

Daniel Rickenbacher

**The Anti-Israel Movement in Québec in the 1970s:
At the Ideological Crossroads of the New Left and
Liberation-Nationalism**

Abstract

Since the late 1950s, Third World nationalism in Algeria, Vietnam, and the Middle East had fascinated radical Québec nationalists. Québec nationalism's militant arm, the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ), styled itself as a national-liberation movement fighting against Anglo-Canadian exploitation and oppression. After the Six-Day-War, the PLO became a significant source of inspiration for these elements. Québec was their Palestine, as one prominent Québec Nationalist asserted. This militant Québec nationalism coincided and often overlapped with the rise of the New Left at Québec's universities and in its unions. Like its European and American counterparts, the Québec New Left adopted the ideologies of anti-imperialism and anti-Zionism, and in 1972, the Québec-Palestine Association was established in this milieu. Anti-imperialism combined the Marxist analysis of class struggle with a nationalistic worldview, which saw the world divided between oppressor and oppressed nations. For the New Left, Israel became the epitome of an oppressor nation. It was associated with all the supposed vices of the West: Racism, capitalism, inauthenticity, and militarism. This paper sheds light on the founding years of the Québec anti-Zionist movement in the early 1970 and discusses the themes and images it used to describe Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Furthermore, the paper investigates whether these articulations a genuine critique of Zionism and Israeli policies or whether they were, instead, a reflection of antisemitic stereotypes. Moreover, the paper compares Québec anti-Zionism to parallel manifestations of New Left anti-Zionism in Germany, asking whether the cultural context in Québec affected the message of anti-Zionism.

Résumé

Depuis la fin des années 1950, le nationalisme tiers-mondiste en Algérie, au Vietnam et au Moyen-Orient fascine les nationalistes québécois radicaux. Le Front de libération du Québec (FLQ), bras militant du nationalisme québécois, s'est présenté comme étant un mouvement de libération nationale luttant contre l'exploitation et l'oppression anglo-canadiennes. Après la guerre des Six Jours, l'OLP est devenue une source d'inspiration importante pour ce groupe qui s'est mis à percevoir le Québec comme étant leur Palestine, tel que l'affirma un éminent nationaliste québécois. Il y eut, entre le nationalisme québécois militant et la nouvelle Gauche montante dans les milieux universitaires et syndicaux québécois de l'époque, des affinités, ainsi qu'un certain chevauchement. À l'instar de ses homologues européens et américains, la nouvelle Gauche québécoise s'est approprié les idéologies anti-impérialiste et antisioniste. En 1972, l'Association Québec-Palestine vit le jour dans ce milieu. L'anti-impérialisme combine une analyse marxiste centrée sur la lutte des classes et une vision de monde à tendance nationaliste qui conçoit le globe comme se divisant entre oppresseurs et opprimés. Pour la nouvelle Gauche, Israël constitue l'État oppresseur par excellence. On lui prêtait tous les vices occidentaux : ra-

cisme, capitalisme, inauthenticité et militarisme. La présente étude éclairera l'émergence de la mouvance antisioniste québécoise du début des années 1970. Pour ce faire, nous aborderons les thèmes et l'imagerie dont la nouvelle Gauche québécoise pro-palestinienne s'est servie pour décrire Israël et le conflit israélo-arabe, et ce, tout en cherchant à déterminer si leur approche relevait d'une critique profonde du sionisme et des politiques israéliennes ou si celle-ci était simplement le reflet superficiel de stéréotypes antisémites. Par ailleurs, nous comparerons l'antisionisme québécois aux manifestations de l'antisionisme au sein de la nouvelle Gauche allemande, en demandant si le contexte culturel du Québec eut un impact quelconque sur le message des antisionistes québécois.

For the supporters of the Palestinian cause in Québec, the year 1981 brought two significant successes. In November 1981, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) opened an information office in Montreal to enhance its ties with Québec and raise awareness for the Palestinian cause.¹ The new PLO office was housed in the premises of the teachers' union CEQ (fr. Centrale des enseignants du Québec), underscoring the strong link between the pro-Palestinian scene and the trade unions. In an interview with the *Canadian Jewish News*, Abdallah Abdallah, the PLO representative at the Arab League Office in Ottawa, enumerated the trade unions' support as one reason for opening the PLO office in Montreal. Additionally, he cited the fact that the French-Canadian media were friendlier to the Palestinian Cause than the Anglophone ones as another critical factor. Edmond Omran, a 35-year-old Palestinian, served as the new office's chief. The diplomatic post represented a career advancement for him. From 1978 until 1979, Omran served as assistant director of the PLO office in Brussels under Naim Khader.² In early December 1981, Abdallah and Omran attended the 8th Congress of the Parti Québécois (PQ) as the PLO's official representatives, along with several other nationalist and left-wing groups. These included some, which, like the PLO, engaged in terrorism and armed conflict. The PQ delegates greeted the Palestinians' attendance with standing ovations. Omran hailed the event as a breakthrough: "This is the first time that a political party in North America invites the PLO to attend its congress."³ How did this apparent diplomatic breakthrough come about?

To find an answer, we have to take a step back in time and take a broader look at the history of pro-Arab lobbying in Canada, out of which grew the pro-Palestinian movement. It started in earnest in 1944 when the Lebanese Muhammed Said Mas-sud established the Canadian Arab Friendship League in Montreal to lobby Ottawa against supporting the partition of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state.⁴ In the following two decades, the growing Arab community in Canada established a plethora of national and religious organizations, of which many were active in anti-Israel activism.⁵ However, the only organization that had a lasting impact was the Canadian-Arab Federation CAF (Fr. Fédération Canado-Arabe), an umbrella organization for many pro-Arab and anti-Israeli groups, which directly lobbied the federal

government to distance Canada from Israel and recognize the PLO. Besides the local Arab-Canadian factor, since the 1950s, foreign organizations from Arab countries, such as the Arab League, also became directly involved in Canadian affairs to influence the country's foreign policy.⁶ However, these groups had no significant impact on Canada's foreign policy in those years.

Only by allying itself with local causes, particularly the New Left and the Québec separatist movement, did the pro-Arab movement eventually achieve a modicum of success. By 1970, the pro-Palestinian movement established a firm presence in Québec. In the following years, it forged close ties with influential actors in Québec society, particularly the trade unions. It was thus able to influence the province's political climate and, as a result, the PQ's foreign policy during the 1970s and 1980s. The Québec pro-Palestinian movement of this period laid the groundwork for a lively scene of pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli activism, which still exists today. However, with the growth of Québec-Israeli ties, its influence has diminished since its heyday, although it still retains a strong presence, especially in the province's institutions of higher education: In 2018, anti-Israeli weeks ("Israeli Apartheid Week") were organized at all four major universities in the city of Montreal.⁷

This paper looks at the founding moment of the Québec anti-Zionist movement, investigating its activities, ideology, and constituents. It also seeks to situate this movement in the international context of increased pro-Palestinian activism. The comparison with Western Germany, where the birth of a subculture tying the student movement, the New Left, and the Palestinian national movement together, was probably more consequential than in any other Western country, inspiring a decade of left-wing terrorism, is particularly informative. As this article will show, some forms of post-Second World War-anti-Semitism, which are thought to be especially popular in Germany, can also be found in Québec's anti-Zionist discourse. Still, anti-Zionist activists often took care to articulate their views in the language and ideology of anti-imperialism and avoid classical expressions of anti-Semitism. Anti-imperialist ideology combined different intellectual traditions, both from the right and the left, appealing to various groups, making it possible to forge an alliance between Québec and Arab nationalists, Catholic far-right and socialist activists around the anti-Zionist cause. A primary focus of this study is Michel Chartrand, a leading trade unionist, separatist activist, and anti-Zionist who, since his death in 2010, took on national hero status in Québec.

The Pro-Palestinian Turn in the Western Left

The growing popularity of pro-Palestinian politics in Québec in the late 1960s was part of a general trend in the Western Left during this period and closely followed the example of Europe. There, the pro-Palestinian turn marked a decisive break

with the post-war social democratic tradition that tended to sympathize with Israel. The horrors of the Second World War and the dangers of the Cold War shaped post-war Social Democracy. The threat of National-Socialism and later Communism forced the Social Democrats to identify with the liberal state and drop their revolutionary pretenses. Across Europe, they took part in building the social-liberal state, which represented a counter-model to totalitarianism. In Switzerland, in 1943, the first Social Democrat became a member of the governing coalition. In Germany, the Social Democratic Party finally distanced itself from its Marxist past with the adoption *Godesberger Programm* in 1959. The leading intellectuals of this period were equally invested in this social-liberal project designed to prevent a repetition of the horrors of the recent past, whose culmination was the destruction of European Jewry in the Holocaust. Within this context, the popular German philosopher Theodor W. Adorno stated in 1966 that the “demand that Auschwitz should not be repeated is the very first requirement of education. It is so much in the forefront of everything else that I do not believe I have to justify it or intend to do so.”⁸

Before the ascendancy of New Left anti-Zionism, agitation against Israel and support for the Arab states fighting its existence had primarily been the reserve of far-right, national-Bolshevist, and Arab émigré groups. In Germany, far-right activists believed that both the Third World and Germany were victims of Western colonization and, therefore, advocated an alliance between both blocs. The term “Befreiungsnationalismus” (Engl. liberation nationalism) has been coined to describe this far-right nationalist form of anti-imperialism.⁹ The term is also used in the context of the Third World, where it does not hold a far-right connotation. German liberation nationalists were particularly fascinated by Nasser’s Arab nationalism and, as a consequence, established a plethora of German-Arab friendship groups in the 1950s, antedating the New Left’s international solidarity movement in Germany by a decade.¹⁰ This far-right liberation nationalism is a generally unacknowledged precursor of New Left Third World activism in Germany. As we will see, this is also the case in Québec.

European solidarity with Israel reached its climax during the Six-Day-War, although there were clear signs by then that the pro-Israeli consensus in the political Left was beginning to crack. During the war, the German *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* SDS (Engl. Socialist German Student Union) distributed a text authored by the Marxist professor Wolfgang Abendroth, an opponent of the liberal *Godesberger Programm*, which claimed that German “philosemitism,” meaning support for the Jews and Israel, stemmed from antisemitic attitudes. In a surprising twist, support for Israel was thus construed as antisemitic. At a meeting in Frankfurt from September 4 to 9, the SDS, furthermore, adopted a resolution to claim that the conflict represented “a struggle of the Arab nations against their oppression by Anglo-American imperialism.”¹¹ The analytical framework and the language of the resolution were

strongly reminiscent of the Marxist-Leninist anti-imperialist doctrine propagated by the Warsaw pact countries. The anti-imperialist doctrine served as a justification for the de facto alliance, which came to emerge after the war between the different Palestinian paramilitary groups forming the PLO and the European New Left. In the following years, numerous Palestine Committees were established all over Western Europe.¹² Within their framework, Left-wing and Fatah/PLO activists collaborated on the local level to propagandize the Palestinian cause.¹³ Sympathy and support for Palestinian terrorism were widespread, and in the most extreme cases, New Left activists engaged themselves in anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli violence.¹⁴

It is essential to distinguish the tradition of Jewish anti-Zionism before the Holocaust and post-WWII non-Jewish anti-Zionism. Many Jews rejected Zionism when the movement gained prominence in the period from the late nineteenth century until the advent of the Holocaust for several reasons. Reform-Jewish anti-Zionism, which was particularly strong in Germany and the US, expressed fear that Zionism would estrange Jews from their host societies and increase anti-Semitism. They argued from a position of concern for Jews, not hostility. Prominent liberal Jewish anti-Zionist bodies, like the American Council of Judaism, were focused on the Jews, not the Arabs, and certainly did not identify with Arab nationalism or anti-Semitism.¹⁵ Still, they never enjoyed mainstream appeal after the Holocaust and saw a further decline after the Six-Day-War, when Jewish support for Israel in the diaspora reached new heights.¹⁶

Post-WWII non-Jewish anti-Zionism, including the New Left's anti-Zionism, tended to have very little in common with the Reform-Jewish anti-Zionism, although it often refers to it to defend itself against critics. The fundamental difference between them is that post-WWII non-Jewish anti-Zionism argues from an Arab perspective, not a Jewish perspective, claiming to seek to improve the lives of Arabs. Moreover, the New Left's anti-Zionism drew heavily on antisemitic themes to shape its ideology and was profoundly unconcerned about Jewish lives. In terms of socio-political goals, it sought to advance Palestinian nationalism, not Jewish assimilation. Unsurprisingly, New Left anti-Zionism never enjoyed the support of major Jewish organizations. Many left-wing Jews, some of them critical of Israel's policies and sympathetic to the Palestinians, have become vocal critics of New Left anti-Zionism. As a result, many former prominent Left-wing and counterculture Jewish activists have formulated sharp critiques of New Left ideology. In Germany and Austria, for instance, Dan Diner, Henryk Broder or Jean Améry, fall into this category. New Left anti-Zionism only proved attractive to a very small number of Jews, who were ready to wholly identify with Palestinian nationalism and ignore the anti-Semitism inherent to the movement.

Anti-imperialism, Anti-Zionism and Secondary Anti-Semitism

To understand the anti-imperialist advocacy of Palestinian nationalism, it is necessary to discuss briefly the complicated relationship between nationalism and socialism. Although the Communist Manifesto famously declared that the workers had no homeland, Marx had sympathized with some forms of nationalism, in particular the Irish national struggle.¹⁷ Lenin enriched the vocabulary of Socialist nationalism by stating that the “division of nations into oppressor and oppressed must be at the centre of the social democratic program since it forms the essence of imperialism.” He, therefore, advocated the right to national self-determination for “oppressed nations.”¹⁸ Seeking to gain “oppressed nations” as partners for the socialist revolution became one of the doctrines of Soviet anti-imperialist foreign policy. However, it was Realpolitik rather than moral considerations that dictated whom the Soviets considered as oppressed, as evidenced by the Soviet support for the Turkish national movement under Kemal Atatürk during its wars of annihilation against the Armenians and the Greeks.¹⁹

Marxist-Leninist ideology was not by itself inimical to Jewish nationhood. After all, the nation (and this included the Jewish nation), was a positive category in Marxist-Leninist thought. Moreover, which nation had objectively been more oppressed than the Jewish nation? Indeed, the Soviets supported some Jewish national projects inside the Soviet Union.

Communist publications, however, distinguished between the Jewish nation and Zionism and declared the latter to be an ally of imperialism and capitalism, thus reproducing the age-old antisemitic stereotype of the Jewish connection to money and power. This attitude allowed the communist regimes in Eastern Europe to start prosecuting Jews as “Zionist agents” after Israel’s founding, while at the same time claiming to be opposed to anti-Semitism. Despite the “the pro-forma distinction between ‘Jews’ and ‘Zionists,’” “Zionist” effectively became a substitute term for Jew.²⁰ In the words of Thomas Haury, who researched anti-Semitism in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Marxism-Leninism was able to integrate anti-Semitism by avoiding “the open ethnic-racial definition of the ‘Jewish people’” and replacing it “with a seemingly ‘political-economic’ one, which otherwise fulfilled the same function.”²¹ Marxism-Leninism effectively mixed the categories of social class and ethnic nation. For instance, newspapers in the GDR spoke of the existence of productive, working nations (Ger. *Werkstätiges Volk*), which were opposed by an international, antinational capitalist class, the “archenemy of all the nations.”²²

The New Left widely adopted Marxist-Leninist anti-imperialism and anti-Zionism in the 1960s and 1970s, pushing the Left to shift the centre of attention from the class

struggle to the national struggle between perceived oppressor nations and oppressed nations. The simultaneity of the Vietnam War and the Arab–Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973 gave credence to the Manichean anti-imperialist worldview, which presented these conflicts as instances of a single imperialist war against the oppressed Vietnamese and Palestinians nations. The US and Israel represented the oppressor nations *par excellence*. While the oppressed nations, such as the Palestinians, were idealized as authentic and autochthonic, the oppressors, especially Israel, were portrayed as artificial creations, which ought to be destroyed.²³ Interestingly, the New Left anti-Zionists perceived the Israelis or “Zionists” in similar ways as the antisemitic, folkish ethnonationalists of the late 19th century had perceived the Jews.²⁴

Disappointment with the local working classes, who had largely abandoned the revolutionary socialist cause, interaction with Arab and Third World students, widespread anti-Americanism, which was energized by the Vietnam War or simply a taste for exotic adventure were all factors which added to the attractiveness of anti-imperialistic and anti-Zionist worldviews for students from Berlin to Montreal in this period. There was also a psychological need to relativize German guilt for the Holocaust by casting Jews as perpetrators, as the Jewish–Austrian journalist Jean Améry already observed in 1969: “Fortunately for once the Jew was not burned, but stood there as a masterful victor, as an occupier. Napalm, and so on. A sigh of relief went through the land. Everybody could talk like the Deutsche National- und Soldaten-Zeitung.”²⁵

Such forms of post-War anti-Semitism, which seek to deny or relativize the Holocaust, are classified as secondary anti-Semitism. Holocaust inversion, branding Jews as the new Nazis with Palestinians likened to the Jews, is one popular form of secondary anti-Semitism pervasive in anti-Zionist discourse. Secondary anti-Semitism is especially common in Germany but also found elsewhere.²⁶ As we will see, it was also widespread with the anti-Zionist movement in Québec.

New Left anti-imperialism was barely distinguishable from the far-right liberation nationalism of a decade earlier, with which it shared its adulation for the Third World, its anti-Zionism, and anti-Americanism among other things. It is, therefore, of little surprise that several far-right antisemitic activists became affiliated with the New Left.²⁷ The inverse phenomenon is also quite common: Some prominent neo-Nazi and far-right activists in Germany, such as Horst Mahler or Ex-AFD politician Wolfgang Gedeon, are former New Left activists. The frequency of conversions from the New Left to the far-right and vice versa becomes better understood by recognizing that the New Left itself integrated different ideological traditions from the Right and the Left, which was also the case in Québec, as we will see.

The Nationalist Origins of International Solidarity in Québec

The pro-Palestinian movement in Québec largely developed along the same lines as in Western Europe. Its origins can be traced back to right-wing anti-imperialism. Given Québec's own experience of British conquest, many Québec nationalists and right-wing thinkers had always taken a critical stance toward European imperialism, expressing, for instance, solidarity with the Boers in their fight against the British.²⁸ Continuing in this tradition, in the 1960s, Québec separatists increasingly connected their fight against Anglo-Canadian or—as some believed—American plutocratic dominance, with other national struggles, in particular, those happening in the Third World. This emphasis on international solidarity started before the separatist movement's leftward turn in the 1960s. Thus, the far-right activist Raymond Barbeau and his Alliance Laurentienne in 1957 were among the first who likened the situation of the French in Québec to that of the colonized peoples.²⁹ Barbeau was an admirer of the national-socialist and self-styled Canadian "Führer," Adrien Arcand, having also praised his antisemitic writings.³⁰ It is worth mentioning that post-war, far-right admiration for independence movements in the Third World was not a phenomenon limited to Québec and Germany, but an international occurrence. In the US, the fascist activist Francis Yockey advocated for this line of thinking and took steps to build an alliance between the Far Right, the Soviet Union, and the Third World.³¹

In the footsteps of Barbeau, the left-wing activist Raoul Roy adopted the idea of Québec's colonized status. Roy is considered the spiritual godfather of left-wing separatism. Like with so many others, his life saw a conversion from fascism to communism. Roy propagandized the idea that Québec was a colony in the pages of his *Revue Socialiste*, which he edited since 1959. Unlike Raymond Barbeau, who had been a staunch anti-Communist, he looked to the examples of Algeria and Cuba as inspiration and envisioned a socialist Québec. Through his book service, Roy introduced the anti-colonialist works of Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi to radical circles in Québec.³² Frantz Fanon's "Wretched of the Earth" became one of the foundational texts of the New Left on a global level. His adulation of violence as a purifying force has often been blamed for inspiring left-wing terrorism and has been described as fascistic by Hannah Arendt.³³ For Roy, the conflict between Francophones and Anglophones in Québec was both a social and a national struggle, as these groups represented both ethnicities and social classes. In other words, the Francophones were both oppressed as workers and as an ethnic group.³⁴ The first manifesto of the FLQ after its establishment in 1963 took up Roy's idea. It argued that Québec had been culturally and economically colonized and that Canada was only advancing the "interests of the Anglo-Saxon capitalists."³⁵ This mélange of socialism and nationalism was not particularly innovative and closely resembled the Marxist-Leninist anti-imperialism preached by the Soviet Union, but obviously met the Zeitgeist. Across the West, the radical Left placed their hopes for the fulfillment of their revolutionary

aspirations in national liberation movements, which substituted the native working class as the primary agents of revolutions.

Michel Chartrand, a charismatic pro-separatist politician and union leader, who later became the head of the anti-Zionist movement in Québec, was among those who looked to the Third World as a model for Québec. In the early 1960s, he travelled to Cuba with two other Canadians. Afterward, he edited a public report of the trip that had left him deeply impressed with Cuba's socialism.³⁶ Like other contemporaries, Chartrand had a fascinating political career. During the 1930 and 1940s, he was an activist in the Catholic nationalist movement in Québec. These groups advocated antisemitic policies, such as a boycott campaign against Jewish businesses. One of the movement's leading ideologues, the Catholic priest Lionel Groulx, hoped that as a result of the boycott, "in six months the Jewish problem would be solved."³⁷ Besides widespread and entrenched Catholic anti-Semitism, the fact that Jews were overwhelmingly non-French speakers contributed to their being singled out by the Catholic nationalist movement as enemies.

Raoul Roy and Michel Chartrand were not the only Québec radicals who had a connection with the far-right. FLQ militant Jacques Lanctôt, whose cell was responsible for the abduction of the British emissary James Cross during the October crisis in 1970, was the son of the fascist antisemitic activist Gérard Lanctôt. Strikingly, Jacques had initially planned to kidnap a Jewish—any Jewish—diplomat.³⁸ The plan, however, was prevented when the police discovered FLQ documents detailing these schemes. Besides Jacques, two others of Gérard Lanctôt's ten children turned to left-wing extremism. Gérard had been a loyal follower of Adrien Arcand and had provided his children with a fascist education. In a radio interview in 2004, Jacques Lanctôt described his upbringing in a profoundly antisemitic Catholic milieu. Fearful of hell, the Jews symbolized Satan's presence on earth, and the United States was considered a "Jewish ghetto."³⁹ Jacques, he reported, had internalized his father's ideology, only to rebel against it in his teenage years. However, did he really rebel against it, and was it therefore merely a coincidence that Jacques, like many of the other radicals of the 1960s and 1970s, identified the same United States and the Jewish state Israel as their arch-enemies, whom their parents, under a different ideological guise, had already abhorred? Or is it not more likely that, instead, many of them chose to cloak a much deeper sentiment in the mantle of a popular left-wing ideology?

Anti-Imperialism, the FLQ, and Palestine

As shown above, the ideology of anti-imperialism, which advocated for the nationalism of the oppressed, appealed to nationalists internationally, including in Québec. Between generations, but also often within one biography itself, Liberation nationalism served as the link between the Catholic, often antisemitic, and Anglophobic

brand of Québec nationalism of the 1930s and the anti-Zionist, anti-American anti-imperialism of the 1970s. It is impossible to determine the exact moment when far-right Liberation Nationalism stopped, and the New Left's anti-imperialism started, since both ideologies share many characteristics.

More important perhaps than its meagre ideological core, anti-imperialism comprised a code language, which marked one's belonging to the international left and allowed accessing its resources. Being considered a so-called national liberation movement was, therefore, a coveted status in these years.⁴⁰ Thus, the efforts of Palestinian nationalist groups like Fatah to align with the left was awarded in 1969, when the Soviet Union recognized the Palestinian cause as "national-liberation, anti-imperialist struggle," boosting the movement immensely.⁴¹ In the same vein, the radicals in the Québec national movement also took care to coach their nationalist aspirations in the language of contemporary anti-imperialist ideology to gain international support. FLQ militants found refuge in Cuba and Algeria and received training from the Palestinian terrorist organization Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP).⁴² As shown by the examples of Palestine and Québec, the reframing of political goals in contemporary themes is often pursued strategically.

As a consequence, the influence of anti-imperialism is discernible in the writings of the FLQ's fourth wave, which sought to integrate the group within the international left. Charles Gagnon and Pierre Vallières were the leading thinkers of this generation, who gained control of the FLQ in 1965. For them, Palestine gradually became the central arena of the struggle between imperialism and the Third World. In 1970, they wrote from their prison cells: "Today, possibly even more than Vietnam, Palestine finds itself at the heart of the inter-imperialist competition of the countries that have enriched themselves through the pillaging and the forced enslavement of the countries called 'The Third World,' this enormous multinational shanty town that covers three-fourths of the World and of which Québec is also a part."⁴³ According to the FLQ militants, "Israeli Zionism (. . .) was remote-controlled and armed by Washington (. . .)."⁴⁴ Their status as oppressed nations bound the Palestinians and the French Canadians together.

The FLQ militants saw Palestinian history as a mirror image of that of Québec—and their national movement as a template for their own. "The ideal of the Palestinian resistance is identical to that of the Québec resistance, as it also surfaced at the heart of a people that history seemed to have condemned to a slow death, following the English conquest in 1760."⁴⁵ They believed that after their defeat in 1948, the Palestinians became "a pariah people which was believed to be destined to disappear by assimilation or starvation."⁴⁶ The vocabulary of "*pariah*," "*assimilation*," and genocide unequivocally evokes the Jewish experience in the 20th century and the Holocaust,

seeking thus to equate the fate of Jews and Palestinians. Following this logic, if the Palestinians were the new Jews, then the Israeli Jews, their oppressors, were the new Nazis.

The writings of Gagnon and Vallières, therefore, offer a classic example of Holocaust inversion, which is part of secondary anti-Semitism, as mentioned above. The fact that it is also quite common in Québec anti-Zionism, as indicated by other examples, suggest that (left-wing) Québec nationalism has not yet come to terms with its history of anti-Semitism, which manifested itself in the presence of active pro-fascist elements in Québec during the 1930s and 40s and nationalist demands for a restrictive admission policy for Jewish refugees. As in other countries, projecting guilt on the Jews serves the function of deflecting from this history to keep it pure and untainted.

The anti-Zionist movement in Québec, which developed in Québec in the late 1960s within the circles of the New Left, is firmly connected to the figure of Michel Chartrand.⁴⁷ Chartrand had started his political career in far-right antisemitic organizations decades before becoming a vocal enemy of Israel in the late 1960s—a period of his life which is usually ignored by the vast body of writings, movies, and broadcasts on him, as the historian Esther Delisle already noted in 2002.⁴⁸ Given the fact that Chartrand's actions and words were often denounced as antisemitic by his detractors, looking at this background is undoubtedly relevant.

In the 1930s, Chartrand was a leading member of the radical Catholic nationalist movement, acting as a spokesman the Jeunesse Indépendante Chrétienne JIC (Engl. Independent Christian Youth) and as the secretary-general of the Jeunesses Patriotes JP (Engl. Patriot Youths) since 1937, which advocated an authoritarian and antisemitic ideology.⁴⁹ The leading figures of the latter group were its founder Walter O'Leary and his brother Dostaler. They took as much inspiration from European fascism as from the nationalist teachings of Lionel Groulx. The virulently antisemitic French politician Charles Maurras and his *Action Française* had an exceptional influence on them. JP rejected parliamentary democracy and freedom of the press, and instead, advocated a totalitarian state. In its economic policy, it opposed both capitalism and communism and favoured a third way by reconfiguring of the Québec economy along the lines of the ideology of corporatism, as advocated by the Catholic Church during the 1930s. This reconfiguration implicated the replacement of the free market system with a mixed corporatist model, which would favour French Canadians and discriminate against Anglophones and Jews. In the vision of the JP, Jews would be allowed to remain in Québec, but their numbers in the liberal professions would be limited to their population share.⁵⁰

It is fair to assume as a leader of those groups, Chartrand shared their convictions.

Moreover, in an article published in 1938, when Chartrand was 22, he explicitly expressed sympathy for fascist movements, which, as in Portugal or Italy, were loyal to their Catholic heritage. Such Fascism, he claimed, would be suitable for French Canadians. Chartrand, however, criticized those Canadian fascists who admired German National-Socialism, that “deplorable and anti-Christian regime.”⁵¹ Still, he underlined that he did not “intend to lay blame on the supporters of reasonable fascism.”⁵² In this period, anti-Semitism was, of course, no reserve of the far-right, and discriminatory measures against Jews in the line of those proposed by the JP were already a reality: Many places of higher education in the US and Canada, including the English-speaking McGill University, had put quotas in place to limit the number of Jewish students. In the case of McGill, these were only abolished after the Second World War.⁵³

In the following two decades, Michel Chartrand shifted away from radical Catholic nationalism, and he became a leading union and social-democratic activist in the 1950s. After visiting Cuba in 1963, he also became invested in the international solidarity movement with the Third World. When Chartrand was elected to lead the Montreal Central Council of the Confederation of National Unions CSN (fr. *Confédération des syndicats nationaux*), he turned the CSN into a platform to promote the causes of Third World and anti-imperialist groups in Montreal.⁵⁴ The conflict between Israel and Arab-Palestinian groups gradually became the most prominent of these anti-imperialist struggles, overshadowing Vietnam.

The Beginning of Pro-Palestinian Solidarity in Québec

Michel Chartrand’s advocacy of the Palestinian cause began at the latest in 1969 when he spoke at a panel discussion at Laval University, which was organized by the Québec-Palestine Committee (Fr. *Comité Québec-Palestine*). The pro-Arab group was established in 1969 following a congress of the Canadian-Arab Federation CAF in Montreal, an organization with which it continued to entertain close relations. The CAF was an umbrella group for Arab-Canadians active in anti-Zionist campaigning. Marie-Claude Tadros-Giguère and Lois Azzaria, who was also the president of the CAF from 1969 until 1972, headed the Québec-Palestine Committee.⁵⁵

Besides Chartrand and several left-wing and Arab activists, the panel at Laval University included mainstream PQ leader René Lévesque, who justified his attendance by explaining that the PQ would eventually have a say in international affairs after achieving Québec’s independence. Lévesque joined in the vociferous denunciations of Israel, signalling a change in his stance. Lévesque had a history of making statements sympathetic to Jews and Israel. He had even once compared the national revival of the French Canadians with that of the Jews in Israel.⁵⁶ Lévesque’s originally positive attitude towards Israel shows that nothing was compelling about the

anti-Zionist direction of Québec nationalism and that closer cooperation between Israel and Québec nationalists might be a wiser policy for both sides. In the 1960s, however, Québec-Israeli ties were still underdeveloped. Only in 1976 did the Canada-Israel-Committee establish a local chapter in Québec, the Association Québec-Israel, also called *Amitiés Québec-Israël*, with around 120 members.⁵⁷

Lévesque's pro-Israeli attitude markedly changed after the Six-Day War, when he published several articles critical of Israel. For instance, he stated that Israel was established on the "back (...) of the Arabs" and condemned the influence of the "Jewish lobby" in American media and politics. Moreover, he compared Israel's conquest of Arab territories in the war to Germany's conquest of the Alsace after the Franco-Prussian War.⁵⁸ Why the comparison with Germany? Germany seemed to be the preferred historical reference when critiquing Israel. The antisemitic implication, whether overt or implicit, was always that the Israeli Jews were repeating German history and had become the new Nazis. Lévesque was influenced by the anti-Israeli voices, which gained weight in the late 1960s, also within the PQ. Expectedly, the relationship between Lévesque, the PQ and the Montreal Jewish community was fraught with tension in the coming years.

In March 1970, a committee consisting of Michel Chartrand and other activists organized the Québec-Palestine solidarity week in Montreal. It took place at different universities and CEGEPs, culminating in a demonstration in front of the US and Israeli consulates.⁵⁹ The event assembled various left-wing nationalist groups, including representatives of the FLN, the Black Panthers and the FLQ leader Charles Gagnon. To interlink the Palestinian and other Third-World movements with the Québec separatist cause, the organizers emphasized that the "Palestinian people's national liberation struggle against the imperialism of the United States and its allies is a struggle pitted against the same enemies as those of the Québec people."⁶⁰ Thus, an alliance of those who perceived themselves as oppressed, which intersectional movements of today seek to recreate, was a mark of Québec pro-Palestine solidarity before the latter term existed. The solidarity week acted as a catalyst for the pro-Palestine movement in Québec.

At the same time, Chartrand's Montreal Central Council officially embraced the Palestinian struggle. The immediate cause was a speech Palestinian activist Rezeq Faraj gave to the Central Council after an invitation by Michel Chartrand.⁶¹ Rezeq Faraj had met with Michel Chartrand at the panel discussion at Laval University in late 1969.⁶² But who was Rezeq Faraj, who came to shape the pro-Palestinian movement in Québec in the coming years together with Chartrand? Faraj was originally from Bethlehem, then part of the Jordanian ruled West Bank. He arrived in Canada in 1966 after studying engineering for two years in Germany.⁶³ At this time, Germany was the centre of Fatah's propaganda and recruitment activity in Europe, organized under

the auspices of the General Union of Palestinian Students GUPS (Ger. Generalunion Palästinensischer Studenten).⁶⁴ Whether Faraj was in any way connected to the GUPS is not known, but given that he had spent two years in the country and that he later had good relations with the PLO and Fatah, it is very likely. In a 1973 secret report, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) suspected him of being a Fatah operative and a member of its terrorist cell Black September, which had been responsible for the Munich Massacre in 1972.⁶⁵

Arab activists and organizations significantly contributed to the development of the pro-Arab movement in Québec. The Israeli victory in the Six-Day-War was a significant setback for the pan-Arab nationalism advocated by Egyptian strongman Nasser and his allies. It was also a public relations defeat since Western publics tended to sympathize overwhelmingly with the Israelis. As a result, the Information Ministers—a euphemism for propaganda—of several Arab states decided to step up their anti-Israeli propaganda and establish a propaganda fund, which would focus on the Palestinian issue.⁶⁶ The Israelis estimated that the Arab countries were investing USD 50 Million for their anti-Israeli campaign in 1969 alone.⁶⁷ The Arabs also revised their strategy. The head of the Arab Information office in New York, Fayez Sayegh, suggested they reach out to marginal groups, including the New Left, left-wing churches and Black Americans, to advocate the Palestinian cause.⁶⁸

The main body responsible for propaganda in Western countries was the Arab League. Since the mid-1950s, the Arab League, which was then dominated by Egypt, started building a worldwide network of Arab propaganda offices. The Canadian chapter of this network opened in Ottawa in 1959 under the name Arab Information Office, which also hosted a PLO operative since the early 1970s.⁶⁹ Since the mid-1960s, the Arab League sought to attach PLO representatives to its international offices to raise awareness of the Palestinian issue. In the 1970s, the PLO official Abdullah Hohd Abdullah finally joined the Arab Information Office in Ottawa. According to the RCMP, Abdullah was in close touch with the anti-Zionist scene in Montreal, which centred around Michel Chartrand and the Palestinian Rezeq Faraj.⁷⁰

Reactions to Palestinian Terrorism: Flirting with Violence

In June 1972, Faraj arranged a one-month trip for a delegation of Québec radicals to the Middle East, where they visited Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Jordan. Besides Chartrand, the delegation included Guy Bisaillon, the president of the teachers' union, the teacher Ghislaine Raymond, Rezeq Faraj, and several other left-wing activists. In South Lebanon, the delegation met with Fatah leader Arafat, who allegedly developed a good rapport with Chartrand, and other Fatah representatives. During a quick side trip to Damascus, Chartrand and Bisaillon had the opportunity to hold a speech in front of Arab teachers. On their return to Lebanon, some of the delegates

reportedly took a trip to the mountains around Beirut, travelling in a convoy of jeeps equipped with anti-aircraft machine guns. At the sounding of a siren, the convoy came to a sudden halt. To the amusement of his colleagues, Chartrand tried to operate one of the machine guns, presumably to shoot at an Israeli airplane.⁷¹ The episode hinted at Chartrand's fascination with violence, which was also evident in his support for militant actions by the FLQ.⁷²

Back in Montreal in early September 1972, Chartrand spoke to the press about his experience in the Middle East. He described Israel as an enemy of the people of the world: "It is (. . .) a small capitalist state, despite all its kibbutz [sic]. It's first and foremost a bridgehead of a big capitalist country, the United States, of American imperialism in the Middle East. It is, therefore, an enemy of Québec and all the people in the world, like the US is our enemy."⁷³ It is worth noting that at the time, Israel was governed by a left-wing coalition headed by Golda Meir.

Chartrand repeatedly made clear that he did not merely oppose Israel's policies in those areas conquered from the Arab enemy states in 1967, but its entire existence. In a speech before the CSN Central Council in autumn 1972, he described the founding of Israel as "immoral."⁷⁴ Moreover, he accused the Jews of having exploited the Holocaust to establish Israel: "What is sad is, [. . .] the Jewish people have been massacred everywhere by the Christians and especially during the Second World War. All the Western countries shut their doors in order not to permit the Jews to take refuge, and thus, Hitler had a greater chance to massacre them in all the countries. Still, they only abused international sympathy to install themselves in Palestine, and today they say that they will not leave Palestine."⁷⁵ Chartrand did not only ignore that the Jewish settlement in Palestine predated the Holocaust, but he also failed to mention that the Catholic nationalist movements he had actively supported during his youth fought the immigration of Jewish refugees to Canada. He also utilized other antisemitic themes, which will be discussed in greater detail below.

Shortly after Chartrand's press conference on 6 September 1972, Palestinian terrorists from the Fatah subgroup Black September murdered 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics. How did Michel Chartrand react to the massacre and Palestinian terrorism in general? Let us look first at how Chartrand's life has been represented in the public memory. In the biographical television series "Chartrand et Simone," directed by his son Alain Chartrand and broadcast on the public television network in Québec from 2000 until 2003, one episode briefly deals with Michel Chartrand's anti-Israeli activism. In the episode aired in 2003 during the height of the Second Intifada, there is a scene of a press conference supposedly taking place shortly after the Munich massacre in early September 1972, which seems to be a summary of several press conferences. In front of the press, Chartrand announces the creation of the Association Québec-Palestine AQP (Engl. Québec-Palestine Association). In response,

a reporter asks Chartrand whether it is appropriate to establish a pro-Palestinian group right after the Munich terrorist attack and whether Chartrand justifies Palestinian violence. Chartrand denies that he supports violence, but advocates empathy for the fate of the Palestinians.⁷⁶ The scene does not reflect Chartrand's real attitude towards terrorism but is an excellent illustration of the tension that exists between the public image of Michel Chartrand and his actual actions and convictions.

In fact, Michel Chartrand openly and consistently endorsed violence, including terrorism, against Israelis. In his presentation to the Central Council of the Confederation of National Unions in autumn 1972, for instance, he excused terrorism against Israeli civilians and likened the Israelis to the Nazis: "Well, when they speak to me about the five [sic] Israeli sportsmen who were killed in Munich, that does not make me cry. The war criminals are the people who help Israel and the people who work with Israel; these are the people who almost use the same methods that Hitler used against them, like the French in Algeria have used the same methods that the Germans used against them."⁷⁷ These words were not spoken accidentally but were repeated in a similar vein on other occasions.

In late 1972, Chartrand toured Canada to advertise the Palestinian cause. In November 1972, he spoke to the local chapter of the Arab Students Association in Toronto. In his speech, Chartrand praised the Palestinian terrorists behind the Munich massacre, unequivocally declaring: "The Palestinian commandos in Munich were heroes."⁷⁸ The left-wing newspaper *Le Devoir* reported that the Jewish attendants were outraged by these statements, shouting "Heil" and "Nazi" at Chartrand, while the Arabs clapped in support.⁷⁹ Among the latter was Edmond Omran, then a student at the University of Toronto. Impacted by Chartrand's words, Omran turned into a vocal pro-Palestinian activist, later becoming the PLO's first official representative in Québec. In 2010, almost forty years later, he reminisced about the event: "Michel was extremely brave. It was the first time I had seen him, and it was the first time I had heard someone who was part of a trade union defending the Palestinian cause."⁸⁰

While Chartrand's sympathy for Palestinian terrorism was undoubtedly a more marginal phenomenon, expressing an understanding of their assumed motives was not uncommon. As mentioned above, René Lévesque had taken a much more critical view of Israel following the Six-Day War. After the Munich Massacre, he reaffirmed his solidarity with the Palestinian national cause, condemning Palestinian terrorism in lukewarm terms: "(. . .) the Palestinians have just once more, before the face of the world, sullied their cause, which in itself was and remains a just cause. Brutally dispossessed for a quarter of a century, confined in exile while a whole new generation was born and grew up, driven to despair since the Six-Day War, the Palestinian nation feels forgotten, cut off, betrayed. In the face of Israel's imperial intransigence, the hypocritical collusion of the great powers, and the universal indifference of oth-

ers, its activists see no other recourse but to the most senseless of extremisms.”⁸¹ As a result of these statements, the pro-Israeli Canada-Israel Committee CIC accused Lévesque of supporting terrorism.⁸² Generally, Lévesque did not endorse violence, but he failed to clarify whether he condemned Palestinian terrorism for strategic reasons because it was counterproductive to the Palestinian cause, or whether he was morally opposed to it.

However, Lévesque was not an anti-Zionist like Chartrand. He pursued a vision of peaceful coexistence of Israelis and Palestinians—something which soon brought him into conflict with the hardline pro-Palestinian nationalists of the AQP, who advocated nothing less than Israel’s destruction. When Lévesque spoke at a meeting of the CAF (Engl. Canadian-Arab Federation) in 1971, many attendants attacked him when he declared his readiness to establish diplomatic relations between a sovereign Québec and Israel.⁸³ Despite the clash, the Canadian-Arab Federation again invited him to speak at their congress in May 1973. During his speech, Lévesque claimed that Israel was profiting from the powerful and influential Jewish community in the US, while the Palestinians were powerless—an idea connected to popular themes about Jewish power. However, he also used the opportunity to advocate a two-state solution, stating unequivocally that “it is beyond discussion that Israel has the right to live.”⁸⁴ Ghislaine Raymond of the AQP reacted angrily, writing in its magazine *Fe-dayin*: “Mister Lévesque had to insult the congress attendants, who reminded him of the goals of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the first of which is a democratic Palestine, where everybody can live as equals without discrimination of colour, race or religion.”⁸⁵ This supposed equality did not include the right for the Israeli Jews to give expression to their national identity.

AQP appropriated the language of non-discrimination to advocate nothing less than the destruction of Israel, an aim which fits the definition of genocide in the UN 1948 Genocide Convention. Such a goal was not achievable by the regular modes of politics and negotiation, but only through extreme violence; a level of violence which could only be enacted through terrorism or through a totalitarian state—precisely the sort of state which Chartrand had sympathized with in the 1930s. Chartrand’s and his followers’ flirtation with violence, thus hinted at their profound discomfort with politics and democracy. Chartrand seemed fully willing to give support to extreme forms of violence, as evidenced by his endorsement of killing Israeli civilians, some of them children of or themselves survivors of the Holocaust, and his dehumanization of them as “Nazis.” His anti-Zionism was never based on the classical Reform-Jewish anti-Zionism before the Holocaust, with which he had no connection, but on traditional forms of anti-Semitism.

The Association Québec–Palestine

Chartrand had decided to create a pro-Palestinian group in Montreal during his 1972 trip to the Middle East. In November 1972, several radicals met in Chartrand's apartment to establish a Montreal-based Comité Québec–Palestine, with Rezeq Faraj as its chairman. It later became known as the Association Québec–Palestine AQP (Engl. Québec–Palestine Association). The AQP regularly organized events and demonstrations and also published an official magazine *Fedayin*, which allegedly had a circulation of 5,000. Rezeq Faraj, Edmond Omran, and Ghislaine Raymond were its most frequent contributors.⁸⁶ *Fedayin* (Arab. those who sacrifice themselves) was named after the irregular Arab fighters who regularly attacked and killed Israelis, mostly civilians, since Israel's foundation. Pictures of armed Palestinians were a recurrent feature of the magazine, again underscoring Chartrand's and the AQP's fascination with violence and their support for it. The AQP formed the nucleus of the Conférence Internationale de Solidarité Ouvrière CISO (Engl. International Conference of Workers' Solidarity). CISO, which was eventually established in 1975, worked to tie together different "anti-imperialist" struggles around the world.⁸⁷

In its first year, the AQP showed little activity. The Yom Kippur War, which started with a surprise attack by Egypt and Syria on Israel on October 6, 1973, presented the AQP with an opportunity to make its views better known to a broader public. On October 9, the AQP and Arab groups organized a protest march in Montreal to express their support for the Arab belligerents and the Palestinians. During the march, which started at the McGill campus and passed the Israeli and US consulates, the demonstrators shouted slogans hailing an Arab military victory.⁸⁸ In the following years, AQP organized three to four conferences and talks each quarterly period, mainly at Québec's various campuses and CEGEPs. In January 1974, for instance, it held a Palestine Week at several universities to celebrate the ninth anniversary of the PLO. The events culminated in a panel discussion with the Kuwaiti ambassador to the UN Fayez Sayegh.⁸⁹ As mentioned above, as head of the Arab League office in New York, Sayegh had been one of the pioneers of the Arab strategy to co-opt the New Left after 1967.

The AQP was regularly involved in fundraising. During the Yom Kippur War, the AQP launched a campaign to collect money "to buy medicines and provide some support to Palestinians who (. . .) 'fight alongside their Arab brothers.'"⁹⁰ In 1974, another campaign was launched to support the Palestinian Red Cross.⁹¹ The sums raised in these efforts are unknown. Who were its beneficiaries? The collection of donations for "*Palestinian casualties*" or bereaved families had served as a code word for fundraising activities on behalf of irregular Arab fighters for decades.⁹² For instance, when Naim Khader became Fatah's official representative in Belgium, Fatah promoted him to this position by allowing him "to collect to help the families of the

resistance (. . .).⁹³ On other occasions, Fatah officials used the Red Crescent as a cover for their mission.⁹⁴ This circumstantial evidence suggests the possibility that the AQP funnelled the collected money to Palestinian militants.

The AQP fully identified with the PLO's goal and developed no independent voice during its existence. The AQP's official organ, *Fedayin*, acted *de facto* as a mouth-piece for the PLO, reprinting many PLO statements and reports from its official news agency WAFA. The few articles, which were written by the editorial staff, especially Rezeq Faraj, never deviated from the PLO line and showed no independent thought. Thus, even compared with FLQ literature, the relationship between the Palestinians and the Québec people was minimally investigated. Subsequently, the intellectual level of the publication was shallow. Slogans replaced any critical inquiry, and there was no effort to understand the sources and motivations of Arab nationalism or Zionism. Israel was generally presented as a Western, imperialist bridgehead.

Fedayin featured many articles openly supportive of terrorism. Palestinian terrorist attacks, such as the one on the Savoy Hotel in Tel Aviv in 1975, where eleven people, including several foreign tourists, were murdered, were openly celebrated. An article described the "Tel Aviv operation" as "audacious" and included pictures of the eight perpetrators, who were hailed as "martyr-heroes."⁹⁵ Even when they were the victims, Israel and its allies were blamed for the violence. In an editorial titled "Munich . . . one year after," Rezeq Faraj claimed that "the true [entity] responsible for the death of the eleven persons killed in Munich is the government of Israel and West Germany."⁹⁶ No explanation as to why this was the case was offered.

AQP activists also heavily romanticized violence. Thus, Faraj called on the Palestinian national movement to follow the slogan "always walk side by side with the bullets in the long and hard struggle against Zionism and global imperialism."⁹⁷ For the AQP, the use of terrorist attacks against all Israeli targets, civilian or military, abroad or domestic, was not only a legitimate tool in their national struggle—it was one which they glamourized.

Antisemitic themes were also common in *Fedayin*: an article by Elias Karatchy contrasting the "good Jew" of the diaspora with the "brutal, degraded" Zionist, is a good example. The article sought to draw a positive picture of the diaspora Jew, perhaps in an effort to appeal to left-wing (diasporic) Jews themselves, and warned them of the dangers of Zionism to their own existence: "A Zionist is a fanatic, and too dangerous to be unleashed, though, in the long run, his danger will paradoxically turn against his own."⁹⁸ However, despite its intent, the article's description of the diaspora Jew was not much better than that of the Jewish nationalist: "But why are the Jews, in their way, subtle, brilliant, hideous and characteristically clannish? They are the subject of beautiful errors, self-delusions and obsessed with their own worth as a

chosen people, set aside for converting the world (. . .).”⁹⁹ In the AQP’s view, a nefarious pro-Israel Jewish lobby corrupted US foreign policy, and articles supporting this worldview were quoted or copied in *Fedayin*.¹⁰⁰ Comparing Israeli Jews to the Nazis was also commonplace in the AQP milieu. During the AQP’s conference celebrating the ninth anniversary of the PLO in 1974, Michel Chartrand asserted that “the Jewish people today repeats the persecutions of which it was a victim. (. . .) It persecutes the Arabs with which it got along well before.”¹⁰¹

Anti-Racism and Anti-Zionism

Since the mid-1970s, the AQP increasingly tried to portray itself as an anti-racist-group fighting against an alleged explosion of anti-Arab racism. When announcing the Palestine Week to the press in January 1974, Faraj, for instance, alleged that there was a plot to “use of the present energy crisis, which was created by the American petrol monopolies (. . .) to whip up anti-Arab and racist feelings in the world.”¹⁰² Faraj effectively claimed that anti-Arab racism was a tool strategically used by Western oil companies against the Arabs—a statement reminiscent of conspiracy theories widely popular in the Middle East, that claim that the West is involved in a war against Islam.¹⁰³ Quite to the contrast, the oil companies were, in fact, dependent upon good relations with the Arab world and had a history of lobbying against Zionism and even refusing to employ Jews.¹⁰⁴

This anti-racist framework was applied to other situations as well. After the Munich massacre in 1972, the security services feared that the Palestinian terrorists would also attack the 1976 Olympics in Montreal. The assessment that PLO and their supporters posed a security risk to the Olympics was understandable, not least in light of the AQP’s violent rhetoric and its endorsement of PLO terrorism. When the AQP discovered in 1975 that the police had tapped their offices, they chose to interpret this as evidence for racist and discriminatory behaviour.¹⁰⁵ On 1 March 1976, an Arab-Canadian delegation consisting of Rezeq Faraj and Lois Azzaria from the Canadian Arab Federation CAF, therefore, met with Attorney General Warren Allmand to complain about “discriminatory measures.”¹⁰⁶ Allmand replied that the RCMP did not target specific groups “in a discriminatory fashion” and promised to investigate their claims.¹⁰⁷

The adoption of the anti-racism framework on the local level was part of an international effort to reframe the conflict: The Palestinian national movement, the Arab states, and their Third World and socialist allies sought to present Israel as a racist and apartheid state and ally itself to the anti-racist movement. In line with this campaign, in 1975, the conference of Non-Aligned Countries “condemned Zionism as a threat to world peace and security and called upon all countries to oppose this racist and imperialist ideology (. . .).”¹⁰⁸ The UN General Assembly followed suit, adopting

resolution 3379 in October 1975, which declared that “Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination.”¹⁰⁹ The resolution shocked the Jewish public and Israel’s supporters. Among its most fervent opponents was Daniel Moynihan, the US ambassador to the UN.¹¹⁰ For anti-Zionist activists around the world, however, it was a boost, allowing them to reach a broader part of the population, which felt naturally outraged by racism.

A Libyan Front group, EAFORD, played a significant role in promoting this anti-Zionist *cum* anti-racist narrative in Canada. On 24–28 July 1976, the Libyan Bar Association organized an International Symposium on Zionism and Racism in Tripoli, which drew 500 anti-Zionist attendants, including many from North America and Canada, such as Reverend A.C. Forrest, the literary critic Edward Said and Klaus J. Herrmann, an anti-Zionist member of B’nai B’rith Canada and a professor at Concordia University.¹¹¹ A delegation from Québec that included New Left and anti-Zionist activists also attended the conference: Besides Michel Chartrand and Rezek Faraj, CAF-president Kalem Mohammar and Yvon Charbonneau, a close collaborator of Michel Chartrand and the president of the teachers’ union CEQ, were members of the delegation.¹¹² Charbonneau was also known as an avowed anti-Zionist, who would later call on Québec teachers to teach their pupils an anti-Zionist curriculum.¹¹³

Abdullah Sharaf al-Din, the head of the Libyan Bar Association—the official organizer—was a Libyan lawyer close to Libya’s dictator Muammar Gaddafi; Gaddafi had even nominated al-Din for a ministerial office.¹¹⁴ It is quite far-fetched to assume that Gaddafi’s regime, which, since coming to power in 1969, had destroyed the remnants of the once-thriving Libyan Jewish community and confiscated its property, had any concerns about human rights—especially those of Jews, whether Zionist or not.¹¹⁵ Abdullah Sharaf al-Din opened the international conference with the following remarks: “Zionism, with its inhumane, ethnic, racist principles, with its devilish schemes, which generate chaos all over the world, with its dangerous plans to dominate, with its disregard for the appeals and resolutions of international organizations, and with its beastly octopus which has almost a decisive role in directing the policies of the greatest countries in the world, cannot be viewed as a threat to this region alone, but to the whole world.”¹¹⁶ The speech is a good illustration of the fact that anti-Zionism often only thinly veils its inherent anti-Semitism. While omitting the word “Jewish,” al-Din’s statements still referred to antisemitic conspiracy theories and themes: Zionism after the Holocaust fulfills the same functions as the ominous Jewish cabal did in the antisemitic conspiracy theories of the first half of the twentieth century: it is the powerful puppet master behind the scenes, manipulating its actors to achieve world domination.

On the last day of the conference in Tripoli, the organizers established the International Organization for the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, short EAFORD, which was to be headquartered at the seat of the Bar Association in Tripoli.¹¹⁷ The organization had all the trappings of a Libyan front group: Gaddafi gave his explicit consent to the establishment and was personally present at its foundation meeting, as attested by a photograph. Besides Abdullah Sharaf al-Din, EAFORD was headed by Anis al-Qasem, a Libyan lawyer of Palestinian origin, who had been a member of the PLO since its establishment in 1964.¹¹⁸ The Québec union activist Yvon Charbonneau was elected to the executive board of EAFORD, developing lasting ties with the Libyan front group.¹¹⁹ He became the most prominent anti-Zionist activist in Québec in the following years, replacing Michel Chartrand as the movement's figurehead.

Upon its return to Montreal in August 1976, the Québec delegation to Gaddafi's conference held a press conference, where Yvon Charbonneau declared his intent "*to combat the immense pro-Zionist propaganda that exists in Canada and Québec.*"¹²⁰ In 1977, Charbonneau formed a local chapter of EAFORD, which he chaired. It consisted of the major unions, New Left and minority organizations, as well as the anti-Zionist groups operating in Québec, including the AQP and the CAF. The group assumed the name of Mouvement québécois pour combattre le racisme MQCR (Engl. Québec Movement to Fight Racism) in 1978 and would become another purveyor of anti-Zionism in Québec. In May 1978, it organized a conference against Racism in Montreal, which affirmed UN resolution 3379, equating Racism and Zionism. The conference was attended by Anis al-Qasem and another representative of EAFORD. Among its observer organizations, the conference counted the Arab Information Office from Ottawa.¹²¹ MQCR effectively served as a hub between the traditional Arab lobby in Ottawa, the Québec New Left and Unions and the Arab regimes, in particular, Libya.

Conclusion

The creation of a robust anti-Zionist movement in Québec in the early 1970s was due to several factors: an ascendant New Left, which identified with the Palestinian national struggle, a tradition of international solidarity, which had its origins in right-wing Liberation Nationalism, and an Arab Lobby, which was willing to lend support to new anti-Zionist groups. In Québec, like in Western Europe, they adopted the ideology and language of anti-imperialism, which had been formulated by the Eastern communist regimes to justify their anti-Zionism. The distinction between the Liberation Nationalism of old and the New Left anti-imperialism was always blurry. The Québec New Left, like its German counterpart, was both a product of left-wing and right-wing intellectual traditions. Québec anti-Zionism also incorporated folkish anti-Semitism, which had deep roots in Québec. Unsurprisingly, Québec New Left anti-Zionism showed significant elements of primary and

secondary anti-Semitism. The latter is especially common in Germany, but is also present in Québec, as shown in this study.

One form of secondary anti-Semitism, Holocaust inversion, was especially prevalent. Québec anti-Zionists, especially Michel Chartrand, repeatedly compared Israelis to the Nazis in order to criticize Israeli behaviour. Chartrand also accused Israel of abusing the Holocaust and profiting from it—a hallmark of secondary anti-Semitism. Why was secondary anti-Semitism so strong among Québec's anti-Zionists? Like elsewhere, accusing the Israelis of being the "new Nazis" may have fulfilled the function of deflecting attention from the history of anti-Semitism and wartime fascist activity in Québec. This is especially likely in the case of Michel Chartrand, who avoided discussing his problematic relationship with Fascism and anti-Semitism. The fact that Chartrand was only one among many who conveniently chose to ignore this past ensured that he was never held accountable.

Left-wing anti-Zionists tended to reject any critique of their movement as antisemitic by referring to Jewish traditions of anti-Zionism. However, in contrast to Reform-Jewish anti-Zionism, New Left anti-Zionism was not concerned about Jewish welfare and fully endorsed Palestinian nationalism. It also distinguished itself from Reform-Jewish and religious anti-Zionism by endorsing antisemitic tropes. Israel was presented as the symbol of the capitalist state, referring to the trope of Jews and money. The fact that Israel was led by a left-wing coalition at the time was ignored by the Québec anti-Zionist movement. Like folkish nationalists, Michel Chartrand also presented Israeli Jewish identity as rootless and artificial. In this vein, the Jewish nation was seen as an enemy of "rooted," authentic people worldwide, such as the French Canadians or the Arab-Palestinians.

Québec anti-Zionists, moreover, dehumanized Israelis and everybody supporting Israel's existence. They usually only referred to them in the abstract as "Zionists," not as real people. Michel Chartrand also degraded their humanity by using the technical language of pest control to discredit them—language erringly similar to the one used by the National Socialist and Communist regimes in Europe. In one instance, he spoke about the need to defend oneself against the "Zionist pollution in Québec."¹²² This anti-Semitism and dehumanization provided the base for the open sympathy for violence and terrorism against Israelis within the Québec anti-Zionist movement—to the point of glamorizing violence. Although often coaching their demands in a language of human rights, the Québec anti-Zionist movement was opposed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict within the framework of a two-state solution.

Unfortunately, there is today substantial mythmaking regarding Michel Chartrand, who has been turned into something akin to a folk hero.¹²³ Many Québec intellectuals fear that discussing these issues will tarnish their identity and undermine the Qué-

bec national cause. Such challenges need to be overcome, not avoided, to formulate a positive national identity. Moreover, such fears, whether warranted or not, should never deter historians from looking closely at the past. Furthermore, this article argues that Québec's history of anti-Semitism and its transfiguration into anti-Zionism is not unique, but rather an exemplary one, which shows parallels to other countries. The study of this phenomenon in different contexts is only beginning and will be a worthwhile scholarly endeavour.

The friendly and admiring attitude, which René Lévesque had initially expressed towards Israel, showed that a positive relationship between Israel and Québec had always been a possibility. Good arguments of economic, political, and moral nature existed for advocating closer cooperation between French Canadians and Israelis. Moreover, both nations share many characteristics, representing small nations whose existence was threatened, either by war or by assimilation. Israel could also serve as a model for Québec on how to thrive and ensure cultural survival even in the most hostile environment. Over time, more and more people have come to realize these similarities and cooperation between Israel and Québec has increased dramatically on many levels since the 1990s to the point where anti-Zionism, which once dominated important sectors of the Québec national movement, increasingly looks like an anachronistic oddity.

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