The Dreyfus Affair, and Communities Seen through Media

The Dreyfus Affair was an event that caused a political and social movement from 1894 to 1906 and was related to what a soldier Alfred Dreyfus experienced (he was falsely accused in treason), which was described in the mass media as a “crime against society.” In simple words, it was a social chaos in France, and it was all about some accusations addressed to Jews in connection to what Alfred Dreyfus supposedly did, and the media was the main source of these “fake news” which disseminated stereotypes and prejudices. The media were affecting the society and the fact that Dreyfus was a Jew became another reason to divide the minds of French people. Jews started to feel tension about the situation affecting not only Alfred, but all of them as well as other French citizens.

The French writer Emile Zola wrote an open letter to the President of the Republic of France in support of Dreyfus. As it was mentioned above, the Dreyfus Affair divided the French society and inflamed the public opinion in France, even within families (see Primary Source 4). This clash emerged from the impact of media and newspapers that Zola and other journalists published. Considering that the Dreyfus Affair had its origin from an anti-Semitic style and they were also Jews, it was more convenient for some people to be against, since for some other people there was no reason to do that. This tells us a lot on the importance that this case had in the society and how it was affecting people.

Primary Sources 2 and 3 demonstrate how Edouard Drumont in his works blames Jewish people for any perceived ill in France through its history. It looked like people used the case of Alfred to accuse all Jews later on for various misdeeds. Drumont’s criticism was built on the tropes of racial inferiority and many differences based on their own stereotypes. Not only that but he saw Jews and treated them in this book, as people who should suffer and die the same way as they did with Jesus Christ. Drumont continued to publish same things and sharing his own sick ideas about Jews and he continued to stoke the fires of anti-Semitism with various publications.

It has to be said that the way Drumont fulfilled his journalist duties was neither objective nor used for good ends. The way that some newspapers were showing and explaining stories of Dreyfus Affair (see Primary Source 5, pic. 2) was not affecting the society for good; it caused a lot of prejudices and provoked persecutions against the Jewish people, since their rights were not respected and because of that they started to feel stateless wishing to flee the country.

In the 20th century, we see other communities experiencing same situations because of prejudices, persecutions, statelessness, etc. Roma community is one of them which has been “fighting” for many years to be accepted into the society, to be respected for their rights and to not be persecuted because of their skin color and stereotypes that exists. As Jews in that time, Roma community has been also dealing with the same challenges in different societies around the world.

To sum it up, this case is very important in the global context since it affected deeply the society as a whole and many social groups within it. The media had a huge impact on how the Jewish people were viewed by the society; various media spread prejudices about Jewish people to create their bad image. As a result, Jewish people were treated badly which no community deserves.

The Roma community, as it was mentioned earlier, has been treated similarly; furthermore, it still suffers and fights for human rights and against stereotypes and prejudices. This case is important not only to know the problematic aspect of the communities in the society, but also to take a lesson of how to treat these communities by considering them part of the society with human rights.