, the right had begun to see the need to adapt to mass parliamentary politics, if only to elect leaders able and willing to restructure the French state along authoritarian—if not agrarian—lines. At the same time, the socialist left had begun to see electoral politics as an avenue toward their eventual triumph. Both right and left increasingly viewed their political vitality as dependent on winning elections, that is, on appealing to the masses.

AN ANALYSIS OF RHETORIC IS HELPFUL IN UNDERSTANDING how and why candidates used anti-Semitism to appeal to the masses. This rhetoric was perhaps sharpest in the Gers, where conservatives faced fierce competition. Four out of five victorious candidates from this department campaigned on anti-Semitic themes. The fifth joined the anti-Semitic bloc in parliament after the election. Furthermore, the election of the Gers deputies in 1898 hinged on rural issues that were incorporated into a new rhetoric of anti-Semitism. With one exception, none of the victors was an incumbent. None won on the first round of elections, and most won by only small margins. Thus none of these politicians was in control of a rotten borough, in which the majority of the population simply voted for the local notable without regard to what he advocated.

Faced with the bankruptcy of traditional conservative politics—a politics that, while varied, usually promoted authoritarian leadership—several Gers candidates rode to victory by appealing to an ancient stereotype in a new way.<sup>61</sup> Two of the

<sup>59</sup> Lebovics, *Iron and Wheat*; Eugene Golob, *The Méline Tariff* (New York, 1944); Michael S. Smith, *Tariff Reform in France, 1860–1900: The Politics of Economic Interest* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1980); and Lhomme, "La crise agricole."

<sup>60</sup> This is an interpretation that comes from reading a variety of popular newspapers published in opposition to the Radicals at this time.

<sup>61</sup> In one paragraph, Burns acknowledges that three (rather than five) anti-Semitic deputies were elected in the Gers. He names only Joseph Lasies. He adds that "the appeal [of the anti-Semites] was not limited to the Gers," then cites some other examples from the Isère and the Loir-et-Cher. Without additional evidence or explanation, he ends this section with the conclusion that, in spite of their appeal, the anti-Semites were not successful because they did not accompany their appeal with concrete action, nor did they have any significant organization in the countryside. He does not analyze elections and offers no explanation why voters in one of his two fundamentally agricultural case studies, the Gers, elected "three" anti-Semitic deputies, except to say that "local notables



Gers anti-Semites, Jules Delpech-Cantaloup and Joseph Lasies, ran on new or revived Bonapartist platforms. Two others, the Radicals Paul Decker-David and André Delieux, seemed to have been compelled through the process of campaigning to invoke anti-Semitism. The fifth victor, the Bonapartist journalist Paul de Cassagnac, did not campaign on any issue but joined the group of declared anti-Semites elected to the Chamber of Deputies in June 1898. Although he had earlier argued for the revision of Dreyfus's verdict, Cassagnac was not hesitant to appeal to anti-Semitic voters in 1898, once he recognized how useful anti-Semitism could be to the authoritarian nationalist politics he advocated.<sup>62</sup>

An examination of electoral platforms helps reveal the basis of rural anti-Semitism.<sup>63</sup> Decker-David promised "severe repression of cosmopolitan Jewry," and Delieux assured voters that he stood against cosmopolitan speculators—large financiers, whether Jewish or others, "who steal from us." "To them," he promised his rural constituency, "war without mercy! They are more dangerous than phylloxera, hail, or floods."<sup>64</sup> Saint-Clar landowner Delpech-Cantaloup, a leading member of the local agricultural society, ran in one of the toughest campaigns of the election against the department's first socialist incumbent. He promised to eliminate property taxes and the city tolls (*octrois*) and opposed a progressive income tax. He also argued for a reorganization of the Chamber of Deputies that would enhance the representation of agricultural interests. Although he promised to fight for freedom of religion, the press, and speech, he added, "But I do not confound liberty with license," and told voters that he was deeply offended by those who insulted France by insulting the army in the defense of a traitor. If elected, he promised to oppose efforts to reopen the case against Dreyfus.<sup>65</sup>

The most significant of the anti-Semitic deputies was Bonapartist Joseph Lasies, mayor of the village of Mormès and defender of viticultural interests. Lasies was

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pressured small landowners, sharecroppers, and day laborers." Burns, *Rural Society*, 158–60; Bordes, "L'évolution politique"; Bordes, *Histoire de la Gascogne*, 331–84.

<sup>62</sup> Cassagnac switched sides sometime between 1897 and June 1898. His newspaper, *L'autorité*, was "generally regarded as a supporter of the anti-Semitic cause" after 1898. His 1898 diatribes against Jews are well documented in François Bournand, *Les Juifs et nos contemporains* (Paris, 1898), 29, 105, 108–10. These diatribes included Cassagnac's suggestion that Jewish wealth be expropriated because "public opinion would regard it as an act of legitimate reprisal." He is typical of many agrarian notables who possessed fiefs in the provinces but lived in Paris. He left his estates in the hands of others who also managed local politics. See Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 207, 215, 222–25, 227–28, 383; Bordes, *Histoire de la Gascogne*, 362. Compare Offen, "Paul de Cassagnac," esp. 376–78, on Cassagnac's complicated relationship with Edouard Drumont.

<sup>63</sup> The analysis of electoral platforms is not necessarily the best way to tackle the problem of anti-Semitism in French politics. Ideally, one would want to look at the socioeconomic basis of anti-Semitic victories, but such an analysis would reveal very little about the Gers elections since the department was homogeneous. At the end of the nineteenth century, 72 percent of the population had agricultural occupations and 87 percent of the population lived in rural areas. Moreover, most of the Gers' fourteen "cities" had populations that barely exceeded 2,000. Statistically, in other words, the relevant explanatory variables did not vary. I have analyzed elections statistically in the department of the Allier, where such an analysis was necessary and meaningful. See also Bordes, *Histoire de la Gascogne*, 381–82; Courtes, "La Gascogne orientale," 209–10.

<sup>64</sup> France, *Programmes*, 1898, 277–78, 282–83.

<sup>65</sup> France, *Programmes*, 1898, 280–82.



elected on the second round in the electoral district of Condom, in the heart of Armagnac. He ran as an anti-Semitic candidate, complaining,

For twenty years, the current regime, hypocritically decorated with the name "the Republic," has deceived us and exploited us to the profit of an odious Jewish-parliamentarian bourgeoisie which, assisted with deceitful promises, has followed only one objective: to empty our pockets and to fill their own. It will not be enough to change men. It is necessary to transform this impotent regime, which, thanks to every bad instinct and every base passion, is nothing more than a vulgar syndicate of exploitation led by large cosmopolitan speculators, clothing with its highest protection Jews and the bloated [*repus*] while tyrannizing poor devils who suffer and work.<sup>66</sup>

Lasies wanted to carry out a Bonapartist-like project based on a directly elected authoritarian leader. He reminded voters that liberty was impossible without responsible authority. "With the authority based on the suffrage of the entire nation," he argued, "we will have the necessary force to get rid of the Jews and their servants, who for twenty years have never ceased to violate our liberties, waste our money, and sully our national honor. We will become our own leaders and will become their master."<sup>67</sup> Like Delpech-Cantaloup, Lasies wanted to reorganize the Chamber of Deputies based on professional representation.

The appeal of rural anti-Semitism, simply stated, took two forms. Radicals like Decker-David and Delieux tended to focus on Jews as financiers. Since the number of Jews in the Gers could be counted on one hand, no one actually thought they were losing their property to Jews or even to Jewish usurers.<sup>68</sup> Rather, the Radicals singled out Jews as cosmopolitan, part of a worldwide force as threatening as the commercial agriculture of the United States. Symbolizing the threat to peasant property and the forces that produced the uncertainty of late nineteenth-century social change, Jews were more dangerous than pestilence, hail, or floods. Never mind that Jews were not generally involved in commercial agriculture. People understood them as wanderers or strangers, as symbols of uprootedness and uncertainty.<sup>69</sup>

Moreover, Eugen Weber has argued, Jews were so often associated with usury in popular culture that "semantic confusion" worked to identify all economic enemies and exploiters as "Jews," despite their actual racial and ethnic identities. Nancy Green has shown that, in the nineteenth century, *juiverie* came to mean any kind of scandalous behavior, including usury and parasitism. *Juiverie* also came to be the word used to describe all foreigners.<sup>70</sup> In case readers missed the point of these constructed synonyms, *La croix* consistently reinforced the notion that Jews artificially kept prices low and encouraged excessive subdivision of property for their own purposes, both of which were practices that contributed to the small

<sup>66</sup> France, *Programmes, 1898*, 278–80.

<sup>67</sup> France, *Programmes, 1898*, 278–80.

<sup>68</sup> Phyllis Cohen Albert, *The Modernization of French Jewry: Consistory and Community in the Nineteenth Century* (Hanover, N.H., 1977), 319.

<sup>69</sup> Crates [Francis Delaisi], "Le camp capitaliste," *Revue critique*, 565, cited in Mazgaj, *Action Française*, 138.

<sup>70</sup> Weber, "Reflections on the Jews in France," 12–13; Nancy L. Green, "Socialist Anti-Semitism, Defense of a Bourgeois Jew and Discovery of the Jewish Proletariat: Changing Attitudes of French Socialists before 1914," *International Review of Social History*, 30 (1985): 381.



proprietor's inability to survive. In the words of Edouard Drumont, "the Jewish millionaires are squeezing the little French peasant in a vise."<sup>71</sup> The Jew, in other words, became a convenient scapegoat that allowed the petite bourgeoisie and small peasant proprietor to attack the rich, especially those identified with international financial and agrarian capitalism, without identifying themselves with either the working class or the socialists. The demand to abolish usury was not new, but only at the end of the century did peasants and Radicals couch the demand in anti-Semitic political rhetoric.

The construction of the ideology employed by Decker-David and Delieux arguably came from the press of the period. "Le sans-patrie," a pamphlet warning France of the danger of cosmopolitan Jews and Freemasons, circulated widely throughout the Gers.<sup>72</sup> More significant, *La croix* in particular published cartoons and articles promoting the idea that Jewish speculators threatened local agriculture. One cartoon published just before the May 1898 election and captioned "The Big Pirate" suggested that a Jewish merchant based his speculation in the bread market on his manipulation of the Spanish-American War in the Philippines. (See Figure 3.) The simple image links the outsider, the Jew, who is involved in the imperialistic adventures of another country, the United States, to a concrete situation (the price of bread) every peasant understood. While many peasants knew that the price of bread was higher in 1898 than it had been, some also attributed the higher prices to the war, which had cut off American wheat.<sup>73</sup> The cartoon suggests that prices depended on speculation in international or cosmopolitan affairs, that is, on undesirable behavior, *juiverie*. Several years earlier, socialist Jean Jaurès had taken a strong stand against international grain speculators in the influential regional paper, *La dépêche de Toulouse*. Coincidentally, one of the major speculators he identified was a merchant family named Dreyfus.<sup>74</sup>

Making direct connections between its anti-Semitic themes and individual political candidates, *La croix du Gers* accused Delieux of being "fond of Zola and his Jewish protégé Dreyfus."<sup>75</sup> It also pointed out that Olivier Bascou, the incumbent deputy running against Cassagnac, was the son-in-law of a wealthy Jewish banker. The newspaper argued that it was necessary to vote out Bascou, since "one cannot have a whole population represented by a Jew."<sup>76</sup> A careful reading of the paper indicates that its editors believed the outcome of all the electoral campaigns in the Gers to hinge on people's feelings about the Jewish question.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Edouard Drumont, *La dernière bataille: Nouvelle étude psychologique et sociale*, as cited in Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 268. See also Sorlin, *La croix*, 108, 179.

<sup>72</sup> *La croix du Gers*, May 1, 1898.

<sup>73</sup> *La croix du Gers*, May 8, 22, 1898. See also *La démocratie du Centre*, May 3, 1898.

<sup>74</sup> Dreyfus, the accused, is not obviously related to the family of grain merchants. There was another "Dreyfus Affair," involving the crash of Jewish banker Auguste Dreyfus's Peruvian guano business with the outbreak of war between Peru and Chile. This Dreyfus was accused of bilking thousands of people out of their savings and of profiting from the adventure to buy up large vineyards near Perpignan in southern France. Goldberg, "Jaurès," 385 n; APPP 1054, "Manifestations diverses à la suite du procès Dreyfus-Esterhazy," which mistakenly contains the dossiers on Auguste Dreyfus and the guano scandal.

<sup>75</sup> *La croix du Gers*, February 27, 1898.

<sup>76</sup> *La croix du Gers*, March 13, 1898.

<sup>77</sup> *La croix du Gers*, January-June 1898.





### LA GRANDE FLIBUSTE

— *Faut-il encore augmenter le pain ?*  
 — *Attends que j'aie compté les coups de canon tirés à Manille!*

FIGURE 3: "The Big Pirate" appeared in *La croix* on May 5, 1898, and in *La croix du Gers* on May 8, 1898. It portrays a man caricatured as a Jew, apparently involved in some kind of business. He asks over the phone, "Is it necessary to raise the price of bread again?" He is told, "Wait until I have counted the rounds of fire in Manila!"

In response to the charges raised in *La croix du Gers*, Delieux published several articles in *La fraternité* explaining his position on the Jewish question.<sup>78</sup> In one article, he acknowledged the importance of attacking Jewish bankers but also pointed out that Catholic bankers speculated, too. In another, Delieux assured voters that he believed Dreyfus was guilty. In yet a third, he asked, "Have we begun to have enough of the Dreyfus Affair? At your house, in the street, in the café, in the city, in the country, there is no other question than that."<sup>79</sup> At the same time, rumors circulated in opposition papers that Decker-David was a Prussian Jew, since his given name was Paul Decker, which could sound German or Jewish. The deputy's father published letters in many supportive newspapers, protesting

<sup>78</sup> The paper was edited by the Radical senator from the Gers, Paul Destieux-Junca.

<sup>79</sup> *La fraternité*, January 23, 1898, January 27, 1898, February 24, 1898.



that he was neither German nor Jewish. Decker-David campaigned for tariffs on foreign wheat and suppression of taxes, just as he had in his successful campaign of 1893. The only difference was his vow to repress "cosmopolitan Jewry," a likely response to the rumors and one compatible with his protectionist program.<sup>80</sup>

Gers Radicals, however, were not merely responding to the anti-Semitic charges of their opponents. They, too, were willing to employ anti-Semitic rhetoric when they believed it would help them win elections. This is most evident in the campaign pitting the Radical incumbent Bascou against the former Bonapartist Cassagnac. Like *La croix du Gers*, *La fraternité* attacked Jewish high finance and supported its own candidate, J.-J. Dourrieu, against both Bascou and Cassagnac. To win votes for Dourrieu, it stressed the fact that Bascou was the son-in-law of a prominent Jewish banker. In the newspaper's words, "in this climate, it is sufficient to speak of the Jews" to win elections.<sup>81</sup>

Little evidence exists that the anti-Semitic attack helped Dourrieu, but there is no question that it hurt Bascou. When the previously popular deputy tried to explain to rural voters that his program was identical to that for which they voted in 1893, they silenced him with the chants "Down with Bascou! Down with the Jews!" In May, the Radicals associated with *La fraternité* paid for their anti-Semitic campaign, when Dourrieu lost and Bascou was forced into a runoff election with the anti-republican Cassagnac. Although the newspaper now tacitly supported Bascou, the damage was done. Cassagnac agreed to debate Bascou, but he found he had to say very little, for *La fraternité* had already created the climate he needed to win. Again Bascou was silenced in rural villages, this time with the chants "Down with the Jews! Throw the Jews out! . . . Down with the Prussians! Long live Cassagnac!" In his victory speech, Cassagnac acknowledged the significance of anti-Semitism in his triumph by 1,164 votes. To those who chanted, "Down with the Jew!" he wrote, "Thank you, thank you again!"<sup>82</sup> After his defeat, Bascou publicly blamed his loss on *La fraternité's* anti-Semitic attack and challenged the newspaper's editor to a duel.<sup>83</sup>

The Bonapartists and Royalists developed a different rhetoric of anti-Semitism. Although some Royalists such as Albert de Mun employed similar anti-capitalist, anti-Semitic rhetoric, many conservatives, including Delpech-Cantaloup of the Gers, le comte de Lévis-Mirepoix of the Orne, and Fernand de Pontbriand of the Loire-Inférieure, were reluctant to argue that the Jewish problem was one of a wealthy elite.<sup>84</sup> Over time, however, increasing numbers of conservatives and conservative republicans began to believe that anti-Semitism would enhance their appeal in rural areas, since verbal attacks on Jews were becoming popular.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Bordes, *Histoire d'Auch et du pays d'Auch* (Roanne, 1980), 185; France, Chambre des Députés, 6th Législature, Session Extraordinaire de 1894, *Programmes professions de foi et engagements électoraux de 1893* (Paris, 1894), 337-38; *La fraternité*, April 3, 1898.

<sup>81</sup> *La fraternité*, February 24, 1898.

<sup>82</sup> *La croix du Gers*, June 5, 1898.

<sup>83</sup> Bascou wounded Destieux-Junca in the duel, sending the editor to the hospital. *La fraternité*, April 7-June 12, 1898; *La croix du Gers*, May 10-June 5, 1898.

<sup>84</sup> See the electoral platforms of these candidates reprinted in France, *Programmes, 1898*; Burns, *Rural Society*, 108-09; Irvine, *Boulangier Affair*, 216 n; Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 225, 270.

<sup>85</sup> Reports from the secretaries of the Indre and the Landes, April 1893, Archives de la Maison de France, AN, as cited in Irvine, *Boulangier Affair*, 171.



Believing that peasants despised Jews, many landed conservatives and their representatives began to make anti-Semitic arguments when justifying their political ideas. Frustrated over the debates that slowly produced the Méline tariffs that protected agriculture only after many were already ruined, these men wanted to replace parliamentary rule with rule by corporate bodies organized around economic interest groups. For Lasies, this meant getting rid of the Jewish-parliamentarian bourgeoisie.

Significantly, both Delpech-Cantaloup and Lasies coupled anti-Semitism with anti-republicanism. Many Jews were intellectuals, professors, lawyers; some were orators; all were viewed as part of the retinue of parvenus whom Karl Marx had identified with the politics of high finance and large-scale industry in his *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, in the anti-Semites' view, Jews were a people without a country, who threatened France by their cosmopolitan nature. Popular culture, the church, and religious publications also kept alive the notion that Jews were a race of thieves.<sup>87</sup> One small phrase thus joined them to the Republic, the impotent state that stole from everyone by pocketing excessively large tax revenues.

The rhetoric of these men identified the entire Jewish community with financial and industrial capital. The proto-Zionist Bernard Lazare explained it this way: "landed capital, in its struggle with industrial capital, has become anti-Semitic, because the Jew is, for the landed proprietor, the most typical representative of commercial and industrial capitalism."<sup>88</sup> Anti-Semites found it easy to single out the Rothschilds, as bankers, and Jewish financiers associated with the disastrous Panama Canal scandal, although the real culprits of the scandal were not Jewish. When Delpech-Cantaloup and Lasies argued for the reorganization of parliament around economic interest groups that would increase agricultural representation, they implicitly identified their political and economic enemies as financial and industrial capitalists, that is to say, as Jews. The Jew became a convenient scapegoat that allowed the large landowner to attack a certain class (financial capital) without directly threatening a very fragile and probably fictive alliance between agrarian and industrial magnates to counter the threat from below.<sup>89</sup>

Conservative arguments also were cast in the language used in newspapers. However, the association of Jews with republicanism and the parliament is much more complex than the linguistic and symbolic equation between "Jew" and "capitalist." Once again, *La croix* took the lead in using anti-Semitic vocabulary and

<sup>86</sup> Most Jews, of course, were not financial and industrial capitalists. See Michael Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation: A Study of the French Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (Oxford, 1971); Paula E. Hyman, "The French Jewish Community from Emancipation to the Dreyfus Affair," in Kleeblatt, *Dreyfus Affair*, 25-36; Nancy L. Green, *The Pletzl of Paris: Jewish Immigrant Workers in the "Belle Epoque"* (New York, 1986); Nancy L. Green, "The Contradictions of Acculturation: Immigrant Oratories and Yiddish Union Sections in Paris before World War I," in Malino and Wasserstein, eds., *Jews in Modern France*, 54-77; Green, "Changing Attitudes of French Socialists"; Karl Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852; New York, 1963); and Sorlin, *La croix*, 101.

<sup>87</sup> Joseph Reinach, *Histoire de l'Affaire Dreyfus*, quoted in Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 4.

<sup>88</sup> Bernard Lazare, *L'antisemitisme: Son histoire et ses causes* (Paris, 1934), 187; Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 272-79.

<sup>89</sup> Lebovics, *Iron and Wheat*.





## TIRAGE AU SORT

— *J'ai le n° 22, Monsieur le sous-préfet.*  
 — *Pon bour drois ans de serfice; Fife la Vrance!*  
 — *Ben, il parle comme un youpin not sous-préfet*

FIGURE 4: "The Draft Lottery" appeared in *La croix du Gers* in January 1898. A French peasant draws his number and says to a man caricatured as a Jew, "I have number 22, Monsieur Subprefect." The subprefect responds in a German-Yiddish accent, "Good for three years of service; long live France!" The potential draftee then exclaims, "Ben, he speaks like a *youpin* [slang for a Jew], not like a subprefect."

images, this time to challenge the Republic. In January 30, 1898, a cartoon in *La croix du Gers*, for example, portrayed a young conscript drawing his draft number in front of three men, one of whom was caricatured as a Jew. (See Figure 4.) The caption reads, "I have Number 22, Monsieur Subprefect." The Jew responds with a German-Yiddish accent, "Pon bour drois ans de serfice; Fife la Vrance!" (Good for three years of service; Long live France!) The conscript then mutters to himself, "Ben, he speaks like a *youpin* [slang for Jew], not like a subprefect."<sup>90</sup> The implication is that Jews have penetrated the bureaucracy throughout the provinces and are now in charge of obtaining draftees for the army. Not only does this image question the integrity of the French army but it also makes the point by demonstrating the impact of the "Jewish Problem" on ordinary peasants. Virtu-

<sup>90</sup> Pointing to the significance of language in the construction of the ideology, many anti-Semitic cartoons were captioned phonetically to indicate a thick German-Yiddish accent. The cartoon is from *La croix du Gers*, January 30, 1898. See Burns, *Rural Society*, 211 n; Hyman, "Dreyfus Affair," 94.



ally nowhere in popular memory was the "tyranny" of the state over peasants greater than in its conscription of rural sons. Language is also used in this cartoon to identify the Jewish Frenchman as an impostor. Although most Jews were completely assimilated and spoke perfect French, *La croix* regarded them as unassimilable.<sup>91</sup> Another cartoon portrayed snakes with Jewish heads biting French soldiers, while still another, which appeared next to "The Big Pirate" on May 5, suggested that only Jews participated in elections, since Jews manned the polls, while most French abstained from voting. (See Figure 5.)

What can be called the nationalist construction of French history at the time was summarized in a poster that appeared in 1902, "The History of a Politician." (See Figure 6.) In this narrative account, the politician, though exhibiting Jewish features, is educated in a seminary. He becomes a Freemason and then wins election by promising "more butter than bread." Jewish financiers bribe him to vote the right way during the Panama Canal scandal. He encourages workers to strike against their bosses and accepts money from the "Dreyfus syndicate" to malign the army. In the end, it is up to "the People" along with the nationalists to sweep the politicians and their friends into Paris's sewers, where they belong. The idea echoed Cassagnac, who once wrote, "A well-led battalion admirably supplements the weaknesses of the Constitution. Let us clean out everything; *let the broom become a symbol!*"<sup>92</sup>

Both Delpech-Cantaloup and Lasies offered a solution: get rid of the Jews and create a government of corporate bodies under the control of a directly elected authoritarian leader. As Lasies had argued, it was no longer sufficient to change men. Earlier in the century, Bonapartists and Boulangists had also promised government through a strong leader and an authoritarian revolution. Yet, while the Bonapartists achieved widespread success during the Empire, they had been unable to attract votes in the 1890s. And, while the Boulangists succeeded in many parts of France, it was Cassagnacisme, not Boulangism, that dominated the elections of 1889 in the Gers. The earlier triumph of Cassagnacisme depended on the continuation in the Gers of a system of official candidacy pioneered by the July Monarchy and refined by the Second Empire. The prefects and subprefects controlled politics by purging republican mayors and teachers, closing republican

<sup>91</sup> *La croix nantaise*, for example, wrote that it was important to treat Jews as human beings, but "the Jews are an unassimilable people and because they are unassimilable, we must refuse to give them the privilege or favor of naturalizing them"; February 6, 1898. As evidenced in the works cited in note 85, the issue of Jewish assimilation in *fin-de-siècle* France is complicated. Most Jews were at least institutionally assimilated into French society, although their consciousness of being Jewish persisted. In fact, *fin-de-siècle* anti-Semitism can be interpreted as a reaction against the social integration of Jews into French society. On the other hand, an increasing number of Yiddish-speaking Jews from Eastern Europe as well as Jews from Alsace-Lorraine were swelling the Jewish population of Paris at this time. But these Jews were ethnically distinct, were generally poor, and joined the French proletariat, not the French administration. See Green, *Pletzl of Paris*; Jay R. Berkovitz, *The Shaping of Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-Century France* (Detroit, Mich., 1989); and Vicki Caron, *Between France and Germany: The Jews of Alsace-Lorraine, 1871-1918* (Stanford, Calif., 1988).

<sup>92</sup> My emphasis. René Rémond, *The Right-Wing in France from 1815 to De Gaulle*, 2d edn., James M. Laux, trans. (Philadelphia, 1966), 224. The last frame of the poster is nearly identical to a cartoon published by Bobb in *La silhouette*, February 20, 1898. The cartoon is reprinted in Grand-Carteret, *L'affaire Dreyfus et l'image*, 121.





FIGURE 5: "No Abstentions." This cartoon appeared in *La croix* on May 5, 1898, suggesting the unlikely situation of a polling place dominated by Jews. The man guarding the ballot box says to the Jewish voter, "You are going to vote, are you not, Master Jacob? It is only the French who abstain!"

clubs, and delivering patronage in the form of roads and jobs. But, by 1898, this system of official candidacy had collapsed, largely as a result of the influences of republican organizations and the popular press.<sup>93</sup>

Without anti-Semitism, neither Royalism nor Bonapartism nor Boulangism, nor any of their radical right transformations, could continue to develop more than a limited popular appeal in the countryside. In the long run, they could not stop the spread of the international capitalist development ruining small producers and large landowners, nor could they offer much to agricultural or industrial workers. Traditional conservatism, despite its form, could work politically only where patronage politics and electoral fraud prevented the operation of disci-

<sup>93</sup> Offen, "Paul de Cassagnac," 179, 341; Burns, *Rural Society*, 101-05; Bordes, "L'évolution politique."





FIGURE 6: This poster, which appeared in 1902, depicts the "History of a Politician." It brings together in a single document many of the themes raised in the popular press during the Dreyfus Affair. Courtesy of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

plined political parties. At the end of the nineteenth century, the new radical right recognized the impossibility of seducing voters with the benefits of a pretender or a Bonaparte and could define itself only through opposition; anti-Semitism



became its means of distinguishing all that was Other.<sup>94</sup> The prefect of the Landes told why Théodore Denis, the “republican nationalist clerical” of Dax and a right-wing “Jacobin,” won his election: “He gives satisfaction to all opinions and is the candidate of all parties. He has made a speciality of anti-Semitism . . . He loves the people and is loved by them. They’re his idol.”<sup>95</sup> Denis recognized sovereignty only in “the people,” who distrusted representative democracy as embodied in parliamentary republicanism and who believed that the parliament itself was foreign, that is, Jewish.<sup>96</sup> The same could be said of Delpech-Cantaloup, Lasies, and Cassagnac.

The effect was not limited to the southwestern departments of the Gers and the Landes. In much of France, the new nationalists argued for a “France for the French.” In the words of Fernand de Pontbriand of the Loire-Inférieure, the French as a race were threatened by the Jewish race, which treated France as a “conquered country.”<sup>97</sup> For Louis Le Roy de Loulay of the Charente-Inférieure, foreign Jews without a country were contaminating the army and promoting social disintegration.<sup>98</sup> Nationality to these conservatives no longer depended on geographical boundaries; it constituted a racial community. In the words of Royalist Count Edouard de Lur-Saluces of Bordeaux, “everyone has understood that we are struggling *against a race* and defending ourselves against its cosmopolitan power.”<sup>99</sup> This attitude is reflected in the cultural production of the period. Many images and artifacts drew from the repertoire of images used to represent collectibles from the Empire in museums and international expositions: glass paperweights containing Dreyfusard figures embodied as fetuses, posters representing Dreyfusards as monsters in a freak show. (See Figure 7.) In short, they resembled the caricatures used to represent those who were not French.<sup>100</sup>

Dreyfus, the Jewish traitor, thus appeared almost miraculously in 1898 to save the cause of anti-parliamentarian conservatives.<sup>101</sup> Everything in the traditional stereotype of the Jew—the stranger, the man without a country, the usurer—

<sup>94</sup> Iconographically, Jews were often embodied as Hottentots, as blacks, as the quintessential Other. Sander L. Gilman, “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth Century Art, Medicine, and Literature,” *Critical Inquiry*, 12 (Autumn 1985): 204–42; and Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 584–601. Gilman treats the theme in more depth in *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1985).

<sup>95</sup> Bordes, *Histoire de la Gascogne*, 377.

<sup>96</sup> The language is adopted from Karen Offen’s description of Cassagnac, in Offen, “Paul de Cassagnac,” 391. See also Steven Louis Englund, “The Origin of Oppositional Nationalism in France, (1881–1889)” (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1981), 570–88.

<sup>97</sup> In some places, candidates also invoked regionalism, that is, “Lozère for the Lozériens.” See France, *Programmes, 1898*, 414–15.

<sup>98</sup> France, *Programmes, 1898*, 149–50.

<sup>99</sup> Lur-Saluces to Duc d’Orléans, February 6, 1899, as cited in Irvine, *Boulangier Affair*, 173, Irvine’s emphasis.

<sup>100</sup> “Scheurer-Kestner Alchimiste,” a cartoon published by Bobb, *La silhouette*, November 7, 1897, reprinted in Grand-Carteret, *L’affaire Dreyfus et l’image*, 114; Carol A. Breckenridge, “The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting: India at World Fairs,” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31 (April 1989): 195–216; Hyman, “Dreyfus Affair,” 100.

<sup>101</sup> Anti-Semitism surfaced in Boulangism, but it lacked unifying power as an ideology before the Dreyfus Affair. Boulanger himself was not an anti-Semite. Anti-Semitism also surfaced in the discourse of those who opposed Boulangism. See Marc Angenot, *Ce que l’on dit des Juifs en 1889: Antisémisme et discours social* (Saint-Denis, 1989); Zeev Sternhell, “The Roots of Popular Anti-Semitism in the Third Republic,” in *Jews in Modern France*, 104–07; Irvine, *Boulangier Affair*, 157–82; and Burns, *Rural Society*, 114–15.



# EXPOSITION DES HORREURS...

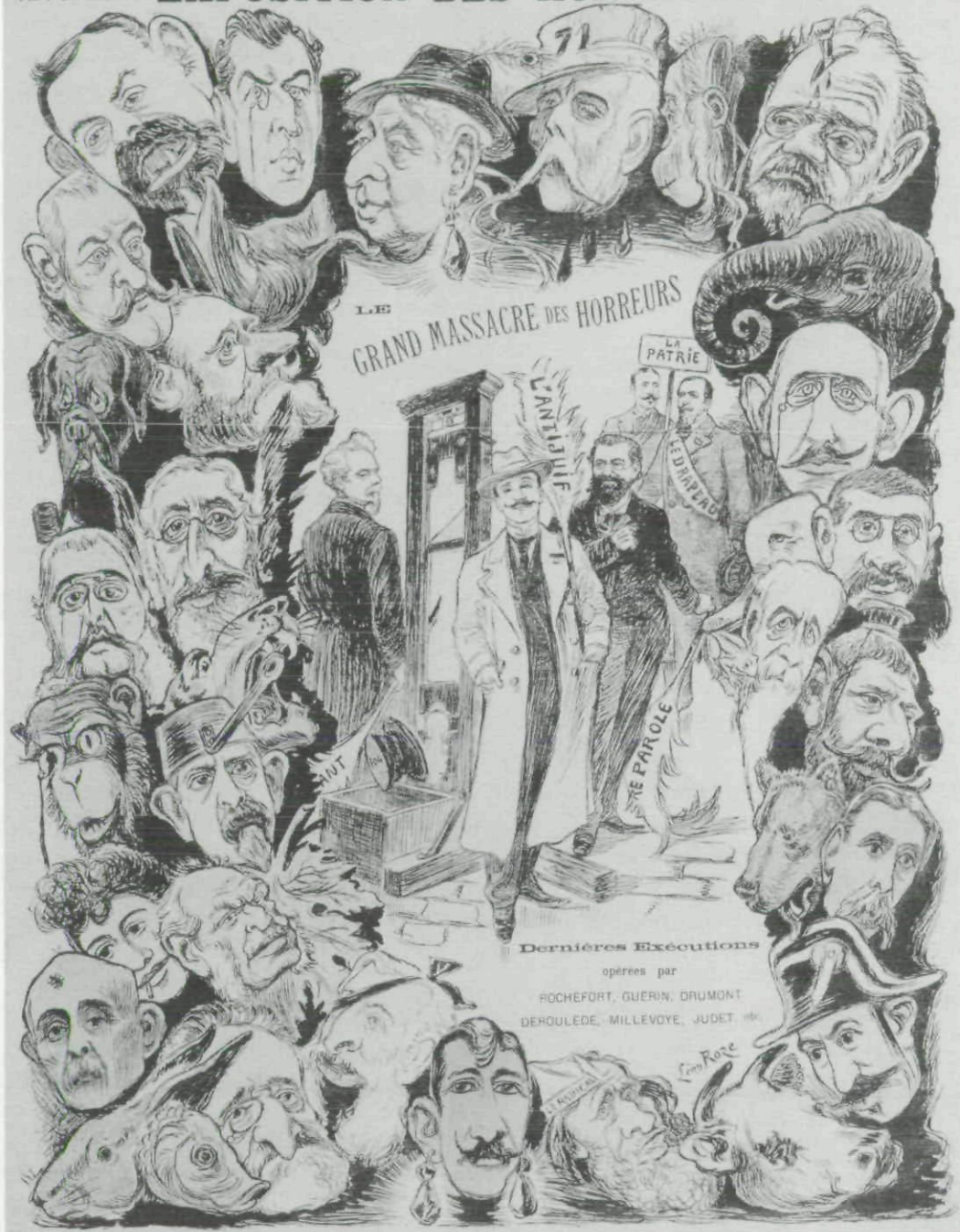


FIGURE 7: "The Freak Show." This poster is an example of the way in which Dreyfus and his supporters were embodied as freaks alongside of exotic animals usually found only in the colonies. Jews, Radicals, and socialists in the poster are thus linked to colonial images. In contrast to those pictured on the border, well-dressed and well-formed Frenchmen, including the prominent anti-Semites Edouard Drumont and Paul Déroulède, occupy the center of the poster with a guillotine. They are promising to execute the freaks, clearly on the margin of the society defined by patriotism (*La patrie*) and the flag (*le drapeau*). The poster itself looks like a theater advertisement. Léon Hayard, who published the poster, also produced toys and other anti-Semitic cultural commodities. Courtesy of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.



could be incorporated into a new ideology linking popular anti-Semitism with hostility toward big merchants, big landowners, big bankers, and speculative capitalism in general. Collectively, these ideas eventually produced a popular conservatism grounded in nationalism without threatening the economic or class interests of its perpetrators. As social critic and Dreyfusard Daniel Halévy argued, anti-Semitism allowed conservatives to function politically without forming a true conservative party. More important, it enabled them to form an imaginary community with Radicals, nationalist *Progressistes*, urban nationalists, and some peasant proprietors with whom they otherwise had little in common. In the words of Gers Radical André Delieux, the formation of this imaginary community was "a bizarre phenomenon" in which "men who belong to the parties that are most opposed are thinking alike" because of "this unhappy Affair."<sup>102</sup> Newspapers and other cultural commodities were the expressions of this imaginary community and linked these diverse groups of consuming publics through the print market.<sup>103</sup>

Given the weakness of organized political parties in their department, the Gers anti-Semites successfully used the press to channel peasant hatred and distrust of traditional enemies (landlords and the state) into hatred of the Jew. Many Gers peasants began to believe that parliamentary "Opportunists and Jews are responsible for the Panama Canal scandal, the expeditions into Madagascar, Tonkin, Dahomy," that is, for everything wrong with France.<sup>104</sup>

IF ANTI-SEMITES WERE SUCCESSFUL IN SOME DEPARTMENTS such as the Gers, they were remarkably unsuccessful—with a few exceptions—in others, the Allier at the foothills of the Massif Central, for instance. This is not to say that anti-Semitism did not enter the countryside in the Allier. In fact, the Dreyfus Affair became one of the largest issues in the 1898 campaigns there. Nevertheless, just because candidates argued that organized cosmopolitan Jewry represented the greatest danger faced by most peasants, and countless popular publications reinforced this position, peasants did not have to accept the argument. In the Allier, most did not.

In many respects, the Allier did not differ from departments where anti-Semites succeeded. There were no more Jews in the Allier than in the Gers. Like the departments in which anti-Semites succeeded, the Allier was rural, though it had a larger industrial population, a better transportation system, and fewer peasant proprietors. Most cultivators in the Allier were agricultural day laborers or sharecroppers. But, like the vinegrowers of the Gers, Allier vinegrowers had lost much to the phylloxera louse, and large landlords in the department were as affected by international competition as were those in the rest of France.

Not surprisingly, the Allier electoral district where anti-Semitism proved most successful was in the vinegrowing region of Gannat. There, the conservative

<sup>102</sup> *La fraternité*, February 24, 1898. See also Daniel Halévy, *Apologie pour notre passé (1907–1910), Luites et problèmes* (Paris, 1911), 113.

<sup>103</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983).

<sup>104</sup> Courtes, "La Gascogne orientale," 216.



candidate, Alphonse Labussière, told voters in the viticultural village of Louchy-Montfand that it was useless to support a progressive income tax as a means of attacking Jews like the Reinachs and the Rothschilds, for a tax meant nothing to millionaires. His Radical opponent, Louis-Gabriel Delarue, disagreed on the value of a progressive income tax, but he agreed that Jews had too much power in the government and in the economy, an argument that won him much applause at rural rallies. In his official program, Delarue campaigned "to defend the national treasury against the speculating of cosmopolitan Jews, gamblers of high finance who enrich themselves by pillaging the small and middle classes."<sup>105</sup> In the rural village of Monteignet, someone asked Delarue what he thought of the "Dreyfus syndicate." After he promised he was "no friend of the Jews," those present at this rally agreed to support him. In Saint-Bonnet-de-Rochefort, one of the more isolated rural villages of the department, another voter asked Delarue if he was part of "the Jewish syndicate." And in Ebreuil, a rural market town, he won the support of voters who liked his positions on agriculture and on the Dreyfus Affair.<sup>106</sup> These meetings induced the *Journal de Gannat* to predict his victory, remarking that "he has fought energetically against the maneuvers and actions of cosmopolitan Jewry."<sup>107</sup>

In spite of the success of anti-Semitism in mobilizing voter turnouts in Gannat, not everyone accepted the anti-Semitic argument. Elsewhere in the Allier, the anti-Semites fared much worse. In the electoral district of Lapalisse, for example, they were forced to run against Jules Gacon, a popular and powerful Radical up for reelection. A dedicated republican, Gacon wanted tax reform, the creation of agricultural credit unions, the formation of mutual assistance societies, separation of church and state, and the continuation of free public education.<sup>108</sup> His was a program identified with Radicals everywhere in France, the program of peasants, artisans, and small shopkeepers.<sup>109</sup> Yet it was not his program that enemies openly opposed. When he appeared at a meeting on April 30 in Saint-Germain-des-Fossés, voters hooted him down by chanting "Long live the army!" "Down with Dreyfus!" "Down with the anarchists!" "Down with Jaurès' gang!" Voters ended the meeting by endorsing his opponent, "the real republican" Paul Debray, who vowed "to silence the Dreyfusards."<sup>110</sup>

Debray's program was not ephemeral. He promised beleaguered peasants that he would improve the wealth of the countryside through patronage projects and that he would end the health regulations ruining the wine industry. But these issues barely surfaced in the newspapers that supported him. Large landowners, commercial farmers, and engineers like Debray had begun to join forces in the

<sup>105</sup> *Journal de Gannat*, April 3, 1898; France, *Programmes, 1898*, 26; Derruau-Boniol, "Le socialisme dans l'Allier."

<sup>106</sup> *Journal de Gannat*, April 16, 23, 1898.

<sup>107</sup> *Journal de Gannat*, April 23, 1898.

<sup>108</sup> *L'indépendant*, May 3, 1898; *La démocratie du Centre*, May 3, 1898; France, *Programmes, 1898*, 27-28.

<sup>109</sup> Jean Viple, "Le radicalisme dans l'Allier sous la Troisième République," *Notre Bourbonnais*, 9<sup>ème</sup> série, no. 208 (2<sup>ème</sup> trimestre 1979): 152-79; Jacques Kayser, *Les grandes batailles du radicalisme, des origines aux portes du pouvoir, 1820-1901* (Paris, 1962 [c1961]).

<sup>110</sup> *L'indépendant*, May 3, 1898; and *La démocratie du Centre*, April 30, 1898. See also *La démocratie du Centre*, May 3, 1898; *Officiel Vichy*, April 28, 1898.



Allier as nationalists to protect the church, religious schools, and respect for the army, priests, and the aristocracy. To these people, Gacon symbolized everything that threatened the country and their families.<sup>111</sup> Gacon could have been the politician in the poster "The History of a Politician." His enemies accused him of having Jewish features, of being a Freemason, of pimping, of taking bribes from Jews. *La croix de l'Allier* argued that he represented the ideal of "Judeo-Masonic" politics. Indeed, Gacon invited the anti-Semitic attack on his candidacy when he gave a speech to new conscripts in January 1898 advocating reopening the case against Dreyfus and calling for army reform.<sup>112</sup>

So many anti-Semitic-related fights broke out at Gacon's electoral rallies that the subprefect of Lapalisse sent special gendarmes to each village to guarantee peaceful elections.<sup>113</sup> Perhaps as a consequence, there was little violence on election day, and Gacon won by a large margin of votes on the first round. Much evidence suggests that hostile landowners and their tenants staged the electoral fights. Debray won a majority in only eight of seventy-seven villages, towns, and urban wards. The results of this election can lead to only one conclusion: in spite of some significant electoral demonstrations, anti-Semitism had little appeal in this part of the Allier. Statistically, as the percentage of forest workers and agricultural day laborers increased, so too did the percentage of the vote given to Gacon. Because only a small minority of electoral districts gave a majority to Debray, the rural proletariat was evidently well enough organized to reject a candidate identified with large landowners. Those who did vote for Debray tended to come from a handful of peasant-dominated viticultural villages in the hinterland of Vichy and in the recently drained and improved Forterre.<sup>114</sup>

The question, of course, is why anti-Semitic and anti-Dreyfusard rhetoric played a central part in these elections. Allier Royalists had begun to define a new political rhetoric in a *Le courrier* article of 1881. They polarized France into "the Great Notables" with their clients and "the new stratum" of men, parliamentary politicians and their followers, who drank, beat their wives, sang obscene songs, read newspapers, and insulted priests. In 1882, they moved in an implicitly racist direction by linking absence of faith in God to support of non-French interests when they ridiculed the atheist Victor Schoelcher as "the deputy of the Negroes" for his role in abolishing slavery in the French empire. Bonapartists soon took up

<sup>111</sup> ADA 3M 59 1898, "Elections législatives, divers, 1898"; and ADA 3M 61-65, "Elections législatives de l'Allier, 1902."

<sup>112</sup> ADA 3M 61-65; *Officiel Vichy*, April 28, 1898; *La démocratie du Centre*, April 30, 1898; *La croix de l'Allier*, December 19, 1897, February 6, 1898, March 13, 1898.

<sup>113</sup> "Le sous-préfet de Lapalisse au préfet, 3 avril 1898," in ADA Allier, 3M 59 1898, "Elections législatives, divers, 1898."

<sup>114</sup> Devastated by the loss of vines to phylloxera after 1895, the peasants in these villages and towns—more than others in the department—were also disrupted by *fin-de-siècle* social and economic change associated with the rise of Vichy as a major tourist center in central France. Debray did best in places with large proportions of *rentiers*, at least some of whom were large landowners, and *fermiers*, most of whom were commercial farmers. On the villages in the hinterland of Vichy, see Touret, "Les campagnes bourbonnaises," 90, 180. I compiled the data I used from manuscript censuses and election results. I ran an additional sample on data found in Secretin, "Le Boulangisme dans l'Allier." Our data is not comparable enough to run together, but the results from the two samples are generally consistent given our differences in coding and sampling. See also ADA Allier, Série M, non-classé, "Le sous-préfet de Lapalisse au préfet, 9 mai 1910"; and ADA M.105.c, "Syndicats agricoles, Enquête de 1910."



the theme, arguing that public schools without God would destroy respect for civilization and tradition. Subsequently, Royalists and Bonapartists collectively began to define a new right grounded in an extreme interpretation of what Christianity represented: tradition, hierarchy, and the "folk" (the authentic French). By 1898, they were defining all struggles in simplistic dichotomies: great notables versus the new stratum, Christians versus Jews, "folk" versus urban dwellers. As a consequence, they constructed a political discourse of anti-Semitism and issues related to Dreyfus that all newspapers and parties had to confront. Gacon was a particularly useful embodiment of the negative half of their dichotomies. A Radical who rejected older political organizations and ran on his own, he was also an anti-clerical Freemason who in their eyes looked Jewish. Moreover, Gacon sided with urban interests against abolition of the regulations destroying the wine industry.<sup>115</sup> In the months preceding the election, *La démocratie du Centre* repeatedly pointed to Gacon's positions on the negative side of the conservatives' dichotomies.<sup>116</sup>

Accepting the notion that Jews threatened France, the Radical paper *L'indépendant* responded by publishing an editorial arguing that Gacon fought against "dirty" Jews and promoted viticultural interests. It also published an open letter to Paul Debray that denied any connection between Gacon and Jews or those in parliament who defended Dreyfus.<sup>117</sup> The rhetoric from *La démocratie du Centre* nevertheless set the tone for the debate and ensured that, in spite of Gacon's American-style campaign, he would be confronted with anti-Semitic remarks in every village he entered. According to published press reports, he was never able to discuss his platform, as he was shouted down by those who wanted to know only of his position on the Dreyfus Affair.<sup>118</sup>

The influence of the press emerges much more clearly in an examination of the elections held in the two electoral districts of Montluçon in the Allier.<sup>119</sup> Several letters to the editors of *La socialiste de l'Allier* mentioned the increased frequency of newspapers during the elections. One voter from the village of Saint-Fargeol complained that the conservative candidate, Marcel Vacher, was inundating his village with Bonapartist newspapers, but the voter remarked that "unfortunately for Vacher, no one believes anything printed in them."<sup>120</sup> The editors of *La socialiste de l'Allier* feared that readers were paying attention to the press and began to debate directly with rightist newspapers. On February 27, 1898, they reprinted an article from *La démocratie du Centre* arguing that the socialists had decided to oppose anti-Semitism. The article added that the collectivists were the Jews' closest allies. The Guesdist candidate Paul Constans published an editorial next to

<sup>115</sup> ADA 3M 59 1898, "Elections législatives, divers"; Lelong, "La presse bourbonnais"; "L'information dans la presse locale"; and "La presse bourbonnaise dans l'Affaire Dreyfus," *Notre Bourbonnais*, 9<sup>ème</sup> série, no. 207 (1<sup>ère</sup> trimestre, 1979): A-D.

<sup>116</sup> *La démocratie du Centre*, January-June 1898.

<sup>117</sup> *L'indépendant*, May 7, 1898; April 29, 1898.

<sup>118</sup> ADA 3M 59 1898, "Elections législatives, divers."

<sup>119</sup> The Bonapartist press also made anti-Semitic accusations against candidates in the two electoral districts of Moulins, but this had almost no impact. These elections are not analyzed here. *L'indépendant*, May 7, 1898.

<sup>120</sup> *La socialiste de l'Allier*, May 1, 1898. Vacher also gave away chocolate medallions to potential voters. See *La socialiste de l'Allier*, April 24, 1898, and May 5, 1898.



the reprint acknowledging that candidates were likely to be maligned but that he would never stand for the insult implied in *La démocratie du Centre*. "All of my life, all of my actions," he wrote, "protest . . . against this venal accusation." Refusing the right's opposition of French versus Jew, another article in the same paper pointed out that the Guesdist position was to stay out of the conflict, adding that the socialists were in favor of expropriating rich Jews like the Rothschilds as well as rich Catholics like Eugene Schneider.<sup>121</sup>

*La croix* and *La croix de l'Allier* responded by publishing a string of articles warning peasants that the socialists were merely following the orders of Prussian Jews, that France had been invaded by foreigners, and that Jews were creating monopolistic department stores and grocery chains that were ruining small producers. Quoting the Parisian *Le petit journal*, *La croix* concluded, "Dreyfus has become the flag, the stench, the God of everything we detest."<sup>122</sup> *La socialiste de l'Allier* bounced back with a series of articles reprinting and then refuting what was published in *La croix de l'Allier*. It also printed news from other regional editions of *La croix*, paying particular attention to the activities of Gers candidate Cassagnac.<sup>123</sup>

Partly because of the influence of newspapers, there were several anti-Dreyfusard riots in the district of Montluçon in 1898 (including one in the rural village of Ronnet). The major targets were small shops believed to be owned by Jews. Many of those attacked, however, wrote their own letters to newspapers with evidence certifying that they were not Jewish. Besides these incidents and the newspaper warfare, anti-Semitism played a very minor role in the Montluçon legislative elections of that year. Candidates from both sides implied that Jewish interests controlled their opponents, but few seemed very concerned.<sup>124</sup>

Voters were more worried about which socialist faction (the Guesdists or the neo-Blanquists) would win and whether either faction would collectivize property than they were about the "Jewish problem." Based on the suffrage of miners, metallurgy workers, vinegrowers, agricultural day laborers, and sharecroppers, socialists from both factions had done well in most legislative elections held since 1889, and many peasants supported the neo-Blanquist candidate Christophe Thivrier, who shocked everyone by wearing a peasant smock when he took his seat in the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>125</sup>

Other peasants began to worry about socialist successes, especially when candidates vowed to collectivize property. Constans, a local Guesdist, facetiously explained the impossibility of surviving as a peasant proprietor in a capitalist-dominated century. Chronicling the experiences of his close peasant relatives, he detailed the inevitable effects of debt, mortgage, and foreclosure on those who

<sup>121</sup> *La démocratie du Centre*, February 27, 1898.

<sup>122</sup> *La croix*, January 21, 1898. See also *La croix de l'Allier*, January–June 1898.

<sup>123</sup> *La socialiste de l'Allier*, January–June 1898. *Le tocsin populaire* also debated *La croix de l'Allier*. ADA M.290.c, "Coupures de la Presse."

<sup>124</sup> *La croix de l'Allier*, January–February, 1898; Georges Rougeron, *Le département de l'Allier sous la Troisième République* (Montluçon, 1965), 103; Fitch, "Class Struggle in the Countryside," chap. 8; Guy Rousseau, "Un miroir de l'action socialiste dans l'Allier: *Le tocsin populaire* de 1895 à 1898," *Notre Bourbonnais*, 2<sup>ème</sup> série, no. 233 (1985): 69, 79 n; *La socialiste de l'Allier*, January–June 1898.

<sup>125</sup> Georges Rougeron, *Le mouvement ouvrier en Allier* (Moulins, 1981); Ernest Montusès, *Le député en blouse* (1978; rpt. edn., Roanne, 1983).



tilled the soil, and advocated collectivization of agriculture.<sup>126</sup> But most peasants rejected his analysis and feared his victory.

In many places, the threat of socialism undoubtedly contributed to the development of modern anti-Semitism. *La croix de l'Allier* argued that Jews and socialists were joined in opposition to the church, the army, and the family.<sup>127</sup> In local sharecropper Emile Guillaumin's fictional account of the rural left, *Le syndicat de Baugignoux*, the right-wing press wrongfully accused a socialist sharecropper of undercutting local traders by dumping Jewish products in his cooperative store.<sup>128</sup> Fear of socialism also may have been the central issue behind the attack on Gacon in Lapalisse, where hecklers associated Dreyfus and Gacon with anarchists and socialists. Here and elsewhere, many identified Jews with socialists, especially with Jaurès, who defended Dreyfus.<sup>129</sup> Both Jews and the socialists were cosmopolitan and international; both threatened the army; both contributed to the weakness and fragmentation of the Republic. The connection between Jews and socialists as international wanderers without countries was reflected in several popular prints, including Figure 8, which appeared in *Le grélot*.<sup>130</sup>

Once again, the facts belie the connection. Until late 1898, most socialists demanded that the proletariat stand aside from the Dreyfus Affair, "the bourgeois civil war" designed to draw attention away from class struggle.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, many socialists had previously made use of anti-capitalist, anti-Semitic rhetoric themselves.<sup>132</sup> In fact, many Royalists were initially reluctant to exploit anti-Semitism as a political issue because of its association, prior to the Dreyfus Affair, with the extreme left.<sup>133</sup> By the mid-1890s, however, anti-Semitism was so strongly identified with anti-socialist politics and the politics of large landowners in the Allier that socialist leaders from both the neo-Blanquists and the Guesdists began to educate peasants, sharecroppers, and workers about the real enemies they faced. The local Guesdists blamed the anti-Dreyfusard riots in Montluçon on

<sup>126</sup> *La socialiste de l'Allier*, July 4, 1897.

<sup>127</sup> *La croix de l'Allier*, February 27, 1898.

<sup>128</sup> Emile Guillaumin, *Le syndicat de Baugignoux* (Paris, 1959), 169.

<sup>129</sup> *La croix du Gers*, May 22, 1898; *La croix nantaise*, May 15, 1898; France, *Programmes, 1898*, 192–97, 244–48. Evidence from Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 126 (on the village of Cogolin), used with data presented by Tony Judt, *Socialism in Provence, 1871–1914: A Study in the Origins of the Modern French Left* (Cambridge, 1979), 94, 128, 225–26, leads one to the same conclusion. See also the voided ballots included in official election returns for the canton of Lecture in AN C.5145, "Elections législatives, 1898, Gers."

<sup>130</sup> This cartoon appeared in 1894. Many similar examples are in *La croix*.

<sup>131</sup> Green, "Changing Attitudes of French Socialists," is especially effective in making this point. See also *La socialiste de l'Allier*, May 19, 1895, January 23, 1898, January 30, 1898. Claude Willard, *Le mouvement socialiste en France (1893–1905): Les Guesdistes* (Paris, 1965), 410–40.

<sup>132</sup> This is particularly true of *Le tocsin* and *Le tocsin populaire*, newspapers published by the neo-Blanquists in the Allier. Both reprinted articles by Drumont, although, significantly, they emphasized his anti-parliamentary arguments and rarely mentioned his views on the Jewish problem. Other articles attacked Jewish wealth; predicted that the Rothschild family would own all of France in fifty years; complained about the power of Jewish bankers; and criticized the policies of Léon Levy, the Jewish director of a large public corporation that owned mines and factories throughout the region. *Le tocsin*, 1891–1895; *Le tocsin populaire*, 1897–1898.

<sup>133</sup> Eugen Weber, "Jews, Antisemitism, and the Origins of the Holocaust," *Historical Reflections*, 5 (1978): 6–9; Irvine, *Boulangier Affair*, 170.





FIGURE 8: This image appeared in *Le grélot* on November 11, 1894. It was similar to many other cartoons in a variety of popular newspapers throughout the Dreyfus Affair. Here, socialists (Jules Guesde and Jean Jaurès) are linked with Jewish financiers. All were “sans-patrie” or without a country. Courtesy of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

large landowners.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, as early as 1895, the neo-Blanquist Thivrier warned of the danger of defining the Jewish problem as a question of race. He insisted that capitalism, not Judaism, created bankers and that the same problem would exist without Jews. He also reminded readers that most of their exploiters were not Jewish. “Is it necessary under these circumstances,” he asked, “to accuse the Jews?”<sup>135</sup>

A few years later, the Guesdist Constans also tried to explain his position on property and Jews to peasants in the viticultural village of Domérat. He rhetorically asked them, “Where does the right to private property come from?” “Not from the Bible,” he answered. “Religions begin with moral principles, not defense

<sup>134</sup> *La socialiste de l'Allier*, January 30, 1898, February 27, 1898; *La croix de l'Allier*, January 30, 1898. See also Green, “Changing Attitudes of French Socialists.”

<sup>135</sup> *Le tocsin*, June 1, 1895.



of private property . . . but now all religions defend the rights and privileges of the rich." To loud applause, Constans concluded, "There are no longer Christians, Jews, Muslims, Monarchists, or Republicans. You will only find a coalition of capitalists. It is against this coalition that socialists must struggle."<sup>136</sup>

Both socialists argued that voters had to learn to struggle against capitalists as capitalists, not as Jews. Dramatically rejecting the imaginary community of the right that demanded a "France for the French," they argued that all such artificial divisions simply confused the basic issue of exploitation. As the neo-Blanquist *Le tocsin populaire* explained just before the elections, what the Jesuits and their financier friends meant by the slogan "'France for the French' was 'France for us and us alone.' You should not be duped by it."<sup>137</sup> The Republic, "imperfect as it is," Constans insisted, "must serve as our instrument of emancipation."<sup>138</sup>

Constans' position is important, for it reflects the impact of the Dreyfus Affair on some socialists in France. Before 1898, socialists of both Allier factions participated in elections, but they were ambivalent toward parliamentary politics. The Dreyfus Affair, by threatening the Republic with another coup d'état that would put in power a strong leader with popular support based on anti-Semitism, induced many socialists to defend republican institutions. Eventually, the specter of popular right-wing, anti-Semitic nationalism in the countryside turned both of the Allier socialist factions toward parliamentary politics, in spite of their official affiliations with the anti-parliamentarian Guesdists and neo-Blanquists.<sup>139</sup> Ironically, socialism—a movement that in its *fin-de-siècle* form stood as a program to overthrow bourgeois parliamentarianism—ended up in rural areas as one of parliament's strongest supporters, although the socialists reserved the right to disagree. For many early twentieth-century intellectuals, the extreme left's reluctant turn toward social democracy represented the crucial culmination, if not the failure, of the Dreyfusard Revolution.<sup>140</sup>

IN ANALYZING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DREYFUS AFFAIR in much of rural France, one must determine what commonalities characterized those areas that enthusiastically embraced anti-Semitism and the new nationalism based on race. It seems that anti-Semitism became important in some departments where traditional conservatism, based on the politics of personalities, was in the process of collapsing but could still pose a threat to its enemies. In these departments, anti-Semites appealed to anti-government and strong anti-socialist sentiments. The national and even local press itself became a new site for their politics.

By the end of the nineteenth century, many local notables no longer unproblematically controlled their rural constituencies and longed to restore the old

<sup>136</sup> *La socialiste de l'Allier*, July 4, 1897; see also May 19, 1895.

<sup>137</sup> Camille Lejuste, "L'antisémitisme," *Le tocsin populaire*, April 25, 1898.

<sup>138</sup> *La socialiste de l'Allier*, July 4, 1897.

<sup>139</sup> See especially *Le tocsin populaire*, January–December 1898.

<sup>140</sup> This was particularly true of Georges Sorel and Gustave Hervé. See Robert Louzon, "La faillite du Dreyfusisme ou le triomphe du Parti juif," *Le mouvement socialiste*, no. 176 (July 1906): 193–99; Sternhell, *Le droit révolutionnaire*, 27–31; Georges Sorel, *La révolution dreyfusienne*, 2d edn. (Paris, 1933).



order wherein they dominated politics without competition. Even their 1898 campaigns reflected their attitudes toward parliamentary politics. Gers deputy Cassagnac, like many conservatives throughout France, belligerently campaigned without a platform, claiming that voters should vote for him because they had voted for his father.<sup>141</sup> Marcel Vacher, a large landowner who lost his bid for reelection in the Allier, held one large private banquet for his constituents at which he insisted that there was no class struggle because no classes existed, adding that what socialists called class struggle was in reality only a conflict between personalities.<sup>142</sup> Louis-Eugène Bignon, another Allier notable who lost in the 1898 election, did not campaign at all but visited villages with the local subprefect to suggest that people should vote for him because he was the official candidate.<sup>143</sup> Other candidates, especially from western France, campaigned as *enfants du pays*, reminding voters that everyone knew them, that everyone knew their fathers and grandfathers, that everyone knew they possessed titles of nobility.<sup>144</sup> Their activity contrasts sharply with the many popular electoral rallies sponsored by victorious Radicals and socialists, who often could make no such personal claims and campaigned on issues.<sup>145</sup>

As William Irvine has demonstrated, there was nothing natural about the conservatives' political transformation. Previously, conservative rural politicians often depended on Jewish money for their campaigns, and many were married to Jewish women. Many of them found distasteful the individuals and street politics associated with anti-Semitic leagues. In 1889, Cassagnac had published an article ridiculing anti-Semitism.<sup>146</sup> As late as the early 1890s, the pretender, the count of Paris, had specifically rejected any suggestions that Royalists consort with anti-Semites like Drumont. Moreover, although some Royalist, Bonapartist, and clerical groups employed anti-Semitism in 1893 elections, they were largely unsuccessful because "anti-Semitism had not yet penetrated to the popular level, to the mass of voters."<sup>147</sup>

Mass culture did have an impact on the countryside, then, as it was appropriated by some agrarian conservatives, who turned toward anti-Semitism and a redefined nationalism when they were compelled through the process of democracy to compete for votes with left-leaning Radicals and socialists threatening the basis of their existence. The press, the special commemorative objects, and other instruments of mass culture and commercialization invaded the provinces with constant information and opinion about the Dreyfus Affair and the "Jewish menace." They helped create an imaginary community among political groups that otherwise had little in common. Joined through an amorphous ideology grounded in concrete local concerns, anti-republican conservatives, conservative

<sup>141</sup> France, *Programmes, 1898*, 278–80.

<sup>142</sup> Both Bignon (see below) and Vacher became active nationalists who distributed anti-Semitic literature in their electoral campaigns. *La socialiste de l'Allier*, January 16, 1898; ADA 3M 61–65.

<sup>143</sup> *La socialiste de l'Allier*, February 27, 1898.

<sup>144</sup> France, *Programmes, 1898*, 48, 126–27, 133–35, 149–50, 162–66, 186–87, 207, 219–20, 307–08, 312–15, 379–81, 414–15, 469, 754–55.

<sup>145</sup> Bordes, "L'évolution politique," 22; *La socialiste de l'Allier*, 1895–1902.

<sup>146</sup> *L'autorité*, October 26, 1889, as cited by Irvine, *Boulangier Affair*, 167.

<sup>147</sup> Raphael Viau, *Vingt ans d'antisémitisme* (Paris, 1910), 60. See also Irvine, *Boulangier Affair*, 157–76.



republicans, and many moderate Radicals developed similar perspectives on economics, defense of private property, and opposition to state socialism.<sup>148</sup> Most important, landed notables began to articulate the view that the parliament as an institution was very "foreign" and not French.

The Dreyfus Affair thus entered rural villages within a particular context, which enhanced its significance by joining anti-Semitism to a movement to challenge the legitimacy of the democratic political institutions developed after the French Revolution. Contradictory ideas on the form parliamentary government should take began to emerge in France before the revolution, before either the full institutionalization of universal manhood suffrage or the rise of a mass-based commercialized press. They combined both feudal and revolutionary ideas of government, and those that triumphed tended to create a system of representation grounded in patronage and deference. Beyond doubt, the difficulty of carrying out principled foreign and domestic policy under the pressure of mass democracy and an aggressive press had not been fully envisioned. For *fin-de-siècle* agrarian notables, parliamentary politics, which might lead to Radical and socialist victories, was completely out of control. For them, the twentieth century demanded new political processes rooted in a movement that could appeal to passions while promoting authoritarian rule. The rhetoric associated with the Dreyfus Affair collectively promoted just such a politics. From the beginning, conservative anti-Semites aimed to appropriate certain language from the French Revolution to articulate a "right-wing" Jacobinism. Willing to accept a limited notion of universal suffrage, they rejected "parliamentarianism, committees, parties . . . [as well as] the entire philosophical and ethical complex that allowed the Jew to be regarded as a full-fledged member of the French collectivity."<sup>149</sup>

A confluence of specific cultural, political, and socioeconomic changes transformed some very traditional ideas into a virulent form of twentieth-century anti-Semitism, which became the basis of a new nationalism best epitomized in the slogan, "France for the French." It seems that the emergence of this new nationalism in the countryside developed out of the near total collapse of traditional conservative politics in *fin-de-siècle* France, as politics based on local social networks began to give way to mass-based, nationally focused political parties, particularly those organized to struggle for working-class interests. Desperate for an alternative to appeal to, the anti-Semitic nationalists reworked elements of traditional popular thought to construct the modern scapegoat of the Jew, the Jew designed to stand in for the worst aspects of capitalism, the Jew who could be identified as the source of individual economic hardship, the Jew who could be simultaneously foreigner, international financier, anarchist, and socialist.

<sup>148</sup> Offen, "Paul de Cassagnac," 236-37, has an excellent analysis of this point.

<sup>149</sup> The quotation is from Sternhell, who wrongly believed that the new right also rejected universal suffrage, hence Jacobinism in its entirety. In fact, it was quite selective in terms of its appropriation. Sternhell, "Roots of Popular Anti-Semitism," 133-34. See also Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, George J. Becker, trans. (New York, 1948), 55-144; Stanley Diamond, *In Search of the Primitive: A Critique of Civilization* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1974), 324-31; and Weber, "Jews, Antisemitism, and the Origins of the Holocaust," 1-17.



Dreyfus as the Jew/traitor could signify everything because in himself he signified nothing. In Dreyfus's own words, "Dreyfus the symbol . . . is not me."<sup>150</sup>

There was nothing inevitable about the formation of this new nationalism grounded in anti-Semitism. It was an ideology in search of a popular following. But the *fin-de-siècle* economic crisis combined with anti-Semitic and anti-Dreyfusard images spread in newspapers and articles of consumption helped create a powerful and popular message for the forces of the right.

If the effect on the rural right was to make anti-Semitism and anti-parliamentarian nationalism its central concerns, the effect on the rural left was most visible in the elections held in the wake of the Affair in places like the Allier. In response to the right's new programs, many socialists came to defend Dreyfus and the Jews (at least as poor workers), while abandoning their extreme hostility to parliamentary institutions. Consequently, they tempered other party lines, in particular their position on the collectivization of property. Like the right, they too wanted to win elections. Because of the socialist response, after the Dreyfus Affair not only did parliamentary socialism become most important in predominantly rural departments but its largest successes came in the most agricultural regions of these departments.<sup>151</sup>

In retrospect, the Affair's most enduring impact may have been its ability to reformulate traditional rural alliances and rhetoric to establish new political forces. Many rural departments like the Allier continued to provide the social base for left-wing parties into modern times. Moreover, while we should avoid overemphasizing the significance of the nationalist electoral victories in 1898 as well as the simplistic similarities between the coalition forged in 1898 and subsequent right-wing politics, it could be argued that the tendencies embodied in the coalition never entirely disappeared. Although authoritarian republicanism has become increasingly secular and urban, one can point to rural and religious influences in many of its twentieth-century forms.<sup>152</sup>

To understand how a new ideology, even when constructed out of reconfigurations of traditional images and ideas, develops widespread appeal, we must examine precisely how it is insinuated into a variety of local circumstances—both urban and rural. Ideologies that cannot be merged with local concerns are unlikely to develop impressive followings. It is because the Jew as an abstraction could be attached to economic dislocation in the Gers that five out of five deputies elected were anti-Semitic. In the Allier, where organized socialists successfully challenged the rhetoric of the anti-Semites as an obfuscating discourse, it was much more difficult for the anti-Semitic right to gain a foothold. Here, where socialists recognized that anti-parliamentarianism would ultimately benefit the right more than the left, they launched a campaign to defend the Republic at all costs. In the words of the socialist sharecropper leader from the Allier, Emile

<sup>150</sup> As cited by Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 1.

<sup>151</sup> Judt, *Socialism in Provence*, 296–305; *La socialiste de l'Allier*, April 3, 1898, June 5, 1898, June 25, 1899.

<sup>152</sup> Offen, "Paul de Cassagnac," 403.



Guillaumin, "Despite its vices and its shortcomings, one has to admit that the composition of parliament affects our daily life."<sup>153</sup>

How the anti-Semitic and nationalist ideas associated with the Dreyfus Affair were acted on or rejected thus depended on a complex set of local socioeconomic and political factors. Not everyone accepted them. They did not resonate similarly everywhere. However, they flourished in certain parts of rural France, where anti-Semites seem to have accepted Drumont's assumption that ordinary people were "unable to coordinate all of these ideas" and "newspapers had to assume the responsibility of explaining" the danger of cosmopolitan Jewry.<sup>154</sup> In these rural areas were politicians who believed, as did the fictional character Woldsmuth in Roger Martin du Gard's *Jean Barois*, that "one can do what one likes with a people, when one knows how to excite them against Jews."<sup>155</sup>

<sup>153</sup> *Le travailleur rural*, September 1910.

<sup>154</sup> Edouard Drumont, as cited in Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 606. See also *La croix nantaise*, February 6, 1898; and "Rapport du commissaire central de la réunion du 9 novembre 1898," as cited in Fabrice Abbad, ed., *La Loire-Atlantique des origines à nos jours* (Saint-Jean-d'Angély, 1984), 358-59.

<sup>155</sup> Roger Martin du Gard's novel set in the midst of the Dreyfus Affair first appeared in 1913. See *Jean Barois* (Paris), 290.



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