

# Quebec's Jews: Victims of a myth

By VICTOR TEBOUL  
Special to The Gazette

The virulently anti-Jewish articles published by Ici Québec recently have once again raised the question of anti-Semitism in Quebec and have confirmed in the minds of many in the Jewish community what is thought to be a true reflection of Quebec's nationalists.

The facts, however, are much more complex.

The ties this periodical has with the Société Saint Jean Baptiste seem to reveal right-wing tendencies which could be traced to the much respected and admired Lionel Groulx whose thought has influenced generations of Quebec's intellectuals.

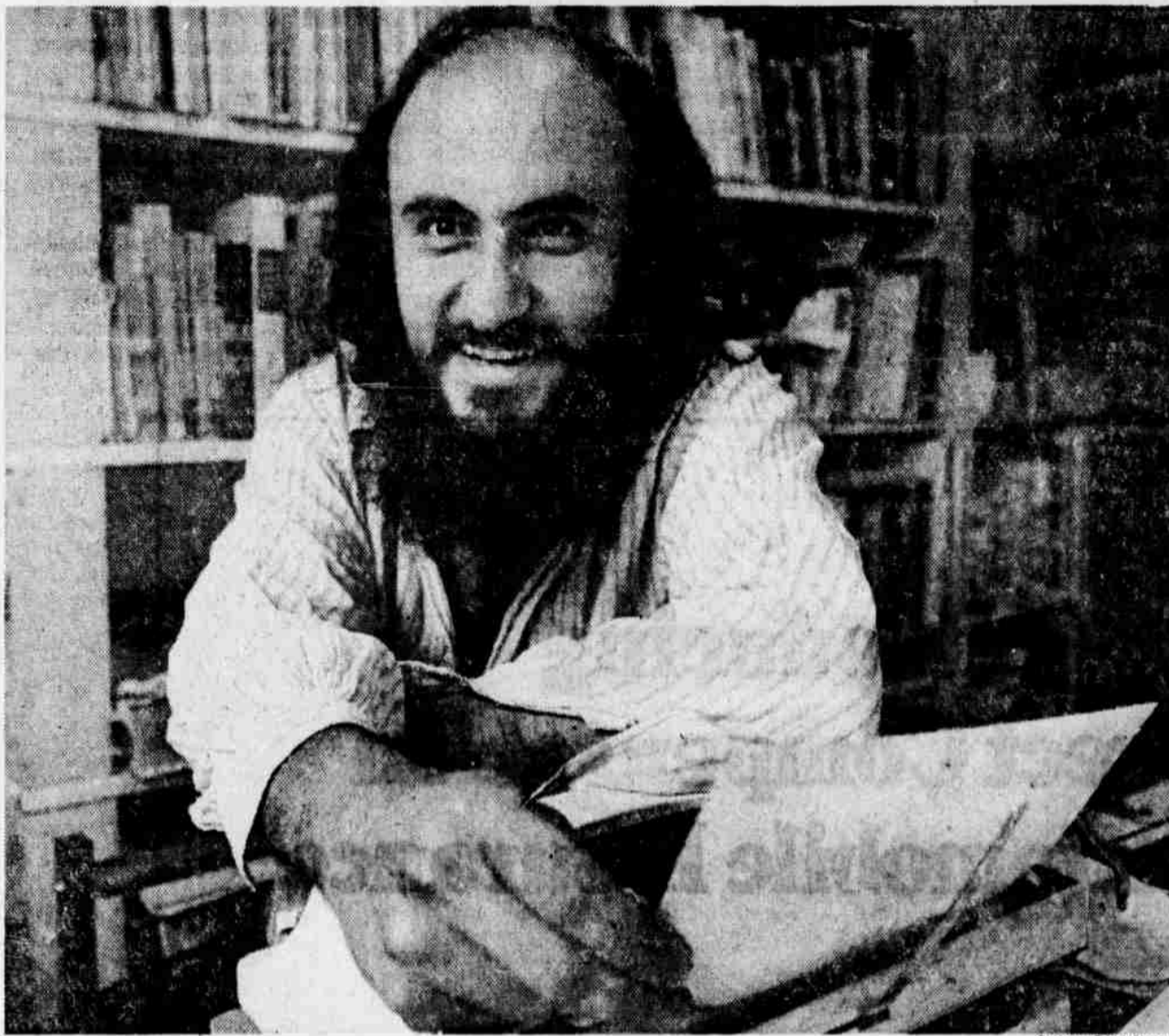
Groulx's nationalism, inspired by French monarchist Charles Maurras, was voiced in his own periodical L'Action Française of which he was the editor in the 1920s and where antisemitic and xenophobic sentiments occupied considerable space. When Maurras' L'Action Française was condemned by the Pope, Groulx hastened to change the name of his own publication to L'Action Nationale.

It reappeared in the 1930s edited by André Laurendeau, later one of the editors of Le Devoir before being appointed co-chairman of the B & B Commission in the 1960s. Strongly influenced by Groulx, it continued its antisemitic stand, was vehemently opposed to immigration and proclaimed its pro-fascist sympathies. Although André Laurendeau later acknowledged and regretted his antisemitic feelings, most nationalists today tend either to ignore these antisemitic sentiments of their idols or consciously attempt to veil these disagreeable aspects of their past.

## No exclusive claim

However, today's nationalism is not of the same brand that prevailed until the 1940s — this conservative, guild-oriented ideology of which Ici Québec is reminiscent — for politically its objectives are if not socialistic at least socially inclined.

Nationalism, however, has no exclusive claim on antisemitism in Quebec. In fact anti-Jewish feelings in the 1930s were quite common in North America; people as popular as Lindbergh were openly Nazi sympathizers.



Author and teacher Victor Teboul says antisemitism is not a new phenomenon in Quebec

There is one basic difference. After the war, intellectuals of most western nations became aware of the animosities expressed toward the Jews in their own countries and tried to scrutinize these feelings. In Quebec, historians tended to say that antisemitism never existed here, or that it was expressed only by marginal groups and individuals such as Adrien Arcand.

In fact, it was predominant in history books, well-read newspapers and periodicals and was never discouraged energetically by the affluent clergy.

Scholars here became interested in the matter in the early 1970s and only incidentally while studying other topics.

Part of Quebec's problems stems from the fact that Quebecers are not aware of their past or conveniently disregard episodes of their history which could be instructive.

In the same vein, many intellectuals do not like to be told by outsiders or by non-French-Canadians, especially if they are themselves francophones, realities that do not correspond to their own particular thought.

Quebecers in general are above all still very touchy when one tries to break down stereotypes still widespread here. And no other stereotype is as deeply entrenched as the one concerning Jews.

Although it is not as verbally violent

as the antisemitic portrayal of the Jew, it is nonetheless closely connected to antisemitism. In reality this stereotype is so rooted in the collective mind that it is closer to a conviction than a legend and consequently has the attributes of a myth.

The mythical image of the Jew has one main characteristic: association with money. It has proven to be so widely spread that it has found its way in well-read and admired Quebec novels. It comes indeed as a shock to discover Gabrielle Roy's books, among others, that Jewish characters are so preoccupied with money. Debasing characteristics (more often peddlers, always merchants) evoke quite explicit-

ly the unscrupulous manner money has been acquired or the supposed stinginess of Jews.

One could rightfully argue that a good number of Jews at the turn of the century and later on were in fact tradesmen and were not all ideal images of honesty and uprightness.

But it should be pointed out that literature tends to freeze a character and to confer upon him an extratemporal duality. It creates what is commonly called symbolic types, which remain in the reader's subconscious, if they do not serve to reactivate and reinforce already existing misconceptions.

This image is so persistent that even popular comedian Yvon Deschamps makes it the centre of one of his monologues where the biblical figure of Abraham is transformed into a unilingual English-speaking merchant always eager to make a good deal and who would even go as far as to cut his own son's throat to attain his goal.

## Provoke laughter

This is designed to provoke laughter and the whole audience seems to have a good time listening to Deschamps. The peculiar thing about it is that when the same comedian, with a tongue in cheek attitude, resorts to the stereotype of the woman, one can hear the same audience protest.

I was a little surprised to hear Deschamps use the stereotype with no other evident intention but to obtain easy laughter, for in a preceding monologue he had tried to confront his audience with its own prejudices and had depicted an orthodox child in such a way as to neutralize prejudice. This monologue, entitled appropriately Intolerance, was worthy of praise, for it had a strong, stunning effect on the audience.

If the image is prevailing and persistent, it is not the only one. After World War II a second image appeared which I have called the ideal Jew in opposition to the preceding mythical figure.

It is an idealistic perception in that it corresponds to what French Canadian intellectuals value most, culture. So this ideal Jew is cultivated, has a refined taste, likes music and art, and speaks perfect French, a useful prerequisite. He is also quite handsome.

You notice that money here is not a

central element of this character. Usually it is not even mentioned, although the ideal Jew comes from a wealthy family or is on the way to a successful situation.

Contrary to the mythical Jew who is sly and deceitful and whose behavior tends to aggravate in the authors' view the Quebecers' oppressed condition by being part of the Anglo-capitalist oppressors, the ideal Jew is honest and intelligent and is even seen himself as a victim, especially of Nazi antisemitism.

## Erotic figure

A third image that comes out quite clearly in Quebec's literature is that of the Jewish female, which appears also in the 1950s and 1960s.

It is an erotic figure that predominates, because French Canadian authors were then discovering physical love and could express their fantasies more freely through her. Perceiving her as a foreigner, they felt less inhibited than they would toward the French Canadian woman. Physically, she usually evokes an exotic biblical image.

These are the three main images of the Jews as they appear in Quebec's literature. Attitudes toward Jews in Quebec either correspond to these images in some way or other, are a combination of these or derive from one of these.

In the early 1960s, for example, there has been a strong leftist current among French Canadian intellectuals which identified with the Third World and with oppressed minorities.

Well-known nationalist writers such as Hubert Aquin, Pierre Vadeboncoeur and even Pierre Vallières perceived the Jews as an oppressed group and as underdogs of society. They drew parallels with their own ordeal in non-fiction essays.

But although the writings of these authors are certainly influential, they do not have an impact on a massive scale, where unfortunately the mythical Jew tends to reappear, unchallenged.

## Tomorrow: The high price of Quebec's historic sense of inferiority.

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# Sadat runs scared as Egypt's economy totters

By DUART FARQUHARSON  
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CAIRO — President Anwar Sadat, Israel's best Arab hope, is in trouble at home.

Domestic criticism of the Egyptian leader has been growing almost proportionately as his peace initiative of last November has collapsed. The Israeli leadership, judging from a recent visit to Jerusalem, is oblivious of the dangerous portent of this relationship.

Sadat is now moving to close the mouths of his critics, provoking criticism from democratic friends abroad in the process.

What deserves sympathy is the no-win situation imprisoning the president and his country as long as there is no real hope of achieving lasting peace with Israel.

Without peace, Egyptians can look forward only to more poverty. The desperate condition of the Egyptian masses, worse now than it was under President Nasser or King Farouk, can only breed further revolution.

One of my personal Cairo sounding boards is Aboul Ghafar Mahmoud, 30, manager of a small Cairo hotel who

would like to get married but can't because he can't afford a scarce one-bedroom apartment.

Two years ago Mahmoud complained about the cost of housing and food but generally praised President Sadat as the hero of the 1973 war, whose attention was now turned to peace and economic breakthrough.

## Hero of the war

At the time of the bread riots, in January, 1977, Mahmoud crisply said about Sadat, "We don't like him any more."

The sudden slashing of state subsidies on many of the staples of Egyptian living made good sense to the International Monetary Fund and the country's creditors. It was intolerable to the people.

The army had to be called out and the subsidies reinstated.

A year later, last January, Mahmoud had great hopes for the peace initiative. If peace came there would be more money for housing. He dared to dream of getting married, perhaps before the end of 1978.

The other day Mahmoud was very unhappy with his president. He didn't blame Sadat for the failure of the peace

initiative, just noted that it was going nowhere.

What annoyed him were the anti-democratic measures taken against critics of the regime from both right and left which the people had been asked to approve in a referendum.

"If a bad man is running for the People's Assembly, it is not up to the president to stop him," he said. "It is the people who say no. That is democracy."

Mahmoud did not vote in the referendum because he believed the result would be rigged. "Everyone knows it."

He and his friends laughed at the official claim that 85 per cent of the electorate turned out at the polls to endorse the Sadat propositions by a margin of 98 per cent. Western observers here are just as skeptical.

Mahmoud said Sadat was no longer a "strong" leader. He wanted the president to stay on, but he also wanted to be able to vote in the assembly election for the conservative opposition movement, the New Wafd, which has just dissolved itself as a party rather than accept new restrictions imposed on it by the president.

Mahmoud made the point which Sadat critics inside and outside Egypt have been making. If the measures setting the democratic clock back were necessary to safeguard his regime, then the president is in deeper trouble than anyone had realized. If they aren't necessary they are deplorable.

## Exudes self-confidence

In either case the restrictions have made Sadat look weaker and strengthened the opposition, even if his opponents now have to go underground.

As recently as last April President Sadat, despite the lack of progress on his peace initiative, struck observers here as being a cool leader-in-command, exuding self-confidence.

About the time of his May Day speech he turned into an angry, impatient and nervous politician.

He railed against his own cabinet members, accusing them of cowardice. He promised all workers in the public sector a 10-day bonus that his horrified, unconsulted officials have estimated would cost the treasury up to \$200 million which it didn't have.

Then President Sadat accepted the

resignation of Abdel Moneim Kaissouny as deputy prime minister for financial and economic affairs, jettisoning the Egyptian economist most respected by the country's foreign creditors.

Kaissouny's stringent policies and proposals — he reportedly wanted a wage freeze — were becoming increasingly unpopular in a cabinet that felt itself besieged on all sides.

The reported views of War Minister Mohammed Abdel-Ghanny Gamas may have been decisive. The army, it is said, after the bread riots of January, 1977, refused ever again to put down a domestic uprising triggered by a government demanding economic sacrifice from ordinary Egyptians.

## Night club tents

The latest evidence of a president on the defensive is Sadat's sudden and unexpected decision to kill the \$500 million Pyramids Oasis resort development project that had been the most visible result of his "open door" economic policy to encourage foreign investment.

Highly controversial, the project was

under attack from archaeologists and ecologists, critics who felt they smelled scandal in the foreign entrepreneurs' financial arrangements with the Egyptian government, and a lobby of Egyptian businessmen whose night clubs and recreational tents near the pyramids were to be expropriated.

Its defenders said any legitimate criticisms could be met with minor changes in the site and financial arrangements.

What is certain is that Sadat's cave-in will further weaken investor confidence in the Egyptian state's ability to live up to contractual undertakings.

Sadat has repeatedly taken public pride "in being the father of the Egyptian family." Egyptian fathers expect their families to look to them for authoritative decisions that are to be implemented without a lot of whining and casting of doubt on the good intentions of the father.

Sadat was sometimes criticized in the press and assembly before his peace initiative. As the initiative waned the carping grew. No one here is sure why he is reacting — overreacting? — so strongly.

But the overwhelming impression is that he is running scared.

# Grand Prix revs up: Can a man have a baby?

The Grand Prix of Canada on Ile Notre Dame: now there's an issue that the Montreal Citizens Movement figured to be worth something in an election year.

At least they did until the opposition held its own hearings on the matter and discovered that neither Save Montreal nor Green Spaces, two of the leading urbanist groups in the city, had substantial objections to the idea.

So nothing much came of the MCM's well considered boycott of Monday's closed "information" session of city council. When Jean Drapeau was asked why he had barred the press and public, which only he could get away with, the mayor replied that he knew little about road racing himself, and wanted councillors to have the opportunity of informing themselves without looking stupid.

## Ironclad guarantees

Thus, Drapeau put his own Civic party members in the embarrassing position of having to ask questions, something they hardly ever do. How they acquitted themselves in this unaccustomed role is not known.

LIAN MacDONALD



But when the proposal was finally considered in open session Wednesday night and yesterday, Drapeau was well armed with answers.

He has clearly observed the lesson of the Olympics — get all the guarantees up front, ironclad and in fine print. The Grand Prix of Canada can no more have a deficit than a man can have a baby.

Drapeau saw this over a period of several weeks, when he had the lawyers in at the beginning or end of the

day, adding clauses and conditions to a draft contract.

The deal is that the promoter and concessionaires cover all the costs, while the city takes five per cent off the top and presumably gets some economic benefit from the annual event.

But financial considerations were not the only ones. Environmental concerns were at least as important. They were also the easiest bandwagon for politicians and commentators to jump on.

The likelihood is that the race will create no more noise or air pollution than afternoon traffic on South Shore Highway 132.

Residents of St. Lambert will probably hear nothing more than the normal distant hum of rush hour. As for fuel emissions, Formula One automobiles are known as clean burning machines.

It's clear that the race course will run over some trees around the perimeter of Ile Notre Dame. Independent councillor Bob Keaton who wanted to know how many was told about 100, mostly saplings that could be replanted while a remaining few would be replaced.

Will crowds trample the grounds, as they did during the Fête St. Jean cele-

bration two and three years ago on Mount Royal? There were a quarter of a million people, then, crowded in a few acres around a bandshell.

The Grand Prix proposal envisages perhaps 100,000 spectators spread over the island's 100 acres. It was built for big crowds, after all, with a Metro stop and everything.

## Pillaged mountain

Moreover, the race would come on Thanksgiving weekend, near the end of the season. "Nature takes care of itself afterwards," said a gentleman of the parks department, indicating it would be nothing like the pillage of his beloved mountain in June of 1976.

Keaton was anxious to know what other uses the three-mile track might have. Could it, for example, be used as a cycling path? Yes, indeed, Drapeau said, What a good idea.

There's no reason these questions couldn't have been cleared up in committee, except that Montreal doesn't have a committee system. What it has is Jean Drapeau's "disciplined democracy" and this has been driving the opposition up the wall for years.

Understandably, they have been given to venting their frustrations in debate. Lacking the information available to the administration, they often look disorganized.

And on Wednesday night, the MCM looked foolish.

Michael Fainstat has been a persist-



JEAN DRAPEAU Sees no deficit

ent and often effective financial critic for the opposition. But now he was reduced to badgering Drapeau about the motives of the sponsor, Labatt breweries.

## Let him have it

They weren't interested in sport so much as selling beer. The city, Fainstat said, would be promoting beer sales.

"I would ask you the same question," Drapeau said. "The CBC is a government agency. Do they promote beer sales by televising hockey?"

Fainstat wouldn't let go, and Drapeau let him have it again.

"Should the Montreal Symphony Orchestra refuse grants from Du Maurier, which is financing a series of concerts, because they sell cigarettes?"

"Should Labatt's forget about selling beer? I don't understand the scandal."

What do we know now, thanks to the MCM, that we didn't know before? That Labatt's is in the business of selling beer.

The secret is out. Faut se parler.