Nov 16  Waldeck-Rousseau presents his political programme to the Chamber of Deputies. Its primary aim is to separate Church and State. It is accepted by 317 votes to 211. (*v. 3 July 1905*)

**The Law of Amnesty**

Nov 17  Waldeck-Rousseau proposes a general amnesty bill ‘for all criminal or unlawful acts connected with the Dreyfus Affair or included in any proceedings relating to one of those acts’. However, in order to allow Dreyfus to pursue a revision, the bill stipulates the Rennes verdict as an exception. Picquart publicly discloses his letter to Waldeck Rousseau protesting against the amnesty: ‘I am concerned to demonstrate that the accusations made against me rest on fraud and falsehood … I protest against the amnesty with all my strength. To grant an amnesty when a man has been unjustly accused is to deprive him of the moral reparation to which he has a right.’ Picquart calls for a judicial investigation of Gonse for his role in the affair of the *faux Henry*, and of Gribelin for his secret manoeuvrings at the Ministry of War.

Clemenceau and Jaurès protest against the amnesty bill and request that a legal action be brought against Mercier, whom they describe as the ‘main criminal’ in the Dreyfus Affair. Clemenceau considers the amnesty bill an ‘error’, a ‘crime’, a ‘disgrace’ and calls it the ‘villainous amnesty’. He writes in *L’Aurore*: ‘They [the government] become the villains’ accomplices … They adjourn the desire, they adjourn courage and they call that governing the Republic of France …’

Nov 21  Esterhazy writes to Clemenceau that he also strongly opposes the amnesty bill. He suggests that Clemenceau ‘collaborates’: if Clemenceau sends him ‘a safe man’, Esterhazy will reveal more of the crimes of the ‘real culprits’ (i.e. the officers on the General Staff). Clemenceau publishes the letter in *L’Aurore* (23 November) and shows it to the Senators and the Deputies who are considering the amnesty bill. (*v. 26 Jan 1900*)

Dec 13  Labori’s suit against *La Libre Parole* reaches the civil court. Millot, owner of the paper, is fined 2000 francs. As part of the compensation due to Labori, the verdict is to be published in 40 newspapers in Paris and 200 in the provinces.

1900  **Publication of *Musée des horreurs***, 52 anti-dreyfusard lithographs by Lenepveu depicting the main dreyfusard characters as bestial images. This was followed by three images entitled *Musée des Patriotes*.

Jan 24  **The Assumptionist congregation is dissolved**, its leaders having been accused by the Seine Assize Court of collaborating in a conspiracy against the Republic. Father Bailly, owner of *La Croix*, is removed from his post and the paper placed under secular management.

Jan 26  Esterhazy writes again to Waldeck-Rousseau stating that he is ready to return to France and be judged.
Jan 28  Mercier is elected Senator of the Loire-Inférieure region by 700 votes to 300.128

Feb 22–Mar 5  With authorization from Waldeck-Rousseau, André Lequeux, French Consul in London, takes Esterhazy’s verbal depositions, given over four sessions. Esterhazy repeats information already given regarding his collusion with the General Staff, writing the bordereau under Sandherr’s instructions and the means by which it reached the Deuxième Bureau. Esterhazy attaches to his depositions copies of documents he claims as proof of the collusion but refuses to submit the originals. Waldeck-Rousseau considers Esterhazy’s depositions to be worthless. He does not recall him to France so as not to reopen the Affair without reason.129

Mar 1  The amnesty bill comes before the Senate. A select committee is appointed to examine it under the presidency of Senator Jean-Jules Clamageran. (v. 13 Mar; 1–2 June 1900)

Mar 8  Dreyfus protests against the bill to Clamageran:

This bill puts an end to public actions from which I hoped to see the emergence of revelations, perhaps even confessions, which would have allowed me to refer my case to the Supreme Court of Appeal … The right of the innocent is not clemency, it is justice … The amnesty strikes at my heart; it would be to the sole benefit of General Mercier … I implore the Senate to grant me my right to truth, to justice …130

Mar 13  The Senate select committee hears Picquart and Reinach.131

Esterhazy writes to Clamageran protesting that the amnesty was decided ‘by order’, to protect Reinach and Picquart. This accusation appears in the Nationalist papers.

Mar 14  L’Echo de Paris publishes an article describing the amnesty as ‘perfidious and shameful, … prepared by Waldeck-Rousseau, and his colleagues Dreyfus, Reinach, Picquart and Zola’. Picquart and Reinach commence proceedings against the paper.132

Opening of the Paris Universal Exhibition

Apr 15  The Government celebrates the opening of the Universal Exhibition in Paris as a symbol of ‘reconciliation’ among the French people. Waldeck-Rousseau greets the event as ‘the testimony that moral peace has been restored’. At the ceremony of inauguration, President Loubet declares: ‘France wishes to make a dazzling contribution to the advent of concord amongst people.’133

Apr 20  Dreyfus moves to Switzerland. He stays at the home of Hélène and Eugène Naville, near the village of Coligny above Lake Geneva.134

Against the ‘reprise de l’affaire’ (‘revival of the Affair’)

Apr 24  In an address to the Ligue des droits de l’homme et du citoyen Reinach states that for ‘the historical honour of France’ the Rennes verdict must be annulled by a further ruling. Until then, dreyfusards
must continue the fight against the amnesty ‘which strangles justice and suffocates truth’. Reinach promises an ‘armistice’ of this campaign during the Universal Exhibition.135

The speech fuels the Nationalist campaign for the forthcoming municipal elections. In Paris the Ligue de la patrie française and the Ligue des patriotes placard the slogan ‘reprise de l’affaire’ accusing dreyfusards and Republicans of a ‘new plot’. Waldeck-Rousseau is accused of complicity with Reinach.

May 4
In Paris’ municipal elections, 45 Nationalist Deputies are elected, 35 Republicans. In the provinces, Republicans win with a large majority.

May 21
*L’Éclair* announces that it has evidence of Waldeck-Rousseau’s role in a plan involving the police to quash the Rennes verdict. Sûreté officers were to obtain information from double agent Cuers (v. 10 July 1885; June 1896) proving that the testimony of Cernuski was false.136

May 22
Waldeck-Rousseau is questioned in the Chamber of Deputies about Reinach’s speech. By 425 votes to 60, the Chamber passes a motion that the Government is to ‘oppose vigorously the resumption of the Dreyfus Affair, from whatever source it might come’. Deputy Alphonse Hubert refers to an article published in the press mentioning the existence of letters from Tomps, proving that attempts have been made by officers of the Deuxième Bureau to obtain information on Cernuski.137

May 28
The Chamber debates the conduct of Deuxième Bureau officer Captain Fritsch, who disclosed the information regarding Cernuski’s testimony to *L’Éclair*. (v. 21 May 1900) Galliffet states that he has punished Fritsch. Waldeck-Rousseau describes Fritsch’s action as ‘felony’. The Nationalists vigorously protest. They ask Waldeck-Rousseau to retract his words and Galliffet to protect the army. Léon Bourgeois proposes a motion to approve the Government’s action. The motion is passed by 286 votes to 234. Galliffet tenders his resignation.

May 29
General Louis André, an ardent Republican and anticlerical, is appointed Minister of War.138

*L’Aurore* publishes Zola’s ‘Lettre au Senat’, strongly critical of the amnesty bill:

*The amnesty was made against us, the defenders of right, in order to save the true criminals, closing our mouths with an act of hypocritical and insulting clemency, lumping together decent people and scoundrels, a supreme ambiguity which will end up rotting the national conscience … You are making this law of amnesty for them [the enemies of the Republic], to save the leaders from the penal colony … You are traitors, the ministers are traitors, the President of the Republic is a traitor. And when you have voted in the law, you will have done the work of traitors in order to save traitors … In this grave danger, there was only one thing to do: to accept the struggle against all the united forces of the past, to change the administration, to change the magistrature, to change
the high command, since it all appeared in its clerical rottenness. To enlighten the country by acts, to speak the whole truth, to deliver complete justice … what we want is for the Dreyfus Affair to end with the only outcome that can give back strength and calm to the country; that is, that the culprits are punished, not for us to take delight in their punishment, but so that the people finally know the truth and so that justice, the only true and solid way, may bring appeasement … Vote in the law of amnesty, Senators, complete the strangulation, say with President Delegorgue that the question will not be put … and if France is one day dishonoured before the whole world, it will be your work … The law of amnesty will be a civic treason, the relinquishment of the Republic into the hands of its worst enemies …

June 1–2

The Senate debates the amnesty bill. Trarieux, in opposition, explains the injustices the law would entail – the transfer of the trials of Zola and Reinach from criminal to civil jurisdiction (where neither proof nor the interrogation of witnesses are necessary); the annulment of Piquart’s court martial, depriving him of a true judgment; but especially leaving the principal culprits, above all Mercier, unpunished. Mercier, now a Senator, states that all his actions in 1894 were committed out of conviction that he was serving his country. Whilst acknowledging that the reasons of the opponents of the amnesty are legitimate, Waldeck-Rousseau summarizes: ‘The amnesty does not judge, it does not accuse, it does not exonerate, it does not convict: it does not know, and is inspired only by public interest.’ The Senate passes the bill by 231 votes to 32.

Nov 25

At Mathieu’s suggestion Dreyfus returns from Switzerland to Paris, where he settles at his father-in-law’s apartment in the rue de Châteaudun.

The parting of Labori and the Dreyfus family

Dec

Forcefully opposing the amnesty, Labori insists that Mathieu must break with Demange. Mathieu refuses. On 14 December, after a heated meeting between Mathieu and Labori, Mathieu leaves: ‘All is over between us … Au revoir Monsieur.’ Despite an exchange of letters and the intervention of Dreyfus himself, the rift between Labori and the Dreyfus family is final.

Dec 6–18

The amnesty bill is debated in the Chamber of Deputies. Drumont supports the proposal to extend the amnesty to Déroulède and Guérin. Waldeck-Rousseau refuses. On the night of 18 December the Chamber passes the bill by 155 votes to 2.

Dec 22

L’Aurore publishes Zola’s open letter to President Loubet: ‘I have fulfilled my entire role as honestly as I could, and now I am withdrawing definitively into silence.’

Dec 25

In a public letter to Waldeck-Rousseau, Picquart again protests against the amnesty and the Government’s intention to promote his [Picquart’s] military career.
Dec 26  Dreyfus writes to Waldeck-Rousseau requesting a judicial investigation:

… My innocence is absolute and to my dying day I will pursue the legal recognition of that innocence through a revision. I am no more the author of the bordereau annotated by the Kaiser, which is merely a forgery, than I was of the original, authentic bordereau, which was by Esterhazy … I retain the right of every man to defend his honour and have the truth proclaimed. And so I retain the right, Mr President, to ask you for an investigation, and I have the honour to solicit it …148

Dec 27  The Senate passes the amended amnesty law by 194 votes to 10.

NOTES
1 Only the main events of the court martial are given here. The full proceedings were published by Stock in three volumes: Rennes (see Abbreviations and Conventions). There is as yet no full English translation of the court martial, but extracts exist in: (1) Harding, Dreyfus: the Prisoner of Devil’s Island, pp. 111–33. The American journalist Harding covered the court martial for the Press Association; (2) Snyder, The Dreyfus Case, a Documentary History, pp. 268–336.
2 Because of the hot summer in Rennes, hearings took place only from morning to noon.
3 The main absentees were Esterhazy, Pays, Du Paty and Weil.
4 The Rennes court martial was a milestone event in the history of journalism. Specially constructed telegraph lines were laid to carry press despatches. On the opening day, about 650,000 words were transmitted in this way. The correspondent of the New York Sun, H.R. Chamberlain, wrote about the special problems encountered by the reporters. Snyder, The Dreyfus Case, pp. 329–34.
5 Attempts to film the court martial failed for technical reasons. Méliès, a dreyfusard, was the first to produce a cinematographic reconstruction of the trial. He produced the film L’Affaire Dreyfus in 1899 while the court martial was still in progress. Divided into 12 short episodes, this was the longest (15 minutes) and most realistic of his films to date. Soon after filming had been completed, Méliès’ rival Pathé shot another, much shorter reconstruction of the trial. According to Méliès’ grandmother, when the film was first shown in 1899 it aroused such strong emotions, dividing dreyfusards and anti-dreyfusards, that the police had to intervene and the film was censored. (v. 1915) S. Bottomore, ‘Dreyfus and documentary’, Sight and Sound 53, 4 (1984), pp. 290–3; E. Ezra, Georges Méliès. The Birth of the Author (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 68–77; J. Barnes, The Beginning of the Cinema in England 1894–1901, vol. 1, 1899 (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), pp. 68–76; S. Sand, ‘Dreyfus in Hollywood’, in L’Histoire 173 (January 1994) pp. 120–3.
6 According to French law, when a new case is opened a new indictment must be presented. But since the Rennes court martial did not represent a new case, there was no new indictment, despite the ruling of the Supreme Court of Appeal that the 1894 indictment was no longer applicable. Although the Government had the right to instruct Carrière to drop all charges relating to the 1894 indictment, he was allowed to take them up again since Galliffet and Waldeck-Rousseau did not want to give the judges the impression that the Government was ‘inviting’ them to acquit Dreyfus. The result was that the validity of all previous accusations, put forward in particular by Mercier, made it more difficult for the judges, who had to choose between Dreyfus and Mercier.
7 Rennes, I, 20–1, Dreyfus.
8 The document was Du Paty’s note to Mercier of 31 July 1899, containing the falsified version of Panizzardi’s telegram of 2 November, which Du Paty asserted was correct.
9 Mercier’s deposition began on Friday 12 August. Labori was prevented from cross-examining him fully because of the assassination attempt on his life (v. 14 Aug). Chamoin reported the disclosure and existence of the document to Galliffet, who considered the matter unimportant. Mathieu and his friends seized the opportunity to write to Waldeck-Rousseau requesting the arrest of Mercier: they did not receive a reply. Labori, Labori. Ses notes manuscrites. Sa vie, pp. 102–6; ATQV, pp. 214–16. The document was not examined in Court until 24 August. (v. n. 38)
10 Paléologue commented that the Court assumed he was concealing the truth or simply ignoring the existence of the document. Paléologue, My Secret Diary, pp. 174–5.
11 One of the new documents Mercier produced was a copy of a report supposedly written by Colonel Schneider, Austrian military attaché to his superiors saying that the German and Italian military attachés had admitted the guilt of Dreyfus. (v. 17 Aug) Colonel Schneider telegraphs Le Figaro to say that he did not write the report mentioned by Roget in his deposition and also by Cavaignac and Mercier. It