

# Nation States and International Tensions |

## Sample answer

### **What was the impact of anti-Semitism in France and Russia 1871 - 1920? (2014)**

There was heavy anti-Semitic sentiment in France and Russia during this period. This can be seen in the controversial trials of Alfred Dreyfus and Mendel Beilis, along with events such as the 'Panama Scandal.' Antisemitism also took the form of horrific pogroms in Russia, and the enactment of discriminatory anti-Semitic policies, such as the May Laws.

This anti-Semitism increased dramatically in 1882, after the collapse of the bank Union Générale in France. The Jewish bankers of Union Générale were immediately blamed for the bank's collapse without hesitation by the public. The French journalist and writer Édouard Drumont used this event as an opportunity to begin an anti-Semitic campaign. By 1886, he had published a book titled, 'La France Juive.' This was a deeply anti-Semitic book, which claimed that the Jews were destroying the traditional values and way of life in France. It was extremely popular, and more than 100,000 copies were sold. The book's popularity highlights the rampant anti-Semitism in French society at the time, and how people were ready to blame the Jews whenever the occasion arose.

Drumont received even more anti-Semitic support when the Panama Canal Company went bankrupt in 1889. This event is also known as the 'Panama Affair.' More than 800,000 investors lost their life savings due to this bankruptcy. It was eventually revealed that more than 150 members of the French government had been bribed to hide the company's bankruptcy from the public. Two Jewish men, Dr. Cornelius Hertz and Baron Joseph Reinach were accused of Anti-Semitism in France and Russia 1871-1920 | Sample answer bribing the members of government. The scandal increased anti-Semitism in France, aided by Drumont's newspaper 'La Libre Parole,' which blamed the Jews for the scandal.

In 1884, Alfred Dreyfus was arrested. This was to become known as the infamous 'Dreyfus Affair.' Dreyfus was a young Jewish captain in the army, and he was accused of sharing military secrets with Germany. A collection of documents called the 'Bordereau' was used as the main evidence in the trial. It was thought the handwriting on these documents was Dreyfus' although there was no date or signature. Handwriting experts were unable to say whose handwriting it was, and Dreyfus was sentenced to life imprisonment on 'Devil's Island' in South America.

This case would be re-opened in 1896, when Colonel Piquart discovered the handwriting on the 'Bordereau' was Major Esterhazy's. This discovery was dismissed by the military court, who refused to re-open the case to protect their reputation. Piquart was discharged from the military, and the case was swept under the carpet. By now the case had caused massive controversy. French society was divided by people who supported Dreyfus who tended to be more liberal, (called 'Dreyfusards') and those who were more right wing. ('Anti-Dreyfusards'.)

Reflecting the call-to-action expressed in the title's imperative to 'fight' sexual abuse, the writer stresses that 'so much more needs to be done', insinuating that education and awareness alone are not a long-term solution. Hence, we might be more inclined to find new ways to actively counteract such behaviour. The Age declares that 'an all-round approach and appropriate funding is essential', targeting the government to contribute further financial support, in order to achieve a secure society for the future children. Conclusively encouraging parents, teachers and carers 'to be vigilant', the paper places ownership on those responsible for children, implying that with everyone's individual efforts to notice and report cases of abuse, we can move forward as a nation to a future of security, in which the next generation can thrive.

That same year, the journalist Emile Zola published the letter 'J'Accuse' in the newspaper 'L'Aurore,' describing who the military had covered up the truth in the case. Zola also published the names of members of the military who had been involved, and Major Esterhazy came forward to admit his guilt. Zola was accused of criminal libel, and he fled to England to escape persecution. The military was now under immense pressure to re-open the case. In 1899, the Minister of War publicly announced they had received new evidence proving that Dreyfus was guilty without doubt. However, this backfired when Colonel Henry admitted that he had created

this 'new evidence.' Despite this, Dreyfus was still considered guilty, although his sentence was reduced by 10 years.

Anti-Semitism in France and Russia 1871-1920 | Sample answer reduced by 10 years.

To prevent more social conflict, the President of France granted Dreyfus a pardon on condition that he admitted he was guilty. By 1906, Dreyfus had been broken down by the case, and accepted the offer. He returned to military service as a major, and was awarded the highest honour in France, 'Legion d'Honneur' before his death in 1935. This controversial case lasted 12 years and highlights how anti-Semitic French society was at the time.

There was also high levels of anti-Semitism in Russia during this time. The most violent period of antisemitism was after WW1. 5 million Jews were made to live in the west of Imperial Russia, in an area known as the 'Pale of Settlement.' Anti-Semitism had been prevalent in Russia for hundreds of years; however, it had never been established as a governmental policy until the after the assassination of Alexander II in 1881. A young Jewish revolutionary named Hesya Helfmann was implicated in the assassination, which the government used to begin their anti-Semitic campaign in Russia. This resulted in widespread violence, terror, death, and rape in the Pale.

Konstantin Pobedonostsev was the primary force behind this brutal anti-Semitic campaign. He was a conservative statesman in charge of the Russian Orthodox Church, and advisor to Tsar Alexander III. He was a deeply anti-Semitic man and stated, "one third of the Jews in Russia must die, one third emigrate, and one third assimilate." He used the Jews as a shared enemy and scapegoat to unite Russia. By 1882, he had introduced the May Laws. These were highly discriminatory laws that forbid Jews to settle outside the Pale and reduced the number of Jews allowed in schools and universities. It also severely limited local Jewish voting rights and made admission to professions such as medicine or law extremely difficult.

The Russian government also supported violent anti-Semitic attacks and massacres, which were known as 'pogroms.' The government considered pogroms as acts of patriotism and allowed them to distract people from the fact that Tsar Alexander III's reign was failing. The first pogroms began in 1881 after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II and continued on a regular basis. A right-wing nationalist group called the 'Black Hundred' was responsible for the majority of these

brutal pogroms by 1905. It is estimated that over 70,000 Jewish men, women, and children were massacred during the period 1881-1920.

The trial of Mendel Beilis in 1911 is another example of anti-Semitism in Russia. Beilis was a factory worker accused of ritually murdering a thirteen-year old boy called Andrei Yushchinsky. Posters were distributed all over the country spreading anti-Semitic propaganda. It was alleged that the boy's post-mortem report had been adjusted to suit the facts of the case, and Mendel was still held guilty despite having a strong alibi and evidence he had been at work at the time of murder. It was also discovered witnesses had been bribed by the secret police to provide false statements. The jury consisted of Christian members only, even of whom were members of the Black Hundred. The real murderers of Yushchinsky were eventually identified, however Beilis was still considered guilty. The trial lasted five years and was followed worldwide. It resulted in heavy criticism of the Russian Empire, and divided Russian society in a similar way to the 'Dreyfus Affair' in France. The Beilis trial shows the amount of anti-Semitism and prejudice in Russia during this period.

In answer to the widespread anti-Semitic violence, hatred, and persecution in Europe, many Jews moved to the west of Europe or to America. Nearly 200,000 Jewish refugees from eastern Europe settled in Britain from 1870-1914. They worked in jobs such as tailors, tinkers, and cabinet makers, etc. Many would join revolutionary movements in the future. The influential Jewish activist Theodore Herzl founded the Zionist Organization in 1897. This aimed to establish a 'legally assured home' for the Jews in response to anti-Semitic persecution in Europe. Eventually, the State of Israel was established in 1948, as the first Jewish State in 2000 years.

The high levels of anti-Semitism in France and Russia can be clearly seen in the trials of Alfred Dreyfus and Mendel Beilis, along with other events such as the 'Panama Scandal.' Anti-Semitism was also prevalent in Russia, is seen in and the enactment of discriminatory anti-Semitic policies, such as the May Laws, and the emergence of pogroms and other anti-Semitic violence. This would eventually result in many Jews choosing to emigrate due to the continued persecution in Europe, and the establishment of a Jewish state.

