

# Religion, politics and preferment in France since 1890

*La Belle Époque and its legacy*

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Maurice Larkin

*Richard Pares Professor of History, University of Edinburgh*



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# Contents

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<i>Preface</i>	page ix
<b>Part 1. As it was: Catholics and the Republic, 1890–1914</b>	1
1 Ralliés and <i>dérailleurs</i> : Catholics and subversion	3
2 <i>Le sabre et le goupillon</i> : Catholics and the Army	29
3 <i>Raison d'état, raison d'église</i> : the Roman dimension	53
<b>Part 2. As it was: Catholics and state employment, 1890–1914</b>	69
4 Problems and principles	71
5 Patterns of preferment: sectors with teeth	88
6 <i>Ronds-de-cuir, genoux-de-chameau</i> : other sectors	107
7 The Brotherhood at work	119
8 Marianne at school	128
<b>Part 3. As it became, 1914–1994</b>	145
9 <i>La grande illusion?</i> 1914–1939	147
10 The leopard's spots: 1940–1960	174
11 Croquet through the looking glass: rules and identity in question, 1960–1994	194
<i>Map: Religious observance in France, c. 1960.</i>	206
<i>Notes</i>	207
<i>Sources</i>	232
<i>Index</i>	240

# 1 Ralliés and *dérailleurs*: Catholics and subversion

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## **'Les deux France'**

When Disraeli spoke of Britain as 'two nations', the division he saw was primarily socio-economic. When French writers spoke of 'les deux France', the division they had in mind was primarily political. On the one side there was democratic France, heir to the Revolution and optimistic in its faith in the power of reason and knowledge to create a better future. On the other there was conservative France, sceptical about mankind's capacity for progress unless guided by its tried-and-true mentors – the ruling elites whose experience, education and material stake in the country guaranteed stability and common sense, and whose entitlement to lead the nation was buttressed by the legacy of Church and monarchy. If French Socialists were more inclined to share Disraeli's socio-economic vision of the divided nation, even they frequently resorted to the political imagery of 'les deux France'. For them, as for Clemenceau, 'la Révolution est un bloc' – with the Church squarely placed in the tradition of repression and distrust of human nature. For these reasons the governments of the Third Republic felt the need to be wary about placing committed Catholics in positions of power and influence. Catholics for their part riposted that the Third Republic was indeed 'deux France' – 'la république des camarades', where favour and advancement went to the supporters of the ruling Republican parties, and an outer wilderness where committed Catholics were condemned to keep company with other pariahs of the regime, deprived of public outlets for their talents, other than the armed services and the diplomatic corps. Polemicists described them, in Tertullian's phrase, as 'exiles in their own country'.<sup>1</sup>

The prime purpose of this book is to investigate the truth of such a claim. But a major problem for contemporaries – and for present-day historians – was how to define a Catholic. There were *catholiques avant tout* whose personal lives were strongly influenced by their religious beliefs, and whose political choices were strongly influenced by what they

thought to be in the best interests of the Church – even if it was at the expense of their own ambitions or the material interests of their own particular social group. There were others whose Catholicism was essentially a product of their social background – part of a package of upbringing and group loyalties. They would defend Church interests as part of this package, but the Church could not necessarily rely on them if group and Church interests parted company on political issues. And between these two categories there was an infinitude of intermediary positions, which the occupants themselves would have been hard put to define or fully comprehend. There was also much overlap and shifting of positions. Many ‘social-package’ Catholics became *catholiques avant tout* and periodically found themselves at odds with their social peers on specific matters. And in a country where the vast majority of people were christened as Catholics and counted on a religious marriage and burial, there was the great amorphous mass of ‘don’t really know or care’ whose religious allegiance was as vague and marginal as the appellation ‘C. of E.’ in British army records – which covered anyone who did not specifically claim to be something else. The breadth of meaning to ‘Catholic’ in France often surprised self-professed Catholics in predominantly Protestant cultures, for whom Catholicism meant allegiance to a distinctive minority with an uncompromising code of beliefs and practices which one accepted or rejected as a whole rather than in parts. Indeed the easy-going uncertainty of many self-styled Catholics in France was much more comprehensible to an English ‘C. of E.’ or similar adherent to a majority faith, whose nominal membership entailed little personal inconvenience and was apparently compatible with a wide range of life-styles and political options.

A study of this kind has to limit itself to the problems of ‘practising Catholics’ – those with some degree of commitment to the Church – even if this epithet embraced not only *catholiques avant tout* but a sizeable slice of the ‘social-package’ variety as well. But it was precisely this bunching together of elements from both categories as ‘practising Catholics’ that gave rise to many of the difficulties and injustices of Republican governments in their dealings with the Church. France was spared the tagging of rival ethnic groups as ‘Catholic’ and ‘Protestant’ that bedevils the politics of Ulster. Yet there was an analogous tagging of conservative and anti-Republican groups in France as ‘Catholic’, because, as with Irish Republicans, many of their members were self-professedly Catholic. The exclusion of such groups from certain branches of the public services took in its wake the exclusion of committed Catholics who were of no particular political persuasion and were not necessarily ill disposed towards the governments of the Republic, despite the anticlerical record

of a fair number of them. Yet it would be a distortion of the facts to see the exclusion of these Catholics as merely a crude failure to discriminate between Catholics *tout court* and Catholics who were opponents of the government and its policies. There was unquestionably much intrinsic matter that set Church and Republic against each other.

The importance and stridency of religious issues in French politics partly reflected the fact that the dominant spokesman of religious interests in France was the highly disciplined and doctrinally monolithic Catholic Church, with its world-wide commitments and complex diplomatic concerns. France lacked the religious pluralism of several of her neighbours, where denominational diversity tended to blur and soften the confrontations of Church and State. The limited headway made by the Reformation in sixteenth-century France had left Protestantism vulnerable to persecution by Catholic monarchs, with the result that it had only a small numerical base. Even in the 1890s baptised Protestants were well under a million, perhaps 800,000, of whom the bulk belonged to the Calvinist *Eglise Réformée* and most of the others to the Lutheran *Eglise de la Confession d'Augsbourg*. Jews probably numbered about 80,000. The fact that Protestantism lacked the administrative and doctrinal unity of the Catholic Church allowed a greater diversity of opinion within it, which rendered it less intransigent towards the ideas and attitudes of secular Republicanism; and this allowed it to cohabit reasonably comfortably with the militant secularism of the late nineteenth century. Much of the conflict between Church and State under the Third Republic was for intellectual control of the rising generation. During the early years of the Third Republic, the Church had openly sympathised with the monarchists – seeing them as a bulwark against the secular ideals of the more militant Republicans. For the Republicans it was a matter of deep concern that a large minority of the children of France were educated in Catholic schools, where they were subjected to irrational Christian concepts such as Revelation and imbued with hostile attitudes towards the Republican establishment. The result was a long struggle, culminating at the turn of the century in the dispersal of thousands of monks, friars and nuns, the closure of many of their schools, and the disestablishment of the Church in 1905.

In France as a whole in the 1890s, well over 90 per cent of the population had been baptised as Catholics. Yet on reaching adolescence, the great majority ceased to go to Mass; and their subsequent visits to Church were largely restricted to the *rites de passage* of marriage, christenings, *communions solennelles* and burial. This was a situation which had its reflection in other denominations, but which was arguably more significant and disturbing for Catholics, in that they had been

traditionally taught that deliberate non-attendance at Sunday Mass was a matter of grave sin. The reasons for this decline are familiar enough. In much of western Europe the traditional social compulsions to church-going were eroded by the massive socio-economic changes of the nineteenth century; but these were compounded in France by the experience and legacy of the French Revolution, which inaugurated periods of government hostility. At the same time the Revolutionary and Napoleonic inheritance laws, with their equal division of property among heirs, created for the peasantry a tension between traditional Church teaching on sexual morality on the one hand, and, on the other, the growing economic imperatives in France to limit family size. By the turn of the century only a fifth or a quarter of the adult French population could be regarded as practising Catholics, in that they went to Mass regularly on Sundays and outwardly conformed to the other prescriptions of the Church, such as Eastertide communion. And of these, the majority were women. Observance was highest in the remote pastoral areas of France, such as the Breton peninsula, the Massif Central, and the eastern uplands, where there was less sustained contact with the changing patterns of secular behaviour and attitudes, and where traditions lasted longer. But it was also high in those areas of France that bordered on the parts of Belgium and the German Rhineland where Catholicism was traditionally strong-rooted, and which had not been subject to anticlerical programmes on the scale of those of Republican France, except during their brief period of annexation to France during the French Revolution. Catholic observance was likewise strong in those parts of France where there had traditionally been confrontation between Catholics and Protestants – and where regular church-going was an assertion of tribal loyalty (see map on p. 206).

### **L'Esprit Nouveau**

By the late 1880s it was evident to many percipient Catholics that the Republic was there to stay – and that until the bulk of French Catholics accepted the fact, the Church could not expect better treatment from the politicians who ruled France. The collapse of Boulangism in 1889 confirmed Pope Leo XIII in this view and resulted in the encyclical of February 1892 advising French Catholics to accept the Republican regime. Concern for their well-being, however, was not the only reason for this eminently sensible step. As demonstrated in later pages (pp. 54–8), he and his Secretary of State, Cardinal Mariano Rampolla, entertained vain hopes that this conciliatory move towards the French government might induce it to support the Pope in his various attempts

to recover Rome which the Papacy had lost to the Italian government in 1870. While this hope was to remain a pathetic illusion, the papal policy of a *ralliement* to the Republic was undoubtedly of unqualified benefit to the Church in France. The move was welcomed by disillusioned monarchists who were looking for an occasion to drop old loyalties which had become an embarrassment, and join forces with conservative Republicans against left-wing demands for social reform. At the same time the moderate Republicans who were in office in the mid 1890s were glad enough to have the support of Catholics against the Left – and were prepared to resist the demands of militant secularists for further anticlerical legislation. This was notably true of the ministries of Charles Dupuy (May 1894–January 1895), Alexandre Ribot (January–October 1895) and Jules Méline (April 1896–June 1898). The Catholic Ralliés had some thirty to forty seats in the Chamber of Deputies which, when added to the two hundred and fifty-odd moderate Republicans, gave these governments a comfortable majority against the Radicals and Socialists, as well as marginalising still further the fifty or so members of the dissident Right. Until ill-health weakened his voice, their most effective speaker was the widely respected if often mistaken Albert de Mun, who had abandoned royalism in obedience to papal policy. Ironically their most representative figures, the committed Republicans, Etienne Lamy and Jacques Piou, were both outside parliament in the mid-nineties, although playing major roles in the 1898 electoral campaign. Indeed by the middle of the decade it seemed that Catholics were well placed to become part of the conservative Republican establishment, with the more fashionable Catholic schools attracting a growing clientele from staunch Republican families who were seduced by their social distinction and conscious emphasis on character-building. While Catholics with a social conscience might regret that the Church was being welcomed into the Republican fold for the wrong reasons, this so-called ‘*esprit nouveau*’ between Church and government had the merit of removing the religious issue and the constitutional issue from the forefront of French politics and clearing the parliamentary decks for the discussion of the basic social and economic issues that dominated politics in most advanced parliamentary democracies.

The significance of these developments for the main theme of this book was that entry into the more political branches of the Civil Service was likely to become easier for those committed Catholics who had hitherto been regarded with suspicion. Indeed, as later chapters will demonstrate, the Méline ministry (April 1896–June 1898) was already seeing a softening of the situation.

Yet there were unquestionably a large number of Catholics who

resented the Pope's advice to accept the Republic; and of those who ostensibly followed it, many did so merely to stand on firmer ground in their fight against Republican ideals. The explosion of the Dreyfus Affair in the late 1890s seemed to offer them – and their opponents – the opportunity to snuff out the *esprit nouveau* and realign the nation's politics along the old fault lines of the religious and constitutional issues. It was this that called into question once more the fitness of committed Catholics for employment in positions of public trust and gave rise to demands that all members of the *fonctions publiques*, including officers of the armed services, be products of the state school system (see pp. 79–81). More tangibly, it led to a sustained attack on the counter-system of Catholic private schools – where so many Catholic officers and civil servants were educated – and ultimately resulted in the closure of over nearly a third of them (see pp. 43–4).

It is arguable that the Dreyfus Affair itself brought nothing fundamentally new to French politics, but merely revealed with startling clarity the division that still existed between 'les deux France'. It gave militant secularists the opportunity to recreate the old Republican concentration of the pre-Ralliement period. Radicals and Socialists were able to reinflate the clerical spectre; and many Socialists saw the Affair as a chance for their party to come in out of the cold – while the more sanguine among them hoped that the generous Republican *élan*, engendered by the Affair, would gather a momentum that would eventually carry government activity into the sphere of social reform.

Although the courtmartialing of Dreyfus for allegedly supplying military secrets to Germany dated back to 1894, it needed the suicide in August 1898 of one of Dreyfus's principal accusers, Colonel Hubert Henry, to multiply public misgivings about the conviction and make a retrial inescapable. Anti-Republicans now feared that public opinion would sway in favour of Dreyfus and destroy the image they had created of a vilified army valiantly protecting France against the traitors that the Republic had set in its midst – not only Dreyfus himself, but the Jews, Protestants and Freemasons with whom the Republic was allegedly colonising the public services. This campaign to use the Affair as a stick to beat the Republic was in danger of collapse; and it was in a mood of desperation that the more militant among them turned their minds to a *coup de main*. Such action might also benefit from the current wave of industrial unrest in Paris and from the government's embarrassment over its recent capitulation to Britain over the Fashoda episode of September 1898.

The historian is confronted with two problems. In the first place, there is still disagreement as to whether this subversive activity amounted to a

serious threat to the Republic. And, secondly, it is still debated whether the degree of Catholic involvement justified the subsequent reprisals against Catholic schools and against the Catholic presence in certain branches of the public services. This chapter seeks to clarify both issues in the light of little-used archival evidence.

### The events of 1898–9

Any examination of these problems inevitably starts with Paul Déroulède, leader of the Ligue des Patriotes; but other elements among the Right-wing opponents of the regime sought to profit from his activities. Speculation has surrounded the degree of involvement of the Army, the monarchist pretenders and the Church; and all of them were caught in varying degrees in the retribution that followed – with the Church arguably the prime victim of the retaliatory action of the successive governments that came to power with a mandate to root out the sources of subversion. Clarification of these issues has been aided by the release of three major sets of documents at the Archives Nationales in Paris and by the growing range of papers now available in various ecclesiastical archives in Rome – particularly those of the Jesuit and Assumptionist orders, and of the Vatican and papal Secretariat of State.<sup>2</sup> Of the three French collections, the papers of Paul Déroulède are the least illuminating in that they reveal disappointingly little about his activities in 1898–9. They largely consist of letters addressed to him; and it would appear that the more revealing ones were ultimately destroyed, following the non-fulfilment of his intention to write a personal account of his political activities. The surviving letters confirm the impression that public esteem for his patriotism was much more widely felt than sympathy for the plebiscitary republicanism which he and his Ligue des Patriotes had also come to represent. But they leave no doubt about the resplendent cult-image he enjoyed among the *sociétés de tir et de gymnastique* and in the café-concerts of the artisan belt and elsewhere. The headed notepaper of his correspondents gives tantalising glimpses of the widely entrenched demi-culture of popular patriotism. ‘Georges Lenique. Le Turco Virtuose. Dans ses Chansons et Scènes Militaires avec sonneries de clairon’ or ‘Le Zouave Leprince. Le Barde Militaire. Scènes d’Afrique. Chansons Vécues’.<sup>3</sup> And on a more exalted thespian level, Déroulède’s admirers included international celebrities such as the indomitable Sarah Bernhardt – who, when he returned from political exile in 1906, was to send him an enthusiastic telegram, regretting that the recent injury to her leg prevented her coming to kiss him in person ‘for I am nailed to my bed by order of the surgeon’.<sup>4</sup>

Déroulède was not a practising Catholic in any meaningful sense of the word, but claimed to be a 'Christian republican'. 'I have fought the clergy, although I am a believer. I am a man of no sect, because I hate all types of intolerance.'<sup>5</sup> But he was opposed to disestablishing or weakening the Church since this would imperil 'the fund of moral force that we all sooner or later need in the restoration of *la patrie*'.<sup>6</sup> There was a similar ambivalence about the beliefs of his principal lieutenant, Marcel Habert: 'I am a Catholic but a Gallican Catholic; I am a Catholic in the French fashion, not the Roman.'<sup>7</sup> And he blamed the Third Republic for bringing about an increased intervention of the Pope in French affairs – presumably a reference both to its persecuting policies and to the Ralliement. Déroulède's sincerity, generosity and flamboyance gained him the liking – often an amused admiration – of many Catholics who disagreed with his politics; Pierre Veillot of *L'Univers* was a typical example. After Déroulède's abortive coup of 1899, Veillot was among those who urged that he be punished with five years' exile, rather than imprisoned – a solution that eventually became a reality.<sup>8</sup> And his many admirers among the senior clergy were to include Archbishop Ricard of Auch.<sup>9</sup> Indeed the formal tribute at his funeral in 1914 was given by Bishop Henri Chapon of Nice, a man whose political sympathies were poles apart from Déroulède's (see pp. 64–6) but who admired in him his patriotism and generosity of character.<sup>10</sup>

Affectionate esteem was one thing – political collaboration another. Several prominent laymen and ecclesiastics played an ambivalent role in the events of 1898–9. The laymen included political associates of Déroulède, who were thought of primarily as anti-Republican politicians rather than spokesmen of Catholic interests – although in periods of anti-clerical government the distinction was not always easy to make. Edouard Archdeacon was to be at Déroulède's side during his ill-fated attempt in 1899 to deflect the Army against the Elysée (see pp. 20–4); and when he subsequently slid into parliament with the Nationalist landslide in the Paris elections of 1902, he came to be popularly regarded as a paladin of the Church during the anticlerical onslaught of the years that followed. Archdeacon was a financial buttress of *Le Drapeau*, the daily newspaper of the Ligue des Patriotes, which Maurice Barrès edited. The same crusader's cross was popularly accorded to another financial pillar of *Le Drapeau*, the immaculate Comte Boni de Castellane. Although Castellane was on close personal terms with the Orleanist pretender – and later enjoyed affable relations with the Bonapartist claimant – he increasingly regarded a plebiscitary republic as the only realistic alternative to the existing regime.<sup>11</sup> A product of both the Marianist Collège Stanislas (see pp. 38–9), and more briefly the Jesuit Ecole Ste

Geneviève, he had at one time considered studying theology, before the attractions of *la vie mondaine* and the opposite sex diverted his energies to becoming France's best-dressed man and leader of fashion – 'pourri de chic', as a wistful admirer once remarked. His marriage to the American heiress, Anna Gould, multiplied his material means for pursuing this role, as well as giving him the wherewithal to help his political friends, including the Ligue des Patriotes. But he described his wealthy wife as 'a shrew'; and it was claimed that, when conducting guests around the Palais Rose that he had built with her money in the Avenue du Bois, he referred to the conjugal bedroom as 'la chapelle expiatoire'.<sup>12</sup> His subsequent defence of the Church in parliament led to his being widely if undiscerningly viewed as one of the leaders of the Catholic cause in France – especially by foreigners, including several major Vatican figures. The Catholics *avant tout* were only too glad to have support from anywhere, and were consequently happy to let the illusion stand. The price was paid in 1906, when Castellane's divorce from Anna Gould scandalised foreign opinion, especially in America, where Catholics had been lavish in their promises of financial aid to the French Church.<sup>13</sup> Even so, he took his Catholicism sufficiently seriously not to marry again, following the Vatican's refusal to grant him an annulment; and he modestly prefaced his memoirs with the declaration, 'j'ai conscience de demeurer fidèle à ce que j'ai voulu être: un catholique, un Français, un Castellane'.

Among Déroulède's ecclesiastical sympathisers, the Assumptionists and their daily newspaper, *La Croix*, had consistently given Déroulède a good press since the reconstitution of his league in September 1898; but *La Croix's* respect for papal directives had inhibited it making a direct demand for a stronger regime. The Assumptionists had already incurred the displeasure of the Pope by their virulent antisemitism and their half-hearted reaction to the papal injunction to form tactical alliances with Méline's moderate Republicans in the 1898 elections. In a highly ambiguous article of 19 January 1899, *La Croix* declared, 'On all sides people are demanding a strong-fisted man, determined to devote his life to liberating France from the traitors, *sectaires*, and imbeciles who are betraying her to the foreigner.' But it went on to say that the nation's infidelity to God had yet to be expiated; and until that time 'Christ must inflict on the Eldest Daughter of the Church a punishment reminiscent of his own passion. That is why he has allowed her to be betrayed, sold, jeered at, beaten, covered with spittle, and crucified by the Jews.' Even so, the Assumptionists were to take a close interest in Déroulède's preparations for a coup in February 1899.<sup>14</sup>

As did the Orleanists – whose papers in the Archives Nationales have

much to say on the events of 1898–9.<sup>15</sup> Despite the Pope's encyclical of 1892, many Catholics remained sympathetic to Orleanism, especially since it had shed the last vestiges of the Voltairian liberal image that it had inherited from the first half of the century. This metamorphosis arose from two factors. The death of the Comte de Chambord in 1883 had made Orleanism heir to the Legitimist as well as to the Orleanist branches of French Royalism, while the defection of so many of the *haute bourgeoisie* and the liberal intelligentsia to the Republic had deprived Orleanism of many of its ablest and most percipient supporters. The influx of Legitimists and the departure of commerce and industry gave conservative landed wealth a proportionally stronger voice in the counsels of the movement in the short run – even if this was offset by the long-term decline of agriculture as a source of wealth and political influence. At the same time the growth of a Right-wing lower-middle class in some cities provided anti-Republican movements with new followers who sought protection against loss of identity in a changing society; and those of them who chose Royalism tended to strengthen its illiberal wing. Then came the cruellest blow of all, Pope Leo XIII's exhortation to French Catholics to desert the monarchists and accept the Republic. The obvious attractions of joining forces with conservative Republicans against the rising strength of the French Left were now even harder to resist, with the result that Royalism was increasingly left with hard-core loyalists, less amenable to arguments of common sense and compromise.

To compound their problems, the death of the Comte de Paris in 1894 left the party in the hands of Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, who, while favoured with youth and good looks, was impetuous and lacking in political acumen. Moreover his inclination for a life of pleasure meant that at crucial political junctures he was usually far from where he could take advantage of the crisis. This was true of each of the critical months of October 1898 and February, July and August 1899.

January and February 1898 had seen a wave of antisemitic riots in France and Algeria, incited by antisemitic leagues but having their roots in the combined effects of the economic malaise of the winter of 1897–8 and the animosities stirred up by the Dreyfus Affair. There existed a traditional antisemitism among many members of the Catholic landed aristocracy, aggravated by the agricultural depression of the late nineteenth century. But the 1890s saw the growth of a strong urban petit-bourgeois antisemitism whose potentiality for violence was startlingly revealed in these recent riots. Among the Pretender's advisers, the Comte Eugène de Lur-Saluces and André Buffet saw antisemitism as a means of broadening the social base of Royalism and providing it with

a rank and file that was prepared to use physical intimidation to achieve its ends: 'which of course is not to say that the Jews will be pillaged or expelled'.<sup>16</sup> July 1898 had already found Buffet establishing contact between the Pretender and Jules Guérin's Ligue Antisémitique. The league prided itself on the enthusiasm of its members: some of its central figures genially signed their letters 'Bien antisémitiquement à vous'.<sup>17</sup> The prime attraction of the league to the Royalists was its exaggerated claim to command the services of a sizeable contingent of strong-arm men, mainly recruited from the butchers and slaughterhouse-men of La Villette. The Ligue also contained a considerable number of committed Catholics – notably in the eleventh *arrondissement*.<sup>18</sup> Even the Rallié deputy, the Abbé Hippolyte Gayraud, had expressed an interest in the Ligue, writing to Guérin in April 1897, 'a true Christian democrat can only be a fervent antisemite'.<sup>19</sup> Guérin, an unsavoury swindler, sought to instruct the Duke on what he should do in the present political situation. 'This movement is Caesarian; but Monseigneur is in a position to take it over – by loudly affirming his readiness to enter the fray, *if necessary*. If a crack appears, *everything is possible!!!* It is up to us to make sure that the crack appears *in the right place*.'<sup>20</sup> Just such a crack seemed offered by Déroulède's attempted coup in the following month.

The Duke had been a pupil in the early 1880s at the Marianist Collège Stanislas in Paris; but he was subsequently transferred to St Mary's College, an exiled French Jesuit school near Canterbury, at a time when the popularly portrayed *éminence noire* of clerical intrigue and influence, Father Stanislas du Lac, was rector. The Duke was generally regarded in ecclesiastical circles as feckless and lacking the qualities of his father. Leo XIII – who as father of the faithful continued to be on courtesy terms with the Duke, despite the Ralliement – would ask visiting members of his entourage, 'The Duc d'Orléans, has he settled down yet – is he calmer?' And the Papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Rampolla: 'your prince, has he become a little more sensible?'<sup>21</sup> If Leo was prepared to show the Orléans family a benign if conditional courtesy, he regarded them as politically finished; in the words of the Papal Nuncio in Paris, Mgr. Benedetto Lorenzelli, 'The Duc d'Orléans has no chance; he has leaders but no army.'<sup>22</sup>

Yet a number of the senior French clergy continued to see in him the only hope for France. Bishop de Cabrières of Montpellier wrote to the exiled Pretender at the end of December 1898, advising a clandestine pilgrimage to Lourdes or Fourvières so that he might be blessed with a son.<sup>23</sup> The suggestion was not without a certain unconscious piquancy, since the Pyrenees were one of the agreed secret entry points for the Duke in the event of an impending coup.<sup>24</sup> The Assumptionists, while

sticking to the letter if not the spirit of the Ralliement, had established amiable relationships with the Royalist election committees in the 1898 elections. Much to the Pope's annoyance, the Assumptionist electoral organisation, Justice-Egalité, had preferred to do deals with Catholic candidates of any provenance, Royalists included, rather than follow his strategy of supporting Méline's ministerial moderates in the interests of keeping out anticlericals.<sup>25</sup>

As for the Jesuits, one of the four provincial heads in France reported to the General of the order in 1896 and 1898 that 'the Pope's political instructions [i.e. the Ralliement] are still meeting with the strong repugnance of several members'.<sup>26</sup> The General for his part questioned the French Jesuits on accusations that they were anti-Republican, partly because their schools were supposedly dependent on the money of the aristocracy. The respondents were quick to point out that the aristocracy represented only a small minority of their school clientele, and that in these circumstances 'we could not express monarchical sentiments without *ipso facto* affronting a large number of families and losing their confidence. While such sentiments could be expressed at other times, this has long since become impossible.'<sup>27</sup> In any case, when it came to donations as distinct from fees,

Most of the nobility who have their fortune in land are now hard up. The donations that come to us are given by the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie . . . [Aristocratic] families, by contrast, give little because they are impoverished by the legal system of divided inheritance, by the long-standing agricultural crisis and much else. Those who are rich have too many financial responsibilities and needs. For example, I have long-standing relations with the Duc de Rohan and the Duc de Larochevoucauld Doudeauville, but have they ever given me a centime?<sup>28</sup>

Prudence, or perhaps ignorance, prevented him adding that the Duc de Doudeauville's finances were too heavily committed to helping the Royalists for there to be much to spare for the Jesuits.<sup>29</sup>

The Jesuit who was most widely accused by the popular press of complicity with anti-Republican sentiment in the 1890s was Father Stanislas du Lac, who had been responsible for the Pretender's education during his Canterbury schooling. Yet the anticlerical *Lanterne* percipiently and prophetically wrote of du Lac in 1913, 'He understood that despite everything, the people were going over to the Republic, and that the Church had only one way of keeping its power: it would be to put the Republic in the hands of a soldier whom the Company [of Jesus] had shaped. This dream preoccupied him for thirty years.'<sup>30</sup> This dream – if indeed he had it – was to become a reality in 1958 when General de Gaulle took over France and then reshaped the regime in a semi-