**Title:** Histoire d’un Traitre — The Story of a Traitor, 1899

**Year (Hebrew):** 5659

**Year:** 1899

**Location:** Europe – Western

**Short description**

This comic strip was published in 1899 in response to the comic strip “The Story of an Innocent” and represents the viewpoint of the anti-Dreyfusards who believed that Alfred Dreyfus was a spy who betrayed France.

**Detailed description**

**​**This comic strip, “The Story of a Traitor,” was published in 1899 in response to the comic strip “[The Story of an Innocent​​](https://bit.ly/2R8BpYM)”. The images and storyline represent the viewpoint of the anti-Dreyfusards who believed that Alfred Dreyfus was a spy who had betrayed France.

The comic strip, which was sold for 10 centimes, shows the different stages of the Dreyfus Affair, starting with Dreyfus’ alleged spying, the trial, and the protest of the Dreyfusards (who believed Dreyfus to be innocent).

The comic strip includes anti-Semitic texts and imagery; for example, the Jews are depicted as fat, ugly people with large noses, an ugly Jew is seen bribing the public, and there are illustrations of insects with faces of Jews trying to attack soldiers. The final frame shows the anti-Dreyfusards’ wishful thinking in an image of boots kicking Jews out of France. The text below this frame reads:

The French must understand by this terrible adventure that Jews are unsociable and eminently dangerous beings for the countries that give them hospitality. The only existence that suits them is that of their ancestor Isaac Laquedem, the “Wandering Jew.” [The Wandering Jew is a myth that spread in Europe in the thirteenth century about a Jew who taunted Jesus on his way to the Crucifixion and was then cursed to walk the earth until the Second Coming.] ​

The depiction of the anti-Dreyfusards is similarly vulgar. The image of Émile Zola, named “a filthy pornographer,” is shown on the body of a pig. The pig’s faeces are tagged “J’accuse” — the title of Zola’s famous article accusing the French establishment of Alfred Dreyfus’ wrongful conviction.

Alfred Dreyfus, a French-Jewish officer, was wrongly accused of spying for Germany, and in 1894 he was convicted and placed in solitary confinement on Devil’s Island. One of the reasons for his conviction was the anti-Semitic atmosphere rampant in Europe at the time. Only years later, as a result of public protest, was Dreyfus acquitted.

In the years following Alfred Dreyfus’ trial and imprisonment, the Dreyfus Affair split the French nation in two. On one side were the Dreyfusards who were fighting for Dreyfus’ innocence; on the other, the anti-Dreyfusards who supported his conviction. It was the press which was primarily responsible for shaping the case into “The Dreyfus Affair.” From 1898-1899, in particular, the public campaign became a goldmine for graphic artists and draughtsmen; newspapers, magazines, posters, brochures, postcards and board games attracted readers with colourful caricatures, cartoons, and vignettes. The two camps seemed to be involved in a ping pong match: a month after the publication of a poster entitled “Dreyfus is a Traitor,” a poster appeared entitled “[Dreyfus is Innocent](https://bit.ly/2R8BpYM)”; the comic strip “Story of a Traitor” (discussed here) was the anti-Semitic answer to the earlier “Story of an Innocent” (discussed above). Likewise, the newspaper L’Aurore published “The Game of Truth,” a Dreyfusard spin on the traditional Goose Game; the newspaper L’Anti-Juif then responded with “The Game of 36 Heads.”

**Would You Like to Know More?**

The Dreyfus Affair – Alfred Dreyfus was born in 1859 to a Jewish family in Alsace in the east of France. Dreyfus joined the French Army and was promoted to the rank of captain in the artillery corps in 1889. In 1894, the French Army’s counter intelligence section became aware of classified information being passed on to the German Army. Suspicion quickly fell on Dreyfus, and he was arrested in October 1894 and convicted of treason in a secret court martial. Dreyfus was stripped of his rank and military decorations before a large crowd of cheering onlookers in a “degradation ceremony” and was deported to Devil’s Island, a penal colony off the coast of South America. Throughout his trial Dreyfus claimed his innocence, and in the degradation ceremony he cried out: “I swear that I am innocent. I remain worthy of serving in the army. Long live France! Long live the army!” The many activists and intellectuals who supported Dreyfus were known as Dreyfusards. The famous French writer Émile Zola published an open letter titled “J’accuse” in a Paris newspaper, accusing the president and government of France of anti-Semitism and of the wrongful imprisonment of Alfred Dreyfus. The anti-Dreyfusards, on the other hand, saw the affair as an example of the unpatriotic views held by the Jews. They saw Dreyfus’ roots in Alsace (a territory still being disputed by France and Germany) as proof of his affiliation to Germany. The protests finally succeeded, and in 1896 Alfred Dreyfus was returned to France and given a second trial. Despite the evidence brought before the court, Dreyfus was again found guilty of treason. Public opinion, however, forced President Émile Loubet to grant a pardon, and in 1899 Dreyfus was released from prison. He, nonetheless, officially remained a traitor until his full acquittal in 1906.