CHAPTER V

ATTACK ON THE REVOLUTION

Among the myths on which the French political system operates is that of the Revolution as a basic watershed of French political belief. The classic interpretation of this myth of the Revolution is the division of France into two blocs: one, the party of progress and intellect, supporting the crusade against the past on behalf of equality, reason, and liberty; the other, the party of tradition and privilege, refusing to be relegated to oblivion, and basing itself on the values of the family, religion, and authority.[1] Both the Left and the Right—Clemenceau as well as Taine—have made use of the idea of the existence of two "blocs." It is clearly true, as Aron argues, that the "unity of the Left" is less a reflection than a distortion of the reality of French politics and that the Republican unity shown during the Boulanger and Dreyfus crises are the exceptions rather than the rule. It is also clear, however, that a crisis would, because of the very existence of the myth, produce the needed unity. Political thinkers and politicians operate on the basis of its existence. "You accept the Republic of course," said Léon Bourgeois to a right-wing group, "but do you accept the Revolution?"[2] Of our three writers, Maurras and Sorel were completely opposed to the Revolution, while Barrès, treasuring its Bonapartist element, declared in a debate in the Chamber, "Many of us . . . are not perhaps the pupils of Gambetta, but we are the responsible sons of the Revolution,"[3] and was prepared to give it qualified support.

Barrès, with his conservative approach to history, was prepared to accept the fact of the Revolution and the political regimes that had resulted from it because the Revolution had taken its place in history, and history was essentially a

[1] Raymond Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, London, 1957, pp. 5-9.

[2] Albert Thibaudet, *Les Idées politiques de la France*, p. 225.

[3] *Journal Officiel*, January 29, 1891, p. 155.

continual process.[4] One could not make a distinction between the soul of France before the Revolution and afterwards. Moreover, not only was Barrès prepared to accept the present; he was also ready to admit the faults of the past.

Barrès implied that the Revolution could be justified. The Revolution had not been made by assault of the revolutionaries, but was the result of the behavior of the rulers at Versailles. "France was dead in 1789, it was not dead of 1789 nor of 1793."[5] Barrès even approved of the "sinister slaughterers of '93, not for their acts, but for their *élan.* They were not moderates." In a curious passage, he invoked the image of Rousseau. "O mon cher Rousseau, mon Jean Jacques, vous l'Homme du monde que j'ai le plus aimé et celebré sous vingt pseudonymes, vous un autre moi-même."[6] But in talking of the deficiencies of the Revolution, his views were diametrically opposed to those of Rousseau. The Revolution had based society on natural rights, that is, on logic; its philosophers and lawyers had declared that all men were the same everywhere and that they had rights as men, an argument that was not acceptable to Barrès. "Our task is to ruin the religion of the Revolution and to serve the Church," he wrote.[7] The task was even more imperative because the Revolution had upset traditional values. The very legend of the Revolution had destroyed the legends of the provinces, the corporations, the families.

Unlike Barrès, Maurras was both uncompromisingly opposed to the Revolution and reluctant to admit any deficiencies in the *ancien régime* that might have been responsible for producing it. Ideologically incorrect, the product of foreign ideas, for Maurras the Revolution had been wrongfully named French.[8] The Revolution came from the Bible of the Reformation, the statutes of the Republic of Geneva, the Calvinist theologians, the old individualist ferment of the Germany

[4] *Mes Cahiers,* III:107, 176; IV:180.
[5] *Mes Cahiers,* V:60; II:202.
[6] Maurice Barrès, *Le Jardin de Bérénice,* Paris, 1921, p. 141.
[7] *Mes Cahiers,* IX:319.
[8] *L'Action française,* April 30, 1908.

for which the trilingual Swiss served as European interpreters; the revolutionary ideas were anything but natural to France. Since Maurras believed that almost the whole French Revolution came from Rousseau, he repeatedly attacked "the Genevan vagabond, a homeless individual." Optimistic and sensitive, the miserable Rousseau was a man of folly, savagery, ignorance, singularity, solitude, pride, and revolt, nourished on a Biblical upbringing. Rousseau had broken with the whole of civilization, with the general principles of the ancient City, mediaeval organization, and modern Europe.[9] It is not surprising that Maurras joined with Barrès in objecting strenuously to the bicentennial celebration of Rousseau's birth in 1912.

For Maurras, one could not talk of defending one part of the Revolution and opposing another, one could not at the same time love the Revolution and hate its excesses.[10] There was no Jacobin revolution to distinguish from a French one; all of the Revolution was anti-French and was marked by insurrection of the individual (liberalism), which led to tyranny of the state (democracy). Maurras followed Taine in arguing that 1789 and 1793 proceeded from the same spirit, represented the same personnel, the same tactics, the same events. The two men supported the doctrine of the "revolutionary bloc" for reasons completely opposite to those of Clemenceau, who had used the slogan as a rallying cry for support of the Revolution and for the Republic. Maurras, from the opposite point of view, said there was only one true schism in all the history of France, and that was the Revolution. He condemned the Revolution because its success meant the end of France.

The Revolution, the most enormous stupidity France had committed, had changed the natural course and the normal rhythm of the life of the country. It had disorganized the nation, reduced the people to a state of atomistic division and of individual rivalries.[11] The heirs of 1789 had destroyed

[9] Charles Maurras, *Réflexions sur l'ordre en France*, p. 21.

[10] *Réflexions sur la Révolution de 1789*, Paris, 1948, p. 83.

[11] Charles Maurras and Lucien Moreau, "L'Action française," *Le Correspondant* (June 10, 1908), 231:973.

the domestic, local, economic, and religious organs of French power. Maurras regarded the legend of the volunteers of 1792, the fable of Valmy, as poisonous, and the Revolution an event from which the decadence of the middle class dated.[12] The night of August 4th ruined the collective liberties, local liberties, professional liberties that had made France powerful and glorious.

Maurras always made a curious division between what was caused by the Revolution and what could be attributed to France. The victories of the Revolution—Valmy, Jemmapes, Fleurus, Hohenlinden, Marengo, Wagram—were won by France, while the defeats were due to the Revolution. What had flourished on the Rhine from 1792 to 1814 was the work of two centuries of French influence, and not the result of the Revolution.

The effect of the Revolution was pernicious. It had led to individualism, the destruction of families, local powers, and other social authorities, the utilization of religion for the profit of the state. Furthermore, it had divided the country into departments, which set up a false barrier to population and interests.[13] The ideas stemming from the Revolution—democracy, liberal Protestantism, and romanticism—degraded the three fundamental characteristics of French civilization: monarchy, Catholic sentiment, and the classical spirit.

The spirit of 1789 was individualistic and pacific, but it led to 25 years of war and to the alliance of the most powerful nations against France. The Revolution had had a greater effect than previous crises, and reduced France to the level of a second-rank power at a time when Italian and German unity had been created, and those nations were of increasing importance. Supporting the view of Bonald, Maurras believed that if it were through France that the Revolution had begun in the world, it would also be through France that the counter-revolution must begin.[14]

[12] *L'Etang de Berre*, Paris, 1915, p. 130.
[13] *Réflexions sur la révolution*, p. 139.
[14] *La Contre-révolution spontanée*, p. 35.

His opposition to the Revolution was a total one, for he believed everything about it was either unrealistic or unsuccessful: it had attempted to destroy great fortunes, but there had been no decrease in them; it had tried to abolish organizations standing between the employer and the employee, but had resulted in the rise of trade unions and considerable violence; it called for a democratic fusion of classes, but had led to class war; it advocated the abolition of differences between nations, but had led to the most violent nationalist enmities. Maurras rejected 150 years of French history, refusing to acknowledge that the Civil Code, the administrative and electoral apparatus, had created permanent habits of thought and action, and denying that Jacobin and Napoleonic centralization was the continuation of a trend begun under the monarchy.

Sorel, while maintaining the myth of revolution and of the use of violence, was totally opposed to the Revolution and its outcome. Taine had "taught us all about the false great men who led the great European upheaval," he wrote.[15] Sorel spoke of the "Jacobin anarchists," "the perfect pedant" Robespierre, the "hallucinators of '93." Fundamentally intellectual and middle class, democratic ideology was a degenerate daughter of the bourgeois ideology of '89. Sorel believed that the Revolution had caused the growth of state power and had increased the activities of politicians, and that this might mean greater, not less, servitude than that under the Old Regime.

IDEOLOGY OF THE REVOLUTION

The three writers were hostile to the chief principles of the Revolution, liberty, equality, and fraternity, and the individualism on which they were based.

Liberty.—Maurras regarded the principle of liberty as false and unrealistic, as undesirable in its method because it put discussion first, and as unfortunate in its resulting disorganization and enfeeblement of individuals. Liberty for all, "the Nuée of Nuées," was a false metaphysical principle, contrary

[15] Georges Sorel, *Le Procès de Socrate*, p. 204.

to nature. It prevented the submission of the citizen, not only to the laws of the state, but to the profound laws of nature and of reason. One of these laws, born from the fact that men were unequal, was that liberty was the privilege of the few. It was meaningless if it was to be exercised by all. Since "we are born slaves of a thousand fatalities,"[16] liberty must be limited to a small number of essentials, beyond which the rule of the strongest legitimately applied. To guarantee the liberty of each meant the servitude of all.

The idea of liberty was unrealistic because it was based not only on the theory of individualism, but also on that of the sovereignty of individuals, which Maurras, following Comte, regarded as "an ignoble lie or oppressive mystification."[17] Admitting that the individual existed and could create, Maurras objected to the emphasis on his primacy; in a case of conflict, society should always be placed first. If it was the individual who created, it was the community that maintained and perpetuated. Maurras felt that the individual had more obligations to society than it could have to him. Social man had no natural rights, only duties. Moreover, Maurras regarded societies as composed of families, not of single human beings. A society could no more be broken up into the individuals that composed it than a geometrical surface could be broken up into straight lines, or a straight line into points. Maurras attacked the idea of the individual as an isolated being. He recognized that the working-class movement of the 19th century was essentially a reaction against this isolation, which had been imposed by the Revolution and maintained by Bonapartism and by bourgeois liberalism, the successor to Jacobinism.[18] In fact, the whole of 19th century history was a series of reactions against the individualist and centralist tendencies bequeathed by Rousseau and Napoleon.

The exercise of liberty was disastrous in all fields. It was wrong to believe that at the bottom of each individual's

[16] Maurras, "L'Evolution des idées sociales," *La Réforme sociale* (February 1, 1891), 21:201.

[17] *L'Action française*, November 4, 1909.

[18] *Mes Idées politiques*, p. 244.

sensibility there existed the principle of unity and order. Barbarism began when the perceptive individual, preferring his own judgment to what was reasonable, began to decide for himself. If good and evil became the result of individual judgment, anarchy would ensue. In all fields the principle of free examination meant chaos: a liberal was nothing but a disorganized mind. Religious liberty meant that everything was challenged and that any truth would be put in peril because of individual doubt. Individualism in religion had resulted in the Reformation. Individualism in politics had resulted in the Revolution. Political and social liberty led to enfeeblement of the individual, to tyranny over those not belonging to the majority party, and to anarchy, for it would destroy the ties of family and tradition, upset the state and destroy patriotism.[19] Economic liberty meant individual competition and the liberty to die of hunger. Liberty of thought really meant libertine thought, as the 17th century had argued. Liberty in art resulted in romanticism.

True liberty for Maurras meant something quite different. It needed authority; it was for Maurras, as he claimed it was for "cet illustre Hobbes," a share of power. It was the product of certainty. Just as there were fixed rules in mechanics, finance, astronomy, figures, or pure numbers, so in social affairs there were rules of habit and discipline based on reason, intelligence, and true understanding. For problems of inheritance there was a head of family, for communal or provincial problems there were social authorities, for religious problems there were spiritual laws and an official hierarchy, for syndical and professional problems there were rules of corporations and trades.

In society, a system with fixed rules of this kind would entail hierarchy and stratification, a Platonic pattern, with each individual gaining his own happiness from within himself and from the proper exercise of his function. It was because of his devotion to real liberty, Maurras said, that he entirely repudiated all liberalism, just as it was from respect for and

[19] Maurras, *La Démocratie religieuse*, Paris, 1921, pp. 395-396.

love of the people that he would fight democracy. Petty individual liberties were not important compared with maintaining the independence of the country and preserving its customs and traditions. Those liberties which favored the national effort were to be encouraged, those which contradicted it were to be watched or suppressed.[20] In particular, control was necessary over the four *Etats Confédérés*—the masons, the Protestants, the Jews, the *métèques*—who were destroying society and true liberty.

Equality.—The Revolution and liberalism, on which it was based, also implied to Maurras the equal political value of individuals. But reason could not accept as natural or biologically true the democratic premise that the value of all members of society was equal. A society could tend to equality, but, from the biological point of view, equality existed only in the cemetery. Equality did not and could not happen of itself, it had to be made. When the law proclaimed equality it lied, for in any society an unequal division of liberties was inevitable, and this precluded the idea of equality.

As one rose in the biological scale, the inequalities present became more numerous and deeper.[21] Organization meant differentiation, which involved useful inequalities; to democratize would be to equalize, which would mean methodical disorganization—one could not organize democracy, and one could not democratize organization. Though Maurras warned specifically against the danger of accepting too readily the analogy between the organism in nature and in politics and criticized the excessive use of such an analogy, in fact he equated natural with political inequality and pointed out the inevitable political disadvantages resulting from the attempt to overturn the natural order. The idea of equality meant surrendering power to the herd, to inferior classes, to incompetence. Democrats argued on the basis of equality for "one man, one vote," but those who opposed this demand and by invoking quality[22] demanded categories of suffrage, represen-

[20] *Gazette de France*, September 4, 1901.
[21] *Gazette de France*, May 1, 1899.
[22] *L'Action française*, May 3, 1913.

tation of families and of social and local bodies, were arguing on more natural grounds.

Equality, moreover, meant weakness, both because it led to internal difficulties and because it was another instance of the penetration of foreign, unhealthy ideas. The existence of a society whose members were practically equal meant that industry and the arts would be retarded. The obsession with and desire for equality established a political spirit directly contrary to the vital needs of a country; it destroyed military discipline, and since the people had need of an army, it led to national abasement. The choice was clear: either political inequality, or the death of the country; inequality, or decadence and anarchy. Moreover, the choice was essential, since egalitarian ideas were foreign and unhealthy, came originally from Israel, and had been reintroduced in the 16th century when the Reformation, multiplying the number of Bibles and making everyone use them, propagated the egalitarian mysticism of the prophets.[23] But even this spiritual equality was false. The Church admitted neither equality of human rewards nor the equal distribution of the divine graces, since unequal souls received unequal supernatural favors.

Just as Maurras believed equality to be an essential element of democracy, and just as he regarded rights as equal only when they corresponded to naturally unequal situations, so did Sorel see the idea of equality, conceived as approximate identity, as belonging, not to socialism, but rather to pure democracy, to radical and Jacobin stupidity—an ideal altogether foreign to socialism.[24] Equality was the chief cause of degradation of citizens, because it was a product of jealousy and of the sophism of generalizing the particular. It was necessary to restrict equality, as did Aristotle, to a small caste,[25] for democracy, which was founded on abstract equality, would result in anarchy.

Fraternity and Justice.—Barrès thought anarchy would result if justice were preferred to society. Referring to the

[23] *Gazette de France*, January 23, 1900.

[24] Sorel, "Superstition Socialiste," *Le Devenir social* (November 1895), 3:729-764.

[25] *Le Procès de Socrate*, p. 174.

Dreyfus Affair, he argued that the French Kantian intellectuals had spoken of sacrificing everything to justice, and would willingly have preferred the destruction of society to the upholding of an injustice. "Speak of Justice when one man condemns another! Let us be content to speak of social preservation."[26] Justice, he thought, was not of this world; in its name revolutions were made, leaving ruins, not heaven, on earth.

The idea of metaphysical justice was equally abhorrent to Maurras, for it was unnatural and essentially Jewish. The first condition of life was not justice, but ability to exist. Then came the capability of possessing the independence and liberty of action without which justice was only a dream. Since this liberty of action was likely to be attained by only a few and since the idea of metaphysical justice was therefore likely to provoke disorder, the consequence was that true justice lay in order and inequality.

True justice was also opposed to the idea of fraternity, "this bad imitation of the evangelical precept of charity,"[27] which, anti-French in nature, was the foundation of the contemporary cosmopolitan regime. Fraternity was meaningless, because the law of life was self-satisfaction, not love for others. Nature had implanted the violent passions of anger and hate in the political animal; the idea of fraternity, by ignoring the existence of these emotions in international relations, would lead to their breaking out internally, and embroiling France in civil war.

SOVEREIGNTY OF THE PEOPLE

The idea of the sovereignty of the people was rejected by all the writers as a fiction, but one that had had disastrous consequences. Sorel, suggesting that the fiction of the sovereignty of the people was the favorite element of democratic theory,[28] thought that such a fiction could lead to anarchy. If government depended on the popular will or on parliamentary rule, this would mean the domination of the ignorant

[26] *Mes Cahiers*, I:263; II:106.
[27] Maurras, "L'Evolution des idées sociales," p. 200.
[28] *Matériaux*, p. 118.

over the wise and the bad over the good, and would result in demoralization and social disintegration. The decadence of the French bureaucracy had begun on the day when it was subordinated to the parliamentarians—everything bowed before the majesty of the national sovereignty, a title the deputies had been invested with as representatives of the people. Moreover, the ideas of the people themselves could not be trusted since they were played on by the press, ideological inheritor of the 18th century.

Maurras argued that the founders of modern democracy, Protestants like Rousseau, Catholics like Lamennais, had thought of the sovereignty of the people as a divine right. He agreed with Barrès that numbers had taken the place of the king. Even the concept of the General Will, once a vague metaphysical entity, had been reduced to that of precise and particular wills, and rule by the majority. And the principle of majority rule was ridiculous in origin, incompetent in practice, and pernicious in its effects.[29]

It was ridiculous in origin because it took for granted the political equality of individuals and equality of capacity, and these ideas he had already attacked as unnatural and false. Politics was too intricate and complex a subject to be abandoned to the caprice of everyone.

Majority rule was incompetent because it was the regime of those least qualified and least interested in national life, the most inert and the least human. Democratic intellectuals thought that action must be preceded by infinite discussions between the least competent persons: lawyers without cases, professors without students, doctors without patients. The great misfortune of the times was that it was supposed to be necessary that the citizen have a deliberate opinion on the state, and where opinion governed, no one governed. There was no instance of a "people" ever having "wished" or "done" anything in the precise sense of these words. Public opinion, which changed from day to day, was the vaguest and the most fleeting, the most badly defined of the fashions. In such a

[29] *La Démocratie religieuse*, p. 397.

situation nothing was fixed and durable.[30] State affairs would be delivered to the hazard of chance or would decline into insolvency, and the state would become enslaved to unforeseen events and changes of opinion. If it was true that on certain subjects the crowd was a child and public opinion a minor, the forgeries in the Dreyfus Affair were permissible and legitimate, and the act of Colonel Henry useful.[31]

The sovereignty of the people as expressed by majority rule was pernicious both because it meant that there was no thought for the general welfare and because the true "Kings of the Republic" were the Jews, Protestants, masons, and *métèques*. The destiny of the country where the crowd ruled was internal strife, producing agreements detrimental to the life and property of the state.[32] Each person thought only of his individual interest, and the sum of individual interests did not add up at all to the general interest of the French nation. Private and party interests superseded interest in the general welfare or in the country as a whole. The idea of Nation ought to replace that of People. Whereas "People" implied the changeable and insignificant desires of mortals, "Nation" was a superior entity which endured spiritually and materially.[33] Only if this change were made would the influence on the people of the foreigners, the true kings, be counteracted.

Maurras was the standard-bearer of the 20th century counter-revolution in France, and his annotated volumes, *Dictionnaire politique et critique*, a serious attempt at a counter-*Encyclopaedia*. "In the name of reason and of nature, conforming to the ancient laws of the universe, for the sake of order, for the existence and progress of a menaced civilization, all hopes float on the ship of the counter-revolution."[34] For Maurras, the counter-revolution had become as radical, as

30 Maurras, *Quand les français ne s'aimaient pas*, Paris, 1916.
31 *Gazette de France*, September 6, 1898.
32 Maurras, *Anthinéa*, Paris, 1919, p. 275.
33 Maurras, "De l'Autorité légitime: le Droit national et le droit démocratique," *La Revue Universelle* (June 1924), 17:666.
34 Maurras, *L'Avenir de l'intelligence*, Paris, 1918, p. 104.

destructive, as brilliant, and as luminous as the Revolution had been at a previous time. He supported all the antidemocratic and antirepublican tendencies of the day: the attack on the revolutionary system in the name of true liberty, requiring the revival of the power of the family; the attack on economic liberty in the name of the liberty of the *syndicat,* requiring the revival of professional groups; the attack on political liberty in the name of independence, requiring governmental liberty to act; the attack on municipal centralization in the name of local liberty, requiring the reawakening of the commune; the attack on the departments in the name of regional liberty, requiring the reanimation of the province.

Maurras claimed that all counter-revolutionary theories had as their fundamental theses necessity, drawn from the essence of things and not from the will of men; authority, not liberty; hierarchy, not equality; family, not the individual; duty, not the rights of man.[35] In his own day, the Dreyfus Affair had produced the first article of the counter-revolutionary creed of the Action Française;[36] namely, that there were duties which did not oblige Frenchmen to regard all judicial decisions as infallible and eternal, duties which forbade believing in judicial error without strong reasons, duties which were good for the social system.

Maurras was the archetype of the modern reactionary who does not derive his ideas from or base them on the premise of God. It was significant to him that the three men most divided on religion, Comte, Bonald, and Le Play, were agreed on opposition to the first principles of the Revolution.[37] "His ambition," said a critic, "was to be the Phidias of a social Parthenon founded on logic, geometry, the tested canons of architecture."[38] Maurras resolved that reason would provide the basis for his creed because he believed that there was nothing less individualist than reason. Reason was concerned with the general, not with the particular or the indi-

[35] *La Contre-révolution spontanée,* p. 45.

[36] Charles Maurras and Lucien Moreau, *op.cit.,* p. 966.

[37] *L'Etang de Berre,* p. 51.

[38] R. Kemp, "Charles Maurras, Prince des Nuées" (November 20, 1952), p. 5.

vidual, and therefore could not be a revolutionary force. It would furnish for him, as for the Athenians, the foundation of order and stability. But Maurras was nowhere able or willing to explain the dilemma of how the counter-revolution on which he set his hopes could respect the law of continuity that had been violated by the Revolution. It is an indication of the irresponsibility of much of the criticism of the Right that, because it was totally opposed to the current institutions, it had to work outside of, and not through, them.

The extreme conservative, as MacIver has suggested,[39] insists on the paramount need of law and order, but what he really believes in is his own law and order. When his dislike of the existing regime is strong enough, he is prepared to rebel. Sorel reached this conclusion through his conviction that a new kind of law and ethics was urgently needed. Barrès reached it through his realization that a new *mystique*, one of nationalism, had to be created, and that the leader of the counter-revolution would have to depend on mass support. Maurras reached the same conclusion because of his rejection of the whole ideology of the Revolution. One of the basic legacies of the Revolution is the concept of the sovereignty of the people, and in France this has led to the sovereignty of the electoral assembly, as representatives of the people. Since Maurras claimed that electoral assemblies were incapable of leading, or of dealing with crises, and since the necessary institution of strong executive power was absent, he was eager to overturn the regime and restore what he considered to be the true political equilibrium.

At the time of the Dreyfus Affair there were two principal right-wing groups, Déroulède's Ligue des Patriotes, which Barrès claimed had a membership of 100,000, including 25 members of the French Academy, and Lemaître's Ligue de la Patrie Française, with a membership of 15,000, with other minor and short-lived bodies like Guérin's Anti-Semitic League. But it was the Action Française movement, subsidized in part by Lemaître's friend Mme de Loynes, which became the

[39] Robert M. MacIver, *The Web of Government*, New York, 1947, p. 277.

focal point for extreme right-wing opposition, going beyond the intellectual traditionalism of Brunetière and Bourget. Vaugeois, initial leading figure in the movement in 1899, at first thought it would be a legal movement within the Republic, and the policy statement on November 15, 1899 for which he was largely responsible, was a nonmonarchical one. It is a commentary on the dominance of Maurras over the movement that it quickly came to realize the necessity for a *coup d'état*, and to believe in monarchy.

The first issue of the *Action française* journal appeared on August 1, 1899; on March 21, 1908 it became a daily. The organization had its own review, the *Revue critique des idées et des livres*, its own publishing house, the Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, and weekly study groups. It had its affiliated organizations like the Jeunes Filles Royalistes, and its strong-arm men, the Camelots du Roi. With the latter, the movement took to the streets, and from 1908 until 1914, there were continual incidents. The breaking of statues of Dreyfusards, the public slapping of Briand, the attempted assassination of Dreyfus in 1908, the attack on a professor of the Sorbonne for his criticism of Joan of Arc in 1909, the incitement to murder Caillaux in 1914, all belied the pretense of the movement. Maurras argued that the violence of revolutionaries was put at the service of disorder, not of order, at the service of theft, not of property, at the service of anarchy, not of authority, at the service of the enemies of France, not of the country. Yet Péguy was not the only one to register pain that the Action Française movement, professing to restore the ancient dignities of the race, resorted to so much derision, sarcasm, and injury. The distressing paradox was that a movement based on the value of order should be so full of invective.

Though Maurras' movement had a considerable effect on the Parisian university youth, its political impact was almost nonexistent. None of the Royalist senators or deputies joined the group, nor did Barrès. The leaders of the Church were wary. They had not forgotten, even if Maurras had, that it was the monarchy that had expelled the Jesuits in 1767. The movement held itself aloof from the right-wing combination

of ex-Boulangists, clericals, and Méline Progressists formed in 1902. Maurras, unable and unwilling to take advantage of monarchical feeling except on his own terms, refused to ally himself either with the ex-ralliés, largely legitimist and aristocratically liberal, or with the Progressists, who had moved further to the right with the Dreyfus Affair. During the Boulanger crisis the Orleanists were at best reluctant allies of the general. The warning by the Comte de Paris that it was imprudent to remind people incessantly of monarchy and that monarchists should fight for conservative ideas on conservative ground was disregarded by his too-enthusiastic supporter, Maurras.

Julien Benda pointed out that the real danger to the regime was always Caesarism or Boulangism. The truth of this observation was shown in 1905 when Déroulède, returning to France after having been exiled, was welcomed by a crowd of 300,000. It was Barrès who sensed the wave of the future, linking the old Bonapartist ideas—its authoritarianism, its magnetic leader, its mass appeal, its appeal to the love of glory—with the growing antiparliamentarianism, the strident militarism, and the political anti-Semitism. Barrès' national republicanism was more appealing than Maurras' monarchy.

But in all this the eyes of the counter-revolutionaries, as both Halévy and Brogan have suggested, were on the wrong revolution, on the political noise of France, rather than the industrial hum of England. They were too eager to see the red carnation of Boulanger triumph over the red flag, and not sufficiently interested in real, fundamental changes in social life.