MAURRAS, Charles (April 20, 1868, Martigues, France – November 16, 1952, Tours, France)

Charles Maurras was a controversial French poet and political theorist. Born in southern France to a royalist mother, Maurras became notorious during the Dreyfus Affair, when his incendiary journalism propelled him to the front ranks of French monarchism. Between 1899 and 1908, Maurras consolidated his control over the political movements and newspapers at the heart of the *Action française*. This movement, made up largely of Catholics and rowdy students in the Latin Quarter, channeled the royalist and anti-republican sentiments of many Frenchmen. While Maurras was himself an agnostic, he courted Catholic support in line with his Comte-inspired belief that religion was necessary to any stable social order. The Vatican condemned Maurras’s movement in 1926. Nevertheless, Maurras continued to influence a generation of French conservatives, many of whom turned to fascism. Maurras himself often used anti-Semitic rhetoric and served multiple jail sentences for threatening violence against republican politicians. When France fell to Germany in 1940, Maurras supported Marshal Pétain and his authoritarian, Vichy regime. For this collaborationism he was imprisoned after the war.

Bibliography: His entry at the Académie Française website (http://www.academie-francaise.fr/les-immortels/charles-maurras).

James Chappel