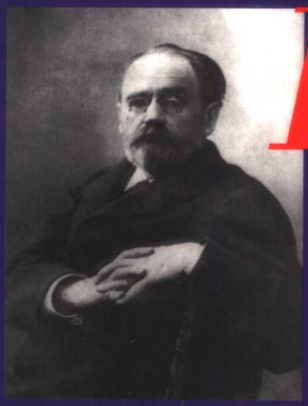
Emile Zola

The Dreyfus Affair



'J'accuse' And Other Writings

Edited by Alain Pagès

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Illustrations

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Emile Zola as photographed by Paul Nadar, March 1898. Collection Musée de Médan.

Photograph of Alfred Dreyfus. (Roger-Viollet)

Drawings of Esterhazy, Lucie Dreyfus, Mathieu Dreyfus and Lt-Col Picquart. (Roger-Viollet)

Pas-à-quatre, cartoon. (Roger-Viollet)

Un bal à l'Elysée, caricature in *Musée des Horreurs*, no. 26, 1900. (Roger-Viollet)

L'Affaire Zola, drawing in *Le Petit Journal*, 20 February 1898. Private collection.

Zola at one of the hearings during his trial, drawing in *L'Illustration*, 26 February 1898. Private collection.

Lt-Col Henry testifying at Zola's trial, drawing in *L'Illustration*, 19 February 1898. Private collection.

Monsieur Jaurès. La vérité en marche, cartoon in *Le Rire*, 21 May 1898. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

L'heure du courrier, cartoon in *Psst . . . !*, 9 July 1898. Private collection.

Obsèques de Bismarck, caricature in *Psst . . . !*, 6 August 1898. Private collection.

La Révision, cartoon in *Psst . . . !*, 3 September 1898. Private collection.

Anti-Dreyfus demonstration, drawing, October 1898. (Roger-Viollet)

Crystal Palace. Photograph by Emile Zola. Collection Musée de Médan.

The cemetery in Addlestone. Photograph by Emile Zola. Collection Musée de Médan.

Jeanne and the children in Weybridge. Photograph by Emile Zola. Collection Musée de Médan.

Alexandrine Zola. Photograph by Emile Zola. Collection Musée de Médan.

Le coup de l'éponge, drawing by H. G. Ibels. (Roger-Viollet)

Translator's Preface

Everyone has heard of 'J'accuse' – but how many people have actually read it? How many know that it was not the only open letter Zola published during the Dreyfus Affair but in fact the sixth? That it was followed by seven more over the next three years? That some were dashed off in the white heat of outrage and others proceeded from cooler reflection? That all were written in response to specific developments as the case unfolded, at a time when memories of the French army's humiliation by Prussia one generation earlier nurtured systematic espionage, and the collapse of the Panama Canal scheme nurtured anti-Semitism? That Zola himself paid dearly for his unflinching involvement in what soon became a crusade?

Nowhere could I find a translation of his entire series of articles, or of 'Pour les Juifs' which preceded it by eighteen months and to which the other articles now appear as a sadly predictable sequel. Books on the Affair or studies of Zola sometimes included brief excerpts, rarely exceeding two or three paragraphs, from a handful of the articles; 'J'accuse' was of course the most widely quoted of the articles, but even it was generally not complete. Bibliographical research confirmed that today's English-speaking reader simply did not have access to the entirety of Zola's contribution to the monumental campaign which transformed French history and still echoes down the decades.

I began translating the published articles. Then Yale University Press encouraged me and greatly enhanced my original purpose by suggesting that the translation could also include much of the material contained in *Emile Zola: L'affaire Dreyfus: Lettres et entretiens inédits*, edited by Alain Pagès and published jointly in 1994 by the CNRS in France and Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal. Accordingly, the most significant letters from Zola's private correspondence were selected from that volume, along with the interviews; thus, this Yale publication constitutes the most comprehensive collection of Zola's writings on and during the Dreyfus Affair available in English. The reader will be able to hear both the public Zola who thunders fearlessly with Biblical wrath and ardent republicanism and the private Zola who fretfully lies low in exile and who, in order to learn that developments across the Channel in France have at last reached a critical

turning point (Colonel Henry's confession and death), must bicycle to the nearest town, incognito, to buy the British newspapers and decipher them with the help of a dictionary!

It has been my aim to render Zola's impassioned late nineteenth-century cadences as faithfully as possible, yet in language that will not sound archaic or stilted to late twentieth-century ears. When we hear Zola warn that reactionary thinking, excessive nationalism and abuse of power lead directly to dictatorship, it is never too late to remember events a few scant decades later, never too late to heed his words.

Eleanor Levieux, Paris, November 1995

Introduction

Each successive degree of Zola's involvement in the Dreyfus Affair during its three most critical years, beginning at the time of Scheurer-Kestner's campaign in the autumn of 1897 to have the Jewish captain rehabilitated, and ending with the trial in Rennes and the pardon in the autumn of 1899, then the amnesty in 1900, emerges clearly from this volume. It comprises numerous letters,[1] an article published in 1896 and the entire contents of *La Vérité en marche* (*The Truth is on the March*), which Zola published in 1901 in order to bring together the pamphlets and all of the articles he had published in the press throughout the Affair, including the famous 'J'accuse'; for the most part, they had explicitly taken the form of 'open letters' to individual or collective addressees. Lastly, a number of interviews, hitherto unpublished in book form, are included because they enable us to hear another type of discourse, in counterpoint, yet preserve the same tone, that of thought expressed through dialogue. They therefore fit perfectly into the unity of this volume.

Taken in chronological order, these writings blend Zola's public texts and excerpts from the private correspondence including letters to the people nearest him – Alexandrine, his wife; Fernand Desmoulin, his most faithful companion; Fernand Labori, his lawyer; and Jeanne Rozerot. Threats sometimes hung over this correspondence. Again and again the police attempted to intercept or copy it. Beginning in January 1898, Zola's mail was opened by a special department (*cabinet noir*) at the prefecture of police, and when he went into exile in England the hunt was intensified. Zola had to conceal his name and address; he had to rely on other individuals to whom he sent his messages, each in an envelope placed inside another envelope. But any reader who leafs through this volume in the hope of discovering secrets that have lain buried for the past century will be disappointed. These texts were not meant to conceal anything. They were intended to illustrate an ideological struggle, or to bring opposing

1 The letters are taken from Volume IX of Zola's *Correspondance*, devoted to the Dreyfus Affair, which was edited by Alain Pagès and published by the CNRS in France and the Presses de l'Université de Montréal in 1994. Readers wishing for further information can refer to the notes provided in that scholarly edition.

points of view closer together. Above all, they sought to convince. Between the letters belonging to the private correspondence but opened for the purposes of this volume, and the genuine open letters, intended as such in the manner and at the time they were written, there is no gap. On the contrary, there is a surprising unity of tone and content. Zola's activity as a polemicist was rooted in the reflections made possible by the intimacy of his private relationships.

Zola in fact never looked upon the activity of letter-writing as the place for clandestine intrigues. Very early on he decided that he would turn over to posterity the dossiers he compiled for each of his novels, and he constructed them with that in mind. And with the same straightforwardness, he explicitly authorized the reading of his correspondence. When Henry Céard, his disciple, warned him that some of his autograph letters were going to be put up for sale, Zola proudly replied in these words in June 1884: 'I have no secrets; the keys are in the cupboard doors. They can publish my letters some day. They will not give the lie to a single one of my friendships, or a single one of the positions I have taken.'[2] By January 1898, when he published 'J'accuse' in *L'Aurore*, he had not changed his mind. Despite the turmoil of the Dreyfus Affair in which he was caught up, despite the hatred and the insults, he still wished his correspondence to be an open book where everything would be perfectly clear and readable for all.

At the beginning of November 1897, Zola was living alone in Paris, in his home in the rue de Bruxelles. A few weeks earlier he had returned to the city from his country house at Médan, near Poissy, west of Paris, where he had spent the spring and summer. Alexandrine had left for Italy for a long stay on 10 October. Every autumn for the past two years she had travelled to Italy. The couple had surmounted the crises of the previous years and relations between them had become normal again, or nearly normal. Ultimately Alexandrine had resigned herself to Zola's liaison with Jeanne Rozerot, even if she hadn't forgiven him for it.[3] All sides involved made the best they could of the compromise that had been reached concerning the way their existence was to be shared, the hours that could be given over to Jeanne and the children. The children had grown: Denise was now eight and Jacques was six. And one of Zola's great joys, on these early November days, was to take them to the Tuileries gardens on Sunday afternoons.

It was all the easier for him at this time to enjoy the pleasures of fatherhood because he felt free of commitments; his mind was not taken up with any major project. In fact, he had just completed a new stage in his work

2 Letter of 14 June 1884 to Henry Céard. *Correspondance*, Presses de l'Université de Montréal and Editions du CNRS, 1985, vol. V, p. 125.

3 See 'Leading Figures Involved in the Dreyfus Affair', at the end of this volume.

by finishing *Paris*, the last novel in his trilogy, *Trois villes*, at the end of the summer, and the first instalment had appeared in *Le Journal* on 23 October. Several of the themes Zola had already explored in *Les Rougon-Macquart* come together in the character of Pierre Froment, the priest who has lost his faith and will discover happiness thanks to young Marie's love. Through this priest, Zola brings in every social class in the capital, from the most wretched slum dwellers to the debauched and corrupt grande bourgeoisie. In the plot of *Paris*, Zola combines the separate worlds of *La Curée*, *Nana* and *L'Assommoir*. But the novel's chief interest is that it offers a modern historical setting. The France that Zola talks about in *Paris* is the France of 1892–4, marked by parliamentary scandals and anarchist attempts to overthrow the government. And that France is already, in advance, so to speak, the France of the Dreyfus Affair. *La Libre Parole*, the real-life newspaper of the anti-Semite, Edouard Drumont (transposed as *La Voix du peuple*, the newspaper of the fictional Sanier), comes into its own amid the disorderly climate of parliamentary intrigues. As Edmond Lepelletier, the critic, rather shrewdly observed, 'Although *Paris* was written and published long before the clamour over the Affair broke out, it was premonitory: it anticipated the struggle that was about to take place. The Dreyfus Affair was the battle that Zola depicted in the novel, translated into reality.'[4]

Zola's well-regulated life was to be thoroughly upset by the Dreyfus Affair. He was totally absorbed in his work and nothing, it would seem, predisposed him to make such a choice.

He did not look upon the world of politics with any fondness. Again and again he had vituperated against the mediocrity of the Third Republic's parliamentary figures, denouncing their low morals and their taste for intrigue. His public statements of opinion, ranging from the positions he upheld in 'La République et la littérature' in 1879 to those appearing in 'L'élite et la politique' during the campaign conducted in *Le Figaro* in 1896, had always been unambiguous.[5] Yet he could also see the value of serious political action aimed at effective reform. He had mulled over the careers of Maurice Barrès, a member of the Chamber of Deputies between 1889 and 1893, and Gabriele D'Annunzio in Italy. And he had occasionally daydreamed of a different destiny. In August 1893, in an interview he granted to Jules Huret, Zola confessed that if overtures were made to him, he too might become a Deputy.[6] He had some idea of what his political influence might be, because of his experience as president of the Société des gens de lettres (virtually without interruption from 1891 to 1896), and because

4 E. Lepelletier, *Emile Zola. Sa vie. Son oeuvre*, Mercure de France, 1908, p. 419.

5 The first of these articles was included in *Le Roman expérimental* (1880) and the second in *Nouvelle Campagne* (1897).

6 J. Huret, *Interviews de littérature et d'art*, Ed. Thot, 1984, pp. 43–4. Zola, it will be recalled, wrote the parliamentary chronicle for the *Sémaphore de Marseille* and *La Cloche* in 1871.

during his visits to England (September 1893) and Italy (October to December 1894) he had been feted and honoured as the outstanding representative of French literature.

A series of encounters drew Zola into the Dreyfus Affair.[7] The first was with Bernard-Lazare, a young Symbolist poet, who came to see him on 6 November 1897. Ever since February 1895, Bernard-Lazare had been supporting Mathieu Dreyfus's efforts to defend his brother, and in November 1896 he had already approached Zola but to no avail. This time he had more arguments at his disposal; he was about to publish his second pamphlet, which would contain detailed analyses of the bordereau by a number of international experts.[8] Then, Louis Leblois, Picquart's lawyer and friend, came to see Zola at his Paris home. He came twice, first on 8 November and again on the 10th. He went into the story of the whole Affair from the beginning, described the intrigues going on in military circles and showed Zola some of the documents in his possession. And he urged Zola to attend a luncheon on 13 November at the home of Auguste Scheurer-Kestner, vice-president of the Senate.

That encounter proved decisive, and thanks to the journal Scheurer-Kestner kept, we know what transpired in the course of it. With a view to leading a campaign in the press, Scheurer wished to 'gather about him a council of men accustomed to speaking to the masses'.[9] To this luncheon he had invited another novelist as well, Marcel Prévost. At the end of the meal, Scheurer-Kestner, aided by Leblois, outlined every episode of the Affair. The two novelists listened closely. Scheurer-Kestner observed their reactions and compared them in his journal: 'What a difference between [Zola] and Marcel Prévost, who has an attractive and fine-featured head, the dark head of a man from the Midi; his eyes are searching and the mouth is sensual and sceptical, but what [Prévost] lacks is forcefulness. I can see it; I can feel it in what he says. I have the impression that [Zola] will do "something" whereas [Prévost], though he calls it regrettable, will not do a thing.'[10]

Zola came away from this gathering deeply stirred by all he had learned. The possibility of his intervening had been raised. He had tried to keep his distance. But in spite of himself he was drawn to what he felt was an 'extraordinary' and 'thrilling' story. He poured out his hesitations in long

7 For the sequence of events during the Dreyfus Affair, see the detailed Chronology. Readers may also wish to consult J.-D. Bredin, *L'Affaire* (new reworked edition, Fayard/Julliard, 1993), which achieves an excellent synthesis of events. (*The Affair*, trans. J. Mehlman, Geo. Braziller, NY, 1986; Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1987.)

8 The pamphlet was put on sale on 12 November 1897. It was reissued in 1993 by Editions Allia (Ph. Oriol, ed.). See also J-D. Bredin, *Bernard-Lazare*, Ed. de Fallois, 1992.

9 A. Scheurer-Kestner, *Mémoires d'un sénateur dreyfusard* (A. Roumieux, ed.), Strasbourg, Bueb et Reumaux, 1988, p. 179.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 180.

letters to Alexandrine which, unfortunately, we have not been able to publish in this volume.[11] Scheurer-Kestner's courageous attitude had made a deep impression on him. Fernand de Rodays, the director of *Le Figaro*, whom Zola had known for a long time, promised to give his support. So Zola made up his mind. On 25 November, *Le Figaro* published his first article on the Affair, 'M. Scheurer-Kestner', in defence of the campaign launched by the vice-president of the Senate. Zola had clearly taken sides.

Let us stop for a moment to evaluate the significance of his decision. Was Zola's involvement in the Affair somewhat belated? It has been pointed out that he was not among the very first Dreyfusards, and that Bernard-Lazare's initial visit to him, in 1896, had left him unconvinced. But these criticisms stem from reconstructions after the fact that do not pay enough heed to the finer points of chronology. At the beginning of November 1897 there was not as yet any Dreyfus Affair, although the idea that Dreyfus might be innocent had begun to gain some ground since 14 July, when Scheurer-Kestner had informed his fellow Senators that he intended to campaign for a revision of Dreyfus's trial. But aside from Scheurer-Kestner and Leblois, who were both sworn to secrecy, no one as yet knew the name of the guilty man; not even Mathieu Dreyfus, who for three years had been striving desperately to solve the mystery. He did not discover the truth until 9 November. Only then, when it became possible to bring Esterhazy's name into play, was there any real hope of proving that Alfred Dreyfus was innocent. With encouragement from Scheurer-Kestner, Mathieu Dreyfus publicly denounced Esterhazy on the evening of 15 November, in a letter to the Minister of War; it appeared in the papers the next day. Thus, 16 November was the day on which the Dreyfus Affair burst upon the general public. Implicated in the affair, the government decided to conduct an inquiry and placed General de Pellieux in charge of it. The inquiry was relayed by a second one, judicial this time, with Major Ravary in charge, and led to Esterhazy's trial, on 10 and 11 January 1898.

Zola was informed very early on and was involved in the discussions during which, in the first half of November, the Dreyfusard group gradually took shape around Scheurer-Kestner and Leblois. Thus, from the beginning, Zola was among those in the front lines, and immediately he demonstrated his commitment with the campaign he conducted in *Le Figaro*, while the investigation led by de Pellieux was going on.

The three articles he published between 25 November and 5 December ('M. Scheurer-Kestner', 'The Syndicate' and 'The Minutes') strive to spell out the circumstances of the Affair and to describe its ideological and political nature. Irony – which he uses in an attempt to combat the lasting

11 They are kept in family archives and are as yet unpublished.

legend of a Jewish 'syndicate' – is followed, in the 'Minutes', by a denunciation of anti-Semitism and the 'base exploitation of patriotism' in which the press was indulging. This was too much for *Le Figaro*'s conservative readership; indignant, the readers threatened to cancel their subscriptions. Forced to cease his campaign in the press, Zola turned to his publisher, Eugène Fasquelle, suggesting that he publish his 'open letters' in pamphlet form. Zola strove to place himself above the events of the day and adopted a more lyrical tone. Both his *Letter to the Young People*, which Fasquelle published on 14 December, and the *Letter to France* on 7 January 1898, launched an appeal to reason and expressed hope. In fact they were hoping against hope that justice might yet be done. But the outcome of Esterhazy's trial on 11 January made a mockery of that hope.

The result was 'J'accuse', which blazed across *L'Aurore*'s front page on the morning of 13 January. It was not some hotheaded, spur-of-the-moment affair. Instead, it was the culmination of the reflection that had begun in early November, combining the historical analysis that characterized the articles in *Le Figaro* with the vehement pleas contained in the pamphlets. By writing this open letter to Félix Faure, President of the French Republic, Zola was deliberately exposing himself to legal action. He states this unequivocally at the end of his peroration, after he has finished accusing the highest authorities in the land: 'I have but one goal: that light be shed, in the name of mankind which has suffered so much and has the right to happiness. My ardent protest is merely a cry from my very soul. Let them dare to summon me before a court of law! Let the inquiry be held in broad daylight! I am waiting.' Clearly, his aim was to bring about a new trial.

The effect of this bold stroke was tremendous. 'There was a burst of indignation,' writes Charles Péguy. 'The battle could be joined again. All day long, the street vendors in Paris shouted "*L'Aurore*" at the top of their lungs, ran about with huge bundles of *L'Aurore* under their arms, and thrust copies of *L'Aurore* at eager buyers. In hoarse but triumphant voices, the fine name of this newspaper rose above the feverish activity in the streets. The impact was so stunning that Paris was nearly turned upside down.'[12] *L'Aurore* sold between 200,000 and 300,000 copies, ten times the normal number. Léon Blum was to recall, in his *Souvenirs*, '"J'accuse" overwhelmed Paris in a single day. The Dreyfus cause was given a new lease of life. We regained confidence; we could feel it flooding through us, while our furious adversaries staggered under the blow.'[13] And Henri Barbusse, another witness, commented,

12 *Les Cahiers de la Quinzaine*, 4 December 1902, p. 31; *Oeuvres en prose complètes*, Gallimard, coll. 'Bibl. de la Pléiade', 1987, vol. I, p. 244.

13 L. Blum, *Souvenirs sur l'Affaire*, Gallimard, coll. 'Folio', 1993 (1st edn. 1935), p. 120.

> We must admire the valour of this man who was plunging wholeheartedly into the campaign for justice at the risk of sinking forever, with his bundles of books and his glory, and we must admire even more the perfect clearsightedness with which he summed up the entire situation. . . . Many of his contemporaries who had the best possible intentions with regard to just causes were shaken, beset by doubt, still seeking clues, still awaiting confirmation, whereas he – who did not have any more proof at his disposal than they did – he had become convinced through and through, with a flawless grasp of the situation.[14]

The work of a journalist, 'J'accuse' was part of a collective action. Clemenceau and Vaughan were associated with the plans to publish it, since *L'Aurore* was legally liable. It was Clemenceau, as we know, who came up with the title 'J'accuse', taken from the challenge reiterated in the final paragraphs. He foresaw the battle that would ensue and lucidly, even ardently, prepared for it. Reinach later claimed that when Clemenceau (who 'would be an incurable dilettante until the end of his days') read Zola's article hot off the presses, he declared, 'Now the child can walk unaided.'[15] The government soon reacted; somewhat hesitantly, but urged on by the Deputies of the majority, it accepted the challenge. Both Zola and Perrenx, the manager of *L'Aurore*, were sued for libel and summoned to appear before the Assize Court of the Seine.

The trial lasted two weeks, from 7 February to 23 February, and caused heated debate. The first hearings were taken up with statements by the most important figures of the Affair, who told what they knew about it. The Dreyfusards gave as many details as possible; the army's witnesses provided a good deal of information even though they employed various tactics to conceal what they could. The high point occurred with Picquart's testimony; on 12 February, his face-to-face encounter with Henry became a direct challenge. Then the experts paraded one by one before the court. Those who had appeared before the courts martial of December 1894 and January 1895 (Bertillon, Teysonnières, Charavay, Pelletier and Gobert, then Couard, Belhomme and Varinard) were followed by the counter-experts whom the defence thrust into the spotlight, including Paul Meyer, Director of the Ecole des Chartes, Edouard Grimaux, who taught at the Ecole Polytechnique, and Louis Havet, professor at the Collège de France. The proceedings took a new turn on the ninth day, 16 February. De Pellieux had made some inadvertent revelations; he appealed to the testimony of General de Boisdeffre, Chief of the General Staff. De Boisdeffre

14 H. Barbusse, *Zola*, Gallimard, 1932, pp. 245–6.
15 J. Reinach, *Histoire de l'affaire Dreyfus*, Ed. de la Revue Blanche/Fasquelle, 1901–11, vol. III, p. 222.

appeared in dress uniform. Standing at the bar, he issued this threat: 'You are the jury; you are the nation. If the nation has no confidence in the chiefs of its army, in the men who are responsible for the nation's defence, those men are prepared to hand over that grave task to others. . . .'[16] From that moment on, the outcome of the trial was clear.

The next day, Zola read his statement to the jury with fervour. He was thoroughly convinced: 'Dreyfus is innocent, I swear he is. I stake my life on that. I stake my honour on it.' Labori's impassioned plea lasted three days, 21 to 23 February; Clemenceau's briefer plea came last. On the evening of 23 February the verdict was announced: Perrenx was sentenced to four months in prison and a fine of three thousand francs, while the author of 'J'accuse!' was sentenced to one year in prison and a fine of three thousand francs.

For the next several weeks, Zola attempted to forget some of the terrible strain he had just been through by withdrawing to his country house in Médan. Besides, his circle of friends shrank rapidly, and in Paris literary circles he was assiduously avoided. It was not healthy to be seen with him. On 27 March, at the general assembly of the Société des gens de lettres, when Paul Alexis, his steadfast friend, proposed a motion of support for Zola, half the members present called the motion scandalous and a terrific brouhaha ensued. Alexis was denied the floor and his motion was harshly rejected.[17] The reaction was the same, although more subtly expressed, on 26 May, at the Académie française, where elections were held to fill the two seats left vacant by the Duc d'Aumale and Henri Meilhac. Zola received not a single vote, not even from his few isolated supporters of previous years.

Meanwhile, the legal twists and turns of the Affair were far from over. On 2 April, the Supreme Court of Appeal overturned the verdict of the lower court; new proceedings became inevitable. On 23 May, the case came up again before the Assize Court of Versailles; the government had decided to remove the case from Paris and chosen Versailles, which was considered to be in less of an uproar. Judges with a reputation for firmness were appointed, and it was hoped that the case would be handled expeditiously. But the lawyers for the defence used delaying tactics in the hope that the other investigations being carried out at the same time (particularly the one concerning Esterhazy) would produce new evidence. Labori introduced a claim of lack of jurisdiction, on the grounds that only a Paris jury had authority to judge the facts as stated. When his claim was rejected, he lodged an appeal, knowing that this ploy would have the effect of suspending the proceedings.

The case had to be heard all over again. On 18 July the parties appeared in court in Versailles, where the same tactic was used. But this time it failed:

16 *Le Procès Zola*, P. V. Stock, 1898, vol. II, p. 127.
17 'A la Société des gens de lettres', *L'Aurore* of 28 March 1898.

the appeal did not cause proceedings to be suspended. Accordingly, the defendants withdrew, thus defaulting. In absentia, they received the maximum sentence: one year in prison and a fine of three thousand francs, just as on 23 February. It appeared that they were right back where they had started. But Labori and Clemenceau believed it was still possible to gain time: if Zola went into exile, the verdict which had just been reached could not be notified to him in the prescribed legal manner and become effective. That very evening Zola took the boat-train for London.

It had not been his wish to leave France; the departure was imposed upon him, but by leaving he avoided becoming bogged down in legal skirmishes and, in a sense, put himself out of harm's way. At the very least he was safe from the hatred of his most enraged enemies: the absurd hatred of the anti-Semitic demonstrators who pursued him around the Palais de Justice in Paris and again in Versailles; the imbecilic hatred of the soldiers who attacked him in Médan, on 10 April, while he was riding his bicycle; and the calculated hatred of Ernest Judet, editor-in-chief of *Le Petit Journal*, who had begun a libellous campaign to discredit Zola's father. The campaign was well orchestrated: Judet's first article, 'Zola père et fils', appeared on 23 May, the day on which the trial in Versailles began. The second appeared on 25 May, and a third on 18 July, when the trial resumed in Versailles. In order to cast doubts on François Zola's military record and make him out to be a thief, Judet used documents taken from the archives of the Ministry of War. Emile Zola retorted in *L'Aurore* on 28 May, recalling his father's career as civil engineer and vowing to defend his good name. And so it was that a new 'affair' suddenly appeared, grafted onto the first and complicating it with a plot of secondary importance. Zola's dream of purity and truth vanished amid sordid machinations. How remote victory seemed to be, at this point!

On 19 July, when Zola reached Victoria Station, in London, a page was turned. He was stepping into the unknown, in an unfamiliar country where he did not speak the language. Throughout his exile he was to feel extremely lonely, sometimes abandoned; but he was also able to use the experience to reaffirm his identity and find within himself a new moral strength.

First, he stayed at the Grosvenor Hotel near Victoria Station. Then, on 22 July, with the help of the faithful Desmoulin, who had come over from France, he left the centre of London and went to the village of Weybridge in Surrey, where he took board and lodging at the Oatlands Park Hotel. He was using the name of Jean Beauchamp, for it was essential that no one be able to trace him. Was he in danger from the French courts? Could French law be enforced against him on English soil? None of his advisers at this time – whether Labori in Paris or Wareham, an English solicitor to whom he had been introduced by Ernest Vizetelly, his translator – really knew what to say. Accordingly, he took all kinds of precautions although, deep down, he did not have much faith in them. The situation sometimes verged

on the comical. His attempt to pass incognito fooled no one, but the individuals who recognized him were very discreet. And in the end, all went well. The legendary national character of England – reserved and puritanical – proved to be the best of shelters.

On 24 July, Desmoulin returned to France to make preparations for Alexandrine's voyage to England: she was to join her husband as quickly as possible. A few days later he was back in England with a trunk containing some clothing, a camera and Zola's preparatory notes for *Fécondité*, the novel he had begun after completing *Paris*. On 1 August, Zola moved from the Oatlands Park Hotel to a modest house, 'Penn', that he had rented for four weeks. Desmoulin left him there alone and returned to Paris, this time to stay. During this period young Violette Vizetelly, the translator's daughter, was to be Zola's interpreter and governess. He was able to resume his regular rhythm of work at last and recover his peace of mind. In the diary he kept during his exile, he assessed the events that had just taken place. 'It is now eleven months since I finished my last novel, *Paris*. Almost a year already that the monstrous Affair has taken out of my life and my work. I do not regret a thing; I would begin my struggle for truth and justice all over again. But even so, what an astonishing adventure this is, at my age, after a methodical and home-loving existence as a writer and nothing but a writer!' And he added, 'Now that I am at the mercy of events, nothing should come as a surprise to me, and all I ask is the strength to continue this new work and to complete it, even amidst the turmoil. It will be a great comfort to me, or so I hope. As it has so many times already, amidst the most unbearable moral suffering, my work will keep me on my feet.'[18]

An unhoped-for interlude of happiness was soon to be granted him. Because Alexandrine was obliged to stay on in Paris to look after practical matters, she encouraged Zola to send for Jeanne and the children, his 'other affections', as she called them, with understatement. The unexpected turn that the Affair had taken had brought Zola and his wife closer together, and now it was Alexandrine who chose to step aside. On 11 August, Jeanne and the children arrived in England, where they remained until 15 October. On 27 August, all four of them moved to 'Summerfield', in Addlestone. It was a more spacious house, and its 'large garden, half overgrown with tall grasses', as *Pages d'exil* describes it,[19] was soon filled with games and laughter. All of a sudden, exile seemed to give way to a peaceful English summer.

Zola had no intention, however, of spending the winter in London. He made plans to go to Genoa after 15 October; there Alexandrine would at

18 *Pages d'exil*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, Cercle du Livre Précieux, 1970, vol. XIV, p. 1151.
19 *Ibid.*, p. 1159.

last be able to join him. Then suddenly, on 31 August, came a dramatic turn of events: Colonel Henry, who had been arrested and imprisoned at the Mont-Valérien, committed suicide. 'A moment of the intensest joy,' wrote Zola in the diary he kept during his exile;[20] he believed the Affair was over and he would be able to return to France. But these hopes were soon dashed. Henri Brisson, the Prime Minister, procrastinated, as usual; the nationalist press, momentarily taken aback, now howled more loudly than ever and made Henry a hero; and the new Minister of War, General Zurlinden, was vigorously opposed to a revision of any kind.

Once again a long period of waiting set in; it was made even harder to bear by these recent events. Zola gave up his plans of leaving for Italy – why move from one exile to another? On 15 October, using the name of Richard, he settled at the Queen's Hotel in Upper Norwood, in the suburbs south of London, close to the famous Crystal Palace, built for the 1851 World Fair. And it was there, in the comfort of one of those grand British hotels which possess the art – unknown anywhere else – of welcoming their guests discreetly yet with the warmth of a family seat, that Zola spent the remaining months of his exile. His hopes of returning to France revived in late October, when the Criminal Chamber of the Supreme Court of Appeal began its inquiry. But in Paris, the Dreyfusard leaders, concerned by the legal action being taken against Picquart, rejected the idea of Zola's return. It was better to wait, they said again. Labori repeatedly advised caution. 'Let the procedure in the Supreme Court follow its course,' he wrote, 'as long as it acts in accordance with justice; and when you do come back, your triumph will be made all the more dazzling by the extent of your sacrifice, and the gratitude and the admiration of all France will be immense.'

Matters did not improve, however. Quesnay de Beaurepaire, president of the Civil Chamber, accused his colleagues in the Criminal Chamber of lacking impartiality. The government's reaction was to introduce a bill (la loi du dessaisissement) withdrawing jurisdiction from the Criminal Chamber. It seemed to Zola that France had gone 'utterly mad' when he learned that the Chamber of Deputies had passed this law on 10 February, for it entrusted the revision procedure to all three Chambers of the Supreme Court of Appeal ruling together, thus making a revision even more unlikely than before. Just as it looked as though all was lost for the Dreyfusards, their second miracle occurred: on 16 February, Félix Faure, President of the French Republic and a fierce adversary of revision, died in the arms of the beautiful Madame Steinheil. The course of fate seemed to have been reversed. Emile Loubet, who was in favour of a revision, was elected President of the Republic. And the failure of Déroulède's attempted coup

20 *Ibid.*, p. 1160.