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Rethinking Adrien Arcand in Historical Context

Introduction

David S. Koffman

This forum brings together three historians—Pierre Anctil, Simon-Pierre Lacasse, and Tyler Wentzell—for a reassessment of Adrien Arcand, the self-styled *führer canadien* and fascist agitator active from the late 1920s to the 1960s. This forum originated as a live panel discussion presented at the Association for Canadian Jewish Studies' Annual Conference at McGill University in the spring of 2024, chaired by Richard Menkis. I found the discussion riveting and thought it would work well in written form so that the perspectives—the harmonies and differences—could be available to readers interested in Canadian Jewish history, in the history of Quebec, the politics of difference in Canada, and in the interdisciplinary field of antisemitism studies. To that end, the forum is comprised of three short essays, and three responses.

While we present the forum in its entirety first in English, then below, in French, it was originally composed in a more mixed manner, with some contributions (essays and responses) originally composed in French, others in English. We had the balance of forum elements translated into the other language after the fact by Valentina Gaddi, and had each of the contributors edit and approve her translations. I'm pleased that the forum as a whole is now accessible to the largest number of monolingual readers, but I wanted to acknowledge that by reconstructing and presenting the discussion this way, we have lost something interesting: the original forum was a genuine bilingual creation, with scholars reading and responding to one another in our two languages.

Each contributor offers a distinct temporal, linguistic, and source-based perspective: Anctil examines Arcand's portrayal in Montreal's Yiddish press in the interwar years, Lacasse traces the postwar Jewish community's monitoring and eventual marginalization of him, and Wentzell analyzes English-language press depictions in the 1930s. Each essay is paired with a response from another contributor, creating a unique, multi-vocal dialogue on how different communities and media registered, reacted to, and helped contain Arcand's odious activism.

The three authors agree that Arcand's political influence—both in the 1930s and after 1945—was, cutting against the grain of the generally received public memory, both rather limited and episodic in nature, rather than ontological. Arcand's visibility, these historians seem to agree, depended on favourable circumstances: political controversy, press curiosity, or the patronage of more powerful allies. They concur that organized Jewish responses—through vigilant editorial campaigns, lobbying, and alliances with sympathetic Catholic leaders—were central to neutralizing him. All three stress that broader shifts, from papal denunciations of Nazism to postwar Catholic-Jewish rapprochement, further closed the space in which Arcand could operate.

They also share a caution about not retroactively inflating his stature. While Arcand periodically attracted headlines and followers, his *notoriety* should not be mistaken for broad or lasting influence; contemporaneous perceptions, across linguistic and communal lines, are essential for keeping his place in proportion.

Each contributor to this forum adds a unique bundle of insights. Ancil draws on more than a decade's worth of *Keneder Odler* editorials, mostly by Israel Rabinovitch, to reconstruct how a Jewish communal voice tracked Arcand's rise and fall in the 1930s. He shows the *Odler's* acute awareness of Arcand's opportunism—his shifting use of fascist symbols, tactical alliances with Conservative politicians, and campaigns to boycott Jewish businesses. By periodizing the *Odler's* attention—from moments of direct threat to long silences when Arcand's relevance ebbed—Ancil models how to assess extremists in context.

Wentzell examines *Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Daily Star* coverage from 1929 to 1940, revealing surprisingly sympathetic portrayals when Arcand first sought an English Canadian audience. Only later, as his movement's militarism and foreign fascist ties drew scrutiny, did coverage turn more adversarial. By tracing this arc, Wentzell underscores how uncritical reporting can legitimize fringe figures—and how quickly public narratives can shift.

Lacasse extends the story into the postwar years, when Arcand re-emerged into a Quebec transformed by the war, the Holocaust, and changing interfaith relations. Using Canadian Jewish Congress archives and Jewish press sources, he charts the community's watchfulness in the late 1940s, the Catholic hierarchy's decisive intervention against *Le Goglu*, and Congress' gradual shift from anti-Arcand vigilance to broader civil rights work as antisemitic incidents declined. His reframing complicates depictions of postwar Quebec as uniformly antisemitic.

In their responses, the authors illuminate parallels between pre- and postwar patterns: initial alarm when Arcand was active, disengagement as he lost traction. Ancil's long view helps contextualize Lacasse's postwar findings; Lacasse's focus on interfaith collaboration adds a new dimension to Ancil's prewar portrait. Wentzell's anglophone case study offers a comparative baseline for both periods.

Together, they map Arcand's career across linguistic, regional, and chronological boundaries. For Montreal's Yiddish press, he was a dangerous but beatable provocateur; for English Canadian reporters, briefly a respectable nationalist; for postwar Jewish leaders, a residual irritant whose capacity to harm was fading.

This forum is timely because the dynamics it uncovers—how extremists manage their public image, how the press frames them, and how targeted communities respond—remain urgently relevant. Arcand's career illustrates both the fragility and resilience of democratic societies faced with antisemitism and authoritarianism. The

interplay between vigilance and proportionality in confronting such figures is a live question for historians, policymakers, and the public.

Understanding Arcand, his legacy, and the ways he is remembered and misremembered matters in the overlapping contexts of Canadian, Quebec, and Jewish history. In Canadian history, he is a reminder that fascism was not solely a foreign phenomenon. In Quebec history, his story challenges simple narratives of entrenched antisemitism by showing moments of Catholic–Jewish solidarity. In Jewish history, his case illustrates both vulnerability and agency—the capacity of a minority community to monitor, resist, and, in time, outlast a dedicated antagonist. How he is recalled today—sometimes inflated as a major threat, sometimes dismissed as a marginal crank—reflects broader debates over how to narrate the history of hate, and how to draw lessons from it without distorting scale or significance.

Adrien Arcand in the Montreal Yiddish Press, 1929–1939

Pierre Anctil

Despite the fact that Adrien Arcand has received much attention in Canadian Jewish studies, and for reasons that can be very well understood, relatively little objective and verifiable data has been produced about him. In French, notable progress in this direction has been made recently on the biographical level, but there is still a long way to go before a credible portrait is finally drawn of the main figure of Canadian antisemitism during the 1930s.¹ A number of elements have already emerged from this recent research, carried out mainly in Quebec, and are worth recalling at the beginning of this short essay. Arcand was not a media personality of great importance in the Montreal context of the interwar period, nor did he play a central role in the political life of French Canada during this period. The individual in question began his career in the mid-1920s in *La Presse*, a widely circulated daily newspaper in which antisemitism played only a very minor role. He mainly worked as a journalist until his internment in 1940, particularly from 1936 in *L'illustration nouvelle*, a press organ sponsored by Maurice Duplessis's *l'Union nationale*. In this role, he remained an employee subject to the editorial directives of his bosses, and he did not have the opportunity to openly express his anti-Jewish leanings. He was also a political organizer for the Conservative Party, both at the federal and provincial levels, from which he derived the bulk of the funding necessary for his career as a propagator of vulgar and outrageous antisemitism. Eventually he built an image as a fascist and anti-liberal leader by creating his own periodicals and recruiting activists from political parties over which he had full control; he never ran as a candidate in a federal, provincial, or municipal election prior to the end of the Second World War.

Despite what we know about Arcand historically, several questions remain unanswered as to the real influence that this individual had within Quebec society and as to the impact of his antisemitic activism on the Jewish population of Montreal. A very thorough analysis of the editorial pages of the newspaper *Le Devoir*, the most emblematic daily newspaper in French Canada during the first half of the twentieth century, and of *L'Action catholique*, a diocesan newspaper published in Quebec City, demonstrated beyond any doubt that Arcand was considered by the French-speaking intellectual elite of his time as a marginal personality and as a publicist of very great mediocrity in journalism.² The editor-in-chief of *Le Devoir*, Georges Pelletier, who was not reluctant to throw poisoned arrows at Montreal Jews from time to time, never mentions Arcand's political activity in his texts. The same goes for his main collaborators Omer Héroux and Louis Dupire, who were fully aware of the existence of *Le Goglu*, the *Miroir*, the *Patriote* or the *Fasciste canadien*; while *L'Action catholique* did not indirectly mention Arcand until the end of the decade, to reproach him for his association with the Nazi ideology condemned by Pope Pius XI in 1937. This is an observation that is even more convincing when you consult French-Canadian newspapers with large circulation, such as *La Presse*, *La Patrie*, or *Le Soleil*.

Very well, but what about the Jewish reaction to Arcand's antisemitic insults and vociferations? On this subject, we have only the occasional reactions of the leaders of the Canadian Jewish Congress after 1933, and that of other Montreal Jewish spokesmen who struggled during the 1930s to establish a more serene climate with the French-speaking majority, without much success, for that matter. These were in most cases isolated remarks, and they were marked, as we can very well understand, by anger and emotion. We still lack an overview of the 1930s that would reflect a widely recognized and consistent Jewish voice. My research over the past seven years has sought to redress this deficit. My contribution to this forum analyzes the content of the editorials that appear between January 1929 and September 1939 in the *Keneder Odler* (The Canadian Eagle), a Montreal Yiddish-language daily newspaper. A complete indexing of these texts reveals that nearly 5,600 opinions and editorial comments were published in the *Odler* during these 129 months, of which two thousand related to the Canadian situation, or 36 percent of the total. Of these at least 150 have as their main subject the press of Adrien Arcand and the influence of the antisemitic journalist on Quebec society. This is more than enough to present a first more comprehensive picture of the issue from exclusively Jewish sources, which have the advantage of being more reliable than the personal testimonies of some community leaders.

Reading these editorials, probably all written by Israel Rabinovitch, the editor-in-chief of the *Odler* since 1924, reveals a number of observations of prime importance on the activity of Adrien Arcand during the 1930s from the point of view of a Jewish press organ responsible for closely monitoring Montreal news and

defending the Jewish population established in the Quebec metropolis. Rabinovitch by the thirties had become a leading figure of the Montreal Jewish community and his writings can certainly be interpreted as reflecting a broad consensus among the Yiddish-speaking population. In the first observation, Rabinovitch was firmly convinced that his colleague from the *Miroir* and the *Patriote*, whom he knew very well, was an opportunist without any scope, and that he went where the wind blew him. In short, his antisemitism was more incidental and cyclical than supported by deep conviction: “We know this individual very well and we know that in addition to all his other deplorable character traits, he is also a hypocrite. All the time he worked for *La Presse* and dealt with ‘artistic’ and ‘aesthetic’ issues, he also played at presenting himself as a quasi-radical on the political level. He even tended for a while to portray himself as an atheist.”³ Arcand obsessively sought media attention, and this fatal inclination led him to adopt a virulent antisemitic stance that was absent from his professional career before the beginning of 1930.⁴

This penchant for bluster and bragging can be identified in the fact that Arcand adopted the swastika as the emblem of his movement only in May 1933, several months after Hitler came to power in Germany. The journalist’s adherence to the symbols of Nazism, like his political approach more broadly, was purely circumstantial and calculated to effect maximum publicity. Ultimately, Arcand was so unconvinced by the National Socialist creed that he completely abandoned the swastika and struck it out of his publications in July 1938, for fear of being associated too closely with a political movement that then threatened Canada and the British Empire as a whole. When the first signs of a brutal and violent antisemitic discourse appeared in Arcand’s weekly newspapers in the summer of 1930, accompanied by despicable caricatures of Jews, Rabinovitch immediately noticed that *Le Goglu*, *Le Chameau* and *Le Miroir* were in fact media instruments designed to bring down the liberal regime of Quebec premier Louis-Alexandre Taschereau in Quebec City and that of Prime Minister Mackenzie King in Ottawa; indeed they were pressing for Conservative governments in the upcoming federal (1930) and provincial (1931) general elections. As soon as antisemitism appeared in a constant and sustained way on the pages of the newspapers published by Arcand, Rabinovitch became convinced that it was the Conservative Party of Richard Bennett and that of Camillien Houde that financed *Le Goglu*, and not the Catholic Church or the German NSDAP:

It is obvious that everything is done in these newspapers [those published by Arcand] for a political purpose. The objective is to play on the emotions of the masses in order to arouse a mindset favorable to the Conservative Party. By shouting “Jews,” the instigators of this strategy think that they will easily succeed and that the Quebec public will swallow their way of doing things. [...] The method of propaganda that is used by the three antisemitic publications is two-fold. On the one hand, the aim is to attack the liberals—take note of this—and on the other hand to lead an agitation against the Jews.⁵

Rabinovitch returned a few months later, on the eve of the federal election of August 1930, to this strategic alliance between Adrien Arcand and his Conservative Party funders:

The closer the federal election campaign gets to its end, the more openly and emphatically the Conservatives play the card of antisemitism. It's at a point where they no longer try to hide from it. In a cynical and dishonorable way, conservative politicians have allied themselves with the "Goglu" clique and with all other sinister forces that act with the ultimate goal of spreading racial hatred.⁶

A year later, Rabinovitch added: "What support could these newspapers have relied on at the beginning of their miserable existence? The answer to this question is well known: on Mr. [Camillien] Houde. During their first year and a half of publication, these newspapers generally used language hostile to Taschereau and favorable to Houde."⁷ In fact, the publication schedule of Arcand's newspapers fluctuated surprisingly between March 1930 and August 1939, with many months-long interruptions and constant title changes. This was a sign that these publications were not paying for themselves and depended on an influx of external funds, mostly Canadian conservative political forces. Although Rabinovitch was often convinced at first glance that Arcand had the support of the German NSDAP or international fascist movements, especially after 1933, nothing validates this hypothesis during the 1930s in the pages of the *Odler*. On the contrary, several times Rabinovitch noted that his opponent's speech aligned with that of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and that the main thrust of his activism was to demand a complete French Canadian boycott of businesses based in Montreal or in other cities by merchants of Jewish origin. Rabinovitch noted this pattern when he wrote in 1932: "And here in Montreal, [...] it has now been three years since two antisemitic charlatans led a boycott campaign against the Jewish population. [...] There are, without exaggerating, in these antisemitic sheets, hundreds of cases of direct boycott calls against Jewish firms and dozens of proven cases of defamation against individuals of Jewish origin."⁸

A more detailed study of the *Odler's* editorial pages reveals four specific periods concerning the strategy that the Yiddish newspaper tried to develop in order to resist the anti-liberal and anti-Jewish mobilization that Arcand sought to provoke among Montreal's Francophone public. For Rabinovitch, the crisis of separate Jewish schools and the promulgation in April 1930 of the David Act by the Taschereau government, seemed to be the triggering events that compelled Arcand to adhere, without restraint, to virulent antisemitism. This finding is confirmed by a detailed analysis of the six hundred *Odler* editorials that I have translated into French in the course of my research. During a fairly short period of four years, from the beginning of 1929 to the end of 1932, the keywords "Protestant" and "school" are strongly associated with "Goglu" in *Odler* editorials that have been translated into French. It was a trend that culminated in 1930, when "Goglu" was mentioned 105 times in connection with

the Protestant schools of Montreal, an association of ideas that disappeared almost entirely after 1933.

Following the Jewish school crisis, Rabinovitch tried unsuccessfully to expunge or censor Arcand's publications. It was at this time that the *Odler* scolded its main opponent in the Quebec press. The daily even went so far as to translate many passages from Arcand's newspapers into Yiddish, hoping to inform its faithful readers of their content. In 1932, E. Abugov, a Lachine merchant, sued the antisemitic journalist for defamation, but Judge Gonzalve Desaulniers, in a decision he quickly regretted, dismissed the plaintiff because the code of law did not consider Arcand's speech defamatory. The provincial deputy Peter Bercovitch subsequently attempted to convince the Legislative Assembly of Quebec to pass a law that would define defamatory libel in a more precise manner. Bercovitch's colleagues refused to back his efforts, preferring instead to support freedom of the press. Finally, the *Odler* obtained statements from important political figures condemning Arcand, but nothing helped until Rabinovitch signed an editorial, in July 1935, entitled, "Krig iz derklert gevoren tsum yidishen folk!" ("War is declared to the Jewish people!")⁹ Compared with the fate of German Jews under the Hitler regime, Arcand's slanders and false accusations appeared to the *Odler* as unimportant nonsense. Following this declaration, the Yiddish newspaper then stopped mentioning the name of the outrageous antisemite in its editorial page for several years.

Arcand resurfaced in the *Odler* one last time, in 1938–1939, but it was in reference to German victims of Nazism, and to a much lesser extent than in 1932–1935. This time Rabinovitch was much more concerned about the influence of Hitler's agents in Canada and fascists of all stripes. These agents risked weakening democracy in the country. Therefore, he branded Arcand more as a follower of the far-right dictatorship than as an antisemite. In 1938, *Odler* editorials mentioned Arcand sixty times, still far less than the peak of 1930. This reduction is also due to the fact that Arcand had not been an influential figure in French Canada since the mid-1930s, a trend that Rabinovitch noted in his editorials. The papal encyclical of March 1937 against Nazi ideology, *Mit Brennender Sorge*, and the anti-Catholic persecutions in Germany, discredited the National Christian Social Party and the far-right National Unity Party of Canada among Montreal Francophones; the risk of Arcand continuing his anti-Jewish political propaganda clearly diminished by the late 1930s. His fascist sympathies ultimately led to his conviction after a brief trial in May 1940, and then his internment for the duration of the Second World War. He did not resurface until July 1945, only to find a Quebec now resolutely on the march towards the Quiet Revolution.

Response to Anctil's "Adrien Arcand in the Montreal Yiddish Press, 1929–1939"

Simon–Pierre Lacasse

Pierre Anctil's text makes two notable interventions: first, it takes us from the general history of Quebec antisemitism to a close and serial study of a single figure, Adrien Arcand, observed by a continuous and structured community source—the Yiddish editorials of the *Keneder Odler*. Then, Anctil forces us to question the blind spots of a historiography that sometimes allocates Arcand an outsized place, freezing him in an influential ideological position that he probably never occupied.

This methodological shift is, in my opinion, the main contribution of the text: it deepens the history of Quebec antisemitism while making it possible to better measure the gaps between the internal perception—here, that of a lucid and combative Yiddish daily—and the very limited attention given to Arcand by the majority press. This contrast resonates strongly with my own conclusions about the postwar period (see my essay below): Arcand was followed closely at first, but then quickly marginalized by the Canadian Jewish Congress and Jewish communal activists in Montreal at a time when public antisemitism was receding, and when new priorities—civil rights, interfaith dialogue—ascended on the communal agenda.

The heart of the dialogue between our two texts lies in this tension: Was Arcand a marginal actor, as suggested by the low attention given to him by the editorialists of *Le Devoir*, or a real threat? The answer, it seems to me, lies in the performative nature of antisemitism: its dangerousness is measured not only by the frequency of its manifestations, but in its capacity to be aggravated by a larger social and political context. For Rabinovitch, as Anctil shows, Arcand was an opportunist, quick to adopt the swastika or to get rid of it depending on the context. But this very opportunism, coupled with tactical alliances with the Conservative Party and Camillien Houde, made it difficult to ignore for those who, like the editors of the *Odler*, monitored French-language media in the interest of community defense.

After 1945, this same opportunism shone through when Arcand watered down his attacks and abandoned his crudest cartoons as he tried to remain relevant in an environment where the Holocaust had shifted the public's threshold for tolerating antisemitism. In both periods, Arcand was feared less for his actual influence than for his ability to capitalize on political opportunities.

The periodization proposed by Anctil—from the school crisis of 1930 through Arcand's heyday of 1932–1935, to his decline after 1937—is, historiographically, a useful reminder that Arcand received inconsistent attention, which was modulated by socioeconomic factors and international politics. We find the same

logic in the postwar period: maximum vigilance upon his release, then gradual retraction as his electoral candidacies failed and his newspapers went bankrupt.

This modulation raises a broader question: How do community actors prioritize their threats? In the 1930s, the campaign to boycott Jewish businesses, documented by Rabinovitch, was a direct attack on the community economy and justified intense mobilization. In the 1950s, as antisemitic incidents declined, the Canadian Jewish Congress redirected its energies to structural fights against discrimination and civil rights struggles, relegating Arcand to the background.

Relying on a comprehensive community source, Anctil decenters the study of Arcand from its usual prisms—biographies, institutional sources—to the news cycle as experienced and expressed by a Jewish media outlet. This angle illuminates not only the *Odler's* strategies of resistance, but also its own limits: the newspaper's fixation on Arcand sometimes risked assigning him more significance than did the contemporary mainstream press.

This observation invites a historiographical self-criticism: How can we avoid, in our narratives, *a posteriori* strengthening the stature of individuals that non-Jews considered marginal or ignored at all? In this sense, comparison with the postwar period enables us to better deconstruct Arcand's "real" influence, which was subject to competing perceptions and interpretations within the Jewish communal press, Jewish institutions, and the majority opinion.

A parallel reading of Anctil's and my work reveals an obvious continuity: although he periodically commanded attention, Arcand was never influential in Quebec intellectual and political life. His capacity to disrupt was largely contextual and dependent on the reactions he elicited. This does not diminish the legitimacy of the vigilance to which he was subjected; but it clarifies its contours. It was less a question of fighting a populist leader than of neutralizing a provocateur.

In the end, the common lesson of our two periods is that of selective vigilance, adaptable and aware of its priorities. Whether it was the 1930s or the postwar period, the Montreal Jewish community was able to focus its attention, mobilize when necessary, and disengage when the enemy lost his ability to harm. This ability to adapt in the long term illuminates both the history of the fight against antisemitism and the shifts in the relationship between the Jewish community and the French-Canadian majority until the Quiet Revolution.

English–Language Media Portrayals of Adrien Arcand, 1929–1940

Tyler Wentzell

Adrien Arcand is sometimes remembered as the *führer canadien*, a fascist antisemite who served as the leader of the *Parti national social chrétien* (PNSC) from 1934 until 1938, and the National Unity Party from 1938 until his internment in 1940. Arcand’s movement produced dramatic scenes of swastika-wearing stormtroopers in blue shirts with Nazi flags, and noisy editorials in the pages of magazines and newsletters that Arcand edited himself. Although Canada was home to both overt and quiet fascists and antisemites, Arcand’s claims of having tens of thousands of followers were overblown. His rallies were generally small, and his organization was marginal. However, in late 1937, Arcand tried to expand his Montreal-based movement into English Canada by building alliances with existing anglophone fascist organizations.

For most of the 1930s, Arcand was a well-known figure in Montreal. He had his supporters, but he was not taken seriously by the mainstream press. Pierre Anctil’s extensive examination of *Le Devoir* and its editorials, for instance, notes that Arcand was not mentioned in this major newspaper’s pages. As a fringe character of little influence, he simply did not merit much attention. In English Canada, however, he remained entirely unknown for most of the decade. When Arcand set the goal of expanding his Montreal movement into English Canada in late 1937, he had the opportunity to present himself to a new audience in a completely different light. When *The Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Daily Star* begin writing about Arcand in late December 1937, they initially depicted the Montrealer in glowing terms.

This article does not attempt to provide a full history of English-language newspaper coverage of Arcand and his activities. Instead, it contributes to the study of media discourse on Arcand by examining two major English-language dailies in Toronto—*The Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Daily Star*—from 1929 until 1940. These two newspapers have been digitized and are keyword searchable, making a comparison of the two sources more feasible. I conducted searches for the words “Arcand,” “A. Arcand,” and “Adrien Arcand,” and then discarded articles not pertaining to this specific individual. This process did not include searches for keywords regarding Arcand’s newspapers or political organizations with which he was associated.

This approach yielded a sample of 177 stories, sixty-one from *The Globe and Mail* and fifty-six from the *Toronto Daily Star*, set out in Table 1.1 below. There were no references to Arcand at all between 1929 and 1936.

Table 1.1
References to Adrien Arcand in *The Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Daily Star*, 1937-1940

Year	<i>The Globe and Mail</i>	<i>Toronto Daily Star</i>
1937	5	3
1938	35	34
1939	12	7
1940	9	12
Total	61	56

Given that more than half of all references to Arcand in these two newspapers appeared in 1938, the articles for Arcand that year are set by month in Table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2
References to Adrien Arcand in *The Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Daily Star*, 1938 by month

Year	<i>The Globe and Mail</i>	<i>Toronto Daily Star</i>
January	3	0
February	5	9
March	4	2
April	1	2
May	0	2
June	6	9
July	7	7
August	3	0
September	0	0
October	1	2
November	2	0
December	3	1
Total	35	34

Quantitatively, there is not a tremendous difference between the coverage of Arcand offered by the two newspapers. *The Globe and Mail* wrote slightly more stories about Arcand overall (sixty-one compared to fifty-six), but generally the two newspapers devoted remarkably similar levels of attention to Arcand. This included the early periods when they sent or otherwise used journalists in Montreal to investigate Arcand, as well as coverage of him and his followers when he began to organize rallies in Toronto in 1938. Given that *The Globe and Mail* was a conservative publication, and the *Toronto Daily Star* was more left-leaning, this congruency is notable. Despite the political differences between the readership of these two newspapers, this suggests that both sets of newspaper editors perceived similar reader interest or newsworthiness of Arcand and his rallies. They assigned journalists accordingly.

Lita-Rose Betcherman's 1975 *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf: Fascist Movements in Canada in the Thirties* described the conditions in Toronto leading up to Arcand's English-language debut. In the provincial election of October 1937, Jewish Liberal J.J. Glass won the St. Andrew riding in Toronto for the second time. The riding had a large Jewish population, and it was little surprise that the next highest polling candidates were Joseph Salsberg and future mayor Nathan Phillips. John Ross Taylor, a young and boisterous fascist and antisemite who publicly brandished the swastika, also ran as a "Jew-baiting" candidate with some backing from Arcand. The election brought some media attention back to the issue of sectarian tensions. Glass brought forward the idea of group libel laws to protect Jews but received little initial support. On Halloween, someone nailed a funeral crepe and a swastika to Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath's front door. English-language newspapers began to investigate Canada's fascist movement, according to Betcherman, at Eisendrath's behest. He encouraged them to look at the German community in Kitchener, which led newspaper editors to assign journalists to look into Arcand.¹⁰

Arcand's move into English Canada coincided with his broader interest in expanding his movement nationally. On October 31, 1937, Arcand attended a large rally at the New York Hippodrome at the invitation of the German American Bund. Arcand was inspired by the collective action of German, Italian, and "native-born" American fascists (the Silvershirts) and entered 1938 with aspirations of uniting Canadian fascists. He made grand pronouncements about the PNSC's future and began building on existing relationships with fascist leaders like Joseph Farr in Toronto (having abruptly ended his collaboration with Taylor) and William Whittaker in Winnipeg. When journalists from Toronto began reaching out to him in the winter of 1937–38, Arcand was eager to talk.

The first mentions of Arcand appeared in the pages of the *Toronto Daily Star* in late November 1937. The headline read, "80,000 Montreal Men Join Fascist Banner to Force New Order," repeating Arcand's overblown claim that the PNSC had eighty thousand members. An unnamed reporter interviewed Arcand about a variety of topics. Among Arcand's noteworthy remarks was an announcement that he planned to hold a national convention for fascists in Kingston, Ontario, the following January. When asked if there were any English-speaking fascist groups in Montreal, Arcand replied, "We are not touching that. We do not believe that French-Canadians can lead Englishmen or that English-speaking people can lead French-Canadians." If English-speaking fascists wanted to form their own organizations, they needed to find their own leaders, "then we'll welcome them."¹¹ The article did not mention Arcand's policies towards Jews.

The next substantive treatment of Arcand appeared in the pages of *The Globe and Mail* less than one week later. These articles were part of staff writer Ken MacTag-

gert's investigation of fascist organizations in Canada, initiated at the behest of Rabbi Eisendrath. The article opened with an editor's proviso noting that no inferences should be drawn about which racial groups were most susceptible to anti-democratic propaganda; the proviso cited the "ultra-resistant qualities" of German Canadians in particular. MacTaggart's articles called Arcand's movement anti-democratic and anti-capitalist: "Only one distinctive difference is constantly noticeable between the Communist and Fascist writings—the latter alone assail the Jews."¹²

In the opening line of his first article, MacTaggart described Arcand as "a brilliant young French-Canadian." In his review of *le Fasciste canadien*, MacTaggart noted a recent article announcing Arcand's intention of expanding into Ontario. "Other articles," McTaggart wrote, "are interesting, well-written discussions of 'National Health and Eugenics,' 'Problem of Bigger Families,' 'The British Point of View,' etc."¹³ MacTaggart's article was practically an advertisement for any sympathetic readers. While it is tempting to assume that the more conservative *Globe and Mail* was inclined to be more sympathetic towards Arcand than the left-leaning *Toronto Daily Star*, the latter's coverage of Arcand in early 1938 shows that this was not necessarily the case.

On February 10, the *Toronto Daily Star* printed a lengthy interview with Arcand by staff writer David Griffin. Published on page 31, the interview was not given a prominent place in the newspaper, but other aspects of the article indicate that the editor considered it to be of interest to the readership. Griffin was a Toronto-based journalist sent to Montreal with a photographer to spend a full day with Arcand at his home. The article filled nearly the entire page. The photographs depict Arcand as a charming family man, seated with his wife and three children. Arcand wears his usual paramilitary outfit; his wife, Yvonne, wears a swastika armband. Another photograph shows Arcand seated with his wife adoringly looking up at him; the third is a portrait of Arcand.¹⁴

Griffin's article briefly touches on Arcand's desire to take power democratically, but his willingness to seize it by force. He admitted that his followers trained in street-fighting "just as Hitler's men learned it before the Munich putsch that brought him to power." Arcand said that he had built his own cabinet and was prepared to rule immediately. He showed Griffin letters of support he had received from Ontario, and that he believed the group would be well received as it moved into Ontario in the coming weeks. "We organize everybody—everybody that is, except the Jews. For them we have no room. Let them buy the island of Madagascar from the French government and set up their own nation. That is the only place in the world fit for them. The Holy land, Palestine, they can't have. It belongs to the Arabs."¹⁵

Most of the article focused on Arcand's family life. Yvonne Arcand was a stunt double in Hollywood before she competed in a beauty contest in Montreal, judged by her future husband who awarded her first prize. She believed that a woman's place is in the home, although she was happy to help with the PNSC's work. "It's pretty simple," she said. She went into Jewish-owned businesses with other women's auxiliary members and "you just buttonhole customers and tell them what the Jews are doing to Canada, so they leave." The Arcands liked to dance, and her only worry was that her husband did not eat enough. His favourite food were mushrooms which they grew in their garage.¹⁶

The article concluded with a visit from Joseph Maurice Scott, the commander of Arcand's "legionnaires." Scott is "six feet two, 270 pounds, with a war record" and trained Arcand's men in boxing and jiu-jitsu. He denied they trained with weapons but emphasized that their strengths were in their discipline and loyalty to Arcand: "We love him. I would die for him. So would every man in the party." Griffin's article is notably uncritical of Arcand and his movement. His antisemitism, and willingness and preparation for using violence to seize power, are presented as relatively minor considerations. The overall message of the article seems to be that Arcand was a man of substance and character who has earned the devotion of archetypically feminine and masculine representatives alike—a beauty queen housewife, and a burly war veteran. Arcand was pleased with his depiction in the *Toronto Daily Star*— he had the photographs of him and his family reproduced in the next edition of *le Fasciste canadien*.¹⁷

Overall, Arcand had managed his public entry into English Canada very well. Depictions of him were generally favourable, and he seemed able to present himself as a unifying and stabilizing figure who wanted a stronger Canada for Protestants and Catholics, anglophones and francophones. His antisemitism did not seem to bother the journalists or editors. That spring, however, Arcand became less of a distant figure as his party began to organize rallies in Ontario. Additionally, at least one journalist began to raise the alarm about the dangers posed by Arcand and the PNSC.

In late February 1938, a New York-based magazine, *The Nation*, printed the longest interview with Arcand yet, given to Canadian journalist David Martin.¹⁸ The tone of the article was conversational, describing the back and forth of their dialogue. Martin had done considerable research on Arcand's previous work and pushed back when Arcand's answers were inconsistent with previous statements.

The author also challenged Arcand on some of his more absurd conspiracy theories. For instance, Arcand had extensively described plans by members of Parliament to overthrow the government. Arcand had also previously written that Leon Trotsky had snuck into the United States and posed as Baron Rothschild's valet so he could

secretly meet with President Roosevelt. When pressed, Arcand admitted that he was no longer quite sure that these things had happened.

The Nation piece also put greater emphasis on Arcand's antisemitism than previous articles. Arcand told Martin, "We believe that the Jews are responsible for all the evils of today," operating through Wall Street and the Communist International. The writer challenged him on this, pointing to the fact that there was not a single Jew sitting as a director on the board of any bank, mortgage, insurance, rail, steamship, or public utility company in Canada. How could they possibly control *everything*? Arcand replied, "The Jews do not work openly," and that "I have nothing against the Jews personally as long as they leave us alone." He thought they should all be sent to Palestine but there were "other complications" and so they must go to Madagascar. The Rothschilds, he said, had enough money to fund the endeavour.¹⁹

Arcand presumably did not know that David Martin's real name was Israel Levine, an Ontarian Jew. Levine used the name David Martin for his organizing through the League for a Revolutionary Workers' Party, a faction that broke off from the Canadian and American Trotskyists, and then operated in small numbers in Toronto, Montreal, and New York. It is not clear how widely read Martin's article was in English Canada, but Reverend Charles Herbert Huestis referred to it extensively in his *Toronto Daily Star* column in late March.²⁰ It was the first piece of writing in either *The Globe and Mail* or the *Toronto Daily Star* that presented Arcand as a deranged man and disruptive figure.

In the months that followed, Arcand and the PNSC held rallies in Toronto alongside Farr and his supporters. In June, at the first large rally, it was clear that Arcand was no longer in control of the narrative. He staged a stunt where six militiamen attended his rally in uniform, marched up the aisle, gave Arcand a fascist salute, and sat in assigned seats in the front row. The *Toronto Daily Star* assigned photographers to the event, which captured images of Arcand, Farr, and Scott in front on swastika banners, Toronto police arresting protestors outside, and the militiamen seated in the front row.²¹

The presence of the soldiers proved to be the most newsworthy event. Arcand had regularly communicated that his movement was popular among soldiers and policemen, but this claim now proved to be a weakness. Newspaper accounts expressed alarm about fascist influence in the military and police, and there were calls for investigations and clarification regarding the militia's rules regarding participation in political movements.²²

In July, when Arcand held the first rally of the new National Unity Party, at Massey Hall, the event attracted considerable media attention. The focus, however, was on

the disruption caused by the event, not on Arcand. Newspaper reporters devoted considerably more attention to the counter-rallies held at Queen's Park and Maple Leaf Gardens and the protestors outside. Arcand was a disruptive influence on the city, and reporters seemed less inclined to interview the *fürher canadien* or report on the content of his speeches. Like the Montreal newspapers before them, the Toronto journalists gave Arcand himself almost no attention.

The articles that followed usually contained only brief references to Arcand, usually a passing reference to Arcand and his association with foreign fascism. As with Arcand's claimed popularity among soldiers and policemen, his association with foreign fascist powers increasingly became a liability as war in Europe seemed more likely. The National Unity Party dropped the swastika from its crest and letterhead, but it was too late. The association between Arcand and foreign fascism was clear. Arcand reappeared in the headlines in 1940 when he was interned under the *Defence of Canada Regulations*.

Arcand's foray into English Canada provides an example of a political extremist attempting to leverage Canada's "two solitudes." With little traction through francophone newspapers, he had the opportunity to begin anew in the anglophone print media. He was given an initially positive treatment and Arcand was able to exert some influence over his emerging public persona. This is especially striking given his flagrant antisemitism, which appears to have been insufficient cause for condemnation.

Response to Wentzell's "English-Language Media Portrayals of Adrien Arcand, 1929-1940"

Pierre Anctil

Tyler Wentzell's contribution, on Adrien Arcand's activities in Toronto in the late thirties, vividly highlights a paradigm shift that has recently emerged in research devoted to the history of Jews in Canada. As a leading voice of mid-twentieth century Canadian antisemitism, Arcand has long been a well-known figure among scholars interested in the evolution of Canadian Judaism. Almost all authors who have examined manifestations of hostility toward Jews have commented extensively on Arcand's career as a publicist and "journalist," portraying him as a prominent activist in the widespread dissemination of anti-Jewish hate speech. Despite this sustained—and quite justified—attention, few researchers have so far taken the analysis further by systematically consulting the historical documentation concerning Arcand at certain key moments in his "professional" career. This is changing, not only with regard to the study of antisemitism as such, but with regard to the historical contribution of Jews to the economic, political, and intellectual life of Canada.

In this sense, Wentzell's consultation of two large-circulation Toronto newspapers, *The Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Daily Star*, for the period 1937–1940, constitutes a remarkable advance in knowledge concerning Arcand's influence in English-speaking Canada. Thanks to Wentzell, we can now see, figures in hand, that the supposed "breakthrough" in Toronto of the antisemitic propagandist was limited to a short period in 1938, based essentially on wacky and exaggerated claims by Arcand about the importance of his militant base in Ontario. For a short time, Arcand also apparently attracted the attention of far-right personalities and followers of racist theories in Toronto, who belonged to a linguistic and cultural horizon different from French Canada. Until now, however, no scholar had been able to describe so accurately the results of Arcand's forays outside the Outaouais region. Wentzell's data were obtained through an in-depth study of all articles published in *The Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Daily Star* over a period of four years, leaving no doubt over the validity of his findings. For the first time, we can now better understand Arcand's influence in a part of the country where his party had previously acquired little traction, and the extent to which his antisemitic "preaching" attracted the attention of the general public in English-speaking Canada.

Wentzell's rigorous research makes it possible to reach conclusions that are far more reliable and historically accurate than the opinion and conjecture that has typically served as the foundation for study of Arcand. By relying on the mass-circulation press, Wentzell succeeds in putting an end to unfounded speculation concerning Arcand's influence. The same impulse to accurately register public opinion convinced me to undertake a detailed study of editorials about French Canadian nationalism published in Montreal's Yiddish press in the 1930s, the veracity and depth of which are unimpeachable. Several of these editorials concern the perception of Jewish immigrants of European origin toward Arcand. Through an exhaustive analysis of the English-language press in mid-century Canada, Wentzell has established a new standard of excellence in Canadian Jewish studies. This approach sheds exceptional light on the prevalence of antisemitism within Canadian society at different periods during the twentieth century.

In the time that elapsed between the start of our work on this forum and our deadlines for commenting on one another's essays, Pierre Berthiaume published a study entitled, *La Clé du mystère d'Adrien Arcand ou l'hystérie antisémite; dénonciation de l'antisémitisme d'un libelle québécois et déconstruction de sa rhétorique démagogique* (Presses de l'Université Laval, 2024). This contribution deserves to be mentioned here, as it provides another illustration of the trend toward strengthening and deepening studies on antisemitism in Canada during the twentieth century based on the consultation of large-scale datasets. Berthiaume analyzed a thirty-two-page pamphlet published by Arcand in the summer of 1937, entitled *La Clé du mystère (The Key to the Mystery)*, which contained no fewer than 215 texts aimed at demonstrating the existence of a

conspiracy for Jewish domination over the Christian world. For each of the published texts, Berthiaume patiently identifies Arcand's sources, discovering that these sources were either entirely fabricated or that Arcand greatly manipulated them and distorted their original meaning. No researcher has previously gone to such lengths to reveal the twists and turns of Arcand's thinking and expose the fallacies of his antisemitic worldview. The remarkable research by Wentzell, Lacasse, and Berthiaume demonstrates how only meticulous research and a very careful reading of texts published by Arcand during the 1930s, in addition to a fine-grained analysis of the historical context, will allow us to reach better-substantiated conclusions about this disreputable character.

Surveillance and Indifference: The Montreal Jewish Community Facing Adrien Arcand during the Postwar Period

Simon-Pierre Lacasse

The antisemitic agitator Adrien Arcand made his mark by the virulence of his words, scattered throughout various short-lived pamphlets in the 1930s at the height of fascist political movements in Europe and, to a lesser extent, in North America. The Canadian Jewish Congress had, in that period, mobilized to fight antisemitism wherever it manifested itself—in newspapers, in civil society, and within some marginal political parties. But what about the period after the Second World War?

Historical work that examines Quebec antisemitism suggests that the phenomenon remained deeply rooted in French Canadian society after the Second World War. An example of this interpretation can be found in a recent study on the immigration of Holocaust survivors to Canada. The historian Adara Goldberg states that “anti-semitic fervour reigned in Quebec, [. . .] fostered by community leaders and absorbed by the masses.”²³ Goldberg suggests that Arcand's fascist ideology, along with his public and political actions, exerted an attractive force on the entirety of Quebec society.²⁴ This assertion, already questionable for the interwar period, appears all the more dubious when applied to the postwar period. Indeed, public statements made by postwar Jewish activists in Quebec vis-à-vis the notorious antisemite suggest that antisemitism no longer constituted the predominant dynamic in relations between Jews and French Canadians.

My contribution to this forum, based on a study of the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* as well as archival documents from the Canadian Jewish Congress, examines the postwar career of Adrien Arcand. While manifestations of antisemitism never ceased, the genocide of European Jews by the Nazi regime rendered antisemitic statements intolerable in the Canadian public and political spheres. This may explain the stance of Montreal Jewish communal activists in response to Arcand's political activism: al-

though still disturbed by Arcand's antisemitism, Jews in Montreal no longer viewed the "Canadian führer" the same urgency as they had during the interwar period. This change of attitude was partly the result of a rapprochement between French Canadian and Montreal Jewish circles, marked by a new openness within the Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy, the French Canadian scientific community, and cultural figures to the Montreal Jewish community. French Canadian-Jewish dialogue reached its peak during the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, a subject that I develop in my recent book.²⁵

The Canadian fascist Arcand, who had been interned under the War Measures Act as a sympathizer of the Nazi regime, was released on July 3, 1945. In his book on the Arcand movement, Hugues Théorêt notes that the release of the Canadian "führer" had been contested by some Canadian Jewish organizations.²⁶ Indeed, the indignation provoked by Arcand's release coincided with growing awareness of the horrors that had transpired in Europe during the war.

The Jewish community's dismay was all the greater when, in September 1946, the newspaper *Le Goglu*, which had been published under the direction of Arcand in the 1930s, reappeared. This time the publication fell under the editorship of Joseph Ménard, a printer associated with Arcand from the start of his antisemitic activities. In the new version of the newspaper, Ménard did not publicly associate himself with the mastermind of the movement, even as he announced from the very start of the new incarnation that Ménard himself intended to "take up the refrain" where Arcand had left it in 1934.²⁷ It is telling that the return of the notorious antisemitic publication did not appear worthy of immediate mention in the English-speaking Jewish press.²⁸ Only the *Keneder Odler*, the Montreal Yiddish daily, published an editorial on the subject, written by Israel Rabinovitch.²⁹ At the *Odler*, no one is fooled. Rabinovitch suspected that Arcand was pulling strings behind *Le Goglu*, an interpretation shared by the historian Théorêt.³⁰

The antisemitic newspaper did not remain on newsstands for long. It published irregularly from September 1946 until February 1947.³¹ Although Théorêt could not establish with any certainty why the reincarnated *Le Goglu* failed, he argues that it was likely due to pecuniary reasons.³² Contemporary Jewish observers offered another explanation: signs pointed to the diocesan clergy playing a leading role in the paper's collapse.

In the pages of the *Congress Bulletin* in May 1947, the journalist Louis M. Benjamin suggested that the disappearance of *Le Goglu* "was due to the direct or indirect intervention of someone in authority in the Church."³³ The internal documents of the Canadian Jewish Congress confirm that a diocesan committee, the Saint-Paul Committee, and in particular one of its most active members, Henri Jeannotte, had orchestrated a campaign against the antisemitic publisher. Saul Hayes, director of the Canadian

Jewish Congress, reported that prominent representatives of the clergy “wrote to the editor of *Le Goglu*, Joseph Menard [sic], very strongly condemning his publication and when he replied they repeated their condemnation even more strongly and in all probability brought the matter to the attention of the Archbishop.”³⁴ This hypothesis is also supported by the words of the Archbishop of the Diocese of Montreal in an interview with the Canadian Jewish Congress in 1948. When asked about the closure of the antisemitic periodical, Bishop Charbonneau claimed to have met in person with Joseph Ménard, and threatened circulating a letter in the parishes condemning his actions if he did not immediately cease publication of the newspaper.³⁵ As Hayes reported, “The simple fact remains that following the condemnation of Menard’s antisemitism by Msgr. Jeannotte, *Le Goglu* ceased publication.”³⁶ While it is difficult to establish with certainty that financial pitfalls did not contribute most immediately to the fall of *Le Goglu*, this intervention was nevertheless viewed by Montreal Jewish activists as a turning point in the fight against antisemitism in Quebec.³⁷ By the late 1940s, Jews in Montreal could count on the active support of the Catholic clergy—an important turning point in the history of Jewish–Catholic relations.

The Canadian Jewish Congress closely followed the activities of Arcand during the postwar period. On November 9, 1947, Arcand gave a speech at a clandestine meeting in Montreal. The Montreal press reported the presence of some five hundred supporters, a demonstration of support all the more worrying since several of them were, according to an observer dispatched by the Canadian Jewish Congress, men of a liberal persuasion.³⁸ On this occasion, Arcand reactivated the National Social Christian Party, which had become legal again after the armistice and in which he stood in the 1949 federal election as the only candidate. Provincial and federal authorities, who were not insensitive to the resurgence of the Arcand movement in 1947, assured Congress that they were collecting information on individual activists. They considered the number of activists they tallied insignificant.³⁹ Nevertheless, the return of Arcand to the political scene caused deep distress among Jewish activists in Montreal. The feeling was compounded by the shadow of great disaster that had just befallen European Jews; the Montreal Jewish community was particularly aware of the genocide, having welcomed after the war a large contingent of Holocaust survivors.⁴⁰

The English-language press subsequently questioned Premier Maurice Duplessis. It noted with concern the resurgence of Arcand in the public sphere. The “secret meeting” in question, to which neither the general public nor journalists were invited, could not, according to the premier, justify the direct intervention of the government or the authorities.⁴¹ Freedom of speech, Duplessis argued, was an inalienable right and only an attack on the democratic constitution would form the ground for punishment. Duplessis reassured the Jewish community, however, that the government stood ready to intervene against Arcand if necessary, since “Communism, Bolshevism, Fascism, Nazism or any other ‘ism’ have no place in the Province of

Quebec.”⁴² The Canadian Jewish Congress was so pleased with this statement, it sent a note of appreciation to the Premier⁴³

In June 1949, Arcand announced that he intended to run in that year’s federal election under the banner of the National Unity Party, a new version of the National Social Christian Party, in the constituency of Richelieu–Verchères. A.M. Klein, a columnist for the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, received the news coldly. Indeed, Klein found it hard to believe that Arcand dared to stand before the electorate in the aftermath of the Second World War and side with the Nazi enemy.⁴⁴ The most distressing element of Arcand’s election bid, according to Klein, was that Arcand could still count on a base of militant voters, and that such voters would prevent him from suffering defeat.⁴⁵ Arcand lost his bid in 1949. He ran again in the 1953 federal election, promoting his party with a new periodical, *Unité nationale*. Here again, Jewish community activists did not comment on Arcand’s political efforts, which would end in failure a second time. According to an estimate by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Unité nationale* published some two thousand copies.⁴⁶ By the early 1950s, however, Arcand had abandoned in his publications the crude, contemptuous caricatures and fascist antisemitism that had been the trademark of his newspapers in the 1930s.⁴⁷

The Canadian Jewish Congress, along with the editors of the *Chronicle*, gradually abandoned their concern over by the 1950s, largely due to the transformation of Quebec’s social landscape, which was marked by a discernible weakening of antisemitism in the province and across Canada. In this context, a marginalized ideologue like Arcand aroused little interest.

As revealed by the systematic compilation of cases of antisemitism by the *Information Bulletin* of the Public Relations Committee of the Canadian Jewish Congress, anti-Jewish incidents had been steadily decreasing in Quebec since the early 1950s. There was a decline in physical assaults, defamatory remarks in the press, and in manifestations of hostility toward Jews in public institutions. The decline reflected a broader shift in Quebec’s sociopolitical environment, in which ideologies inspired by fascism lost much of their symbolic significance, while Catholic elites began to engage more explicitly in interfaith outreach initiatives. The progressive marginalization of figures like Arcand and the disappearance of agents of antisemitic propaganda, such as *Le Goglu*, confirm this repositioning. In this context, the Canadian Jewish Congress actively redefined its strategic priorities. Rather than focus exclusively on exposing antisemitism, the organization turned increasingly to promoting civil rights and the fight against systemic discrimination.⁴⁸

The study of how Montreal Jewish activists perceived Adrien Arcand in the postwar period reveals a significant evolution of the place of antisemitism in Quebec society. If the 1930s were marked by an urgent fight against virulent hate speech, embodied by Arcand and his publications, the period following the Second World War testifies

to a transformation of inter-community dynamics. The horrors of the Holocaust fundamentally changed how the public received antisemitic statements, increasingly rendering them unacceptable, even to Quebec's Catholic institutions.

Analyzing Jewish community responses to Arcand thus makes it possible to challenge popular understanding of the entrenchment of antisemitism in Quebec society. It highlights not only the strategic effectiveness of Jewish institutions in their response to hatred, but also the ability of Quebec society to gradually marginalize extremist speech. Through this process, slow but real progress in Jewish-Catholic relations emerged, initiating a dialogue that would culminate with the identity shifts of the Quiet Revolution.

Response to Lacasse's "Surveillance and Indifference"

Tyler Wentzell

Simon-Pierre Lacasse's essay examines how Montreal's Jewish community—particularly through the Canadian Jewish Congress—monitored and responded to the postwar activities of fascist leader Adrien Arcand. Lacasse's article challenges persistent notions that antisemitism was part of the civic fabric of Quebec. On the contrary, in the postwar, post-Holocaust era, there was solidarity across communities for the strategic containment of Arcand and cautious indifference to the threat he posed.

Using Canadian Jewish Congress records, including the *Chronicle Bulletin*, *Public Relations Committee Information Bulletin*, and the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, Lacasse shows that the Catholic clergy confronted Arcand's resurrected antisemitic newspaper, *Le Goglu*, and consequently contributed to its demise in 1947. Postwar Catholic authorities increasingly aligned with Jewish communities to oppose antisemitic propaganda. When Arcand tried re-entering politics in the 1949 and 1953 federal elections, he softened his public antisemitic rhetoric. He likely anticipated condemnation if he used the same tropes he relied on during the 1930s.

Lacasse effectively argues that antisemitism was not as widely tolerated in postwar Quebec as is often assumed. Jewish activism and Catholic leadership actively marginalized Arcand in public, and Arcand proved unable to build a broad base of popular support. Lacasse's nuanced reading of reactions to Arcand highlights the importance of communal vigilance, interfaith solidarity, and democratic institutions as bulwarks against fascism and antisemitism. Arcand's largest postwar rally apparently had only five hundred participants who met secretly. The members were no longer willing to attach their names to Arcand's movement.

The Canadian Jewish Congress' influence, and perhaps non-Jewish communities' willingness to publicly support its objectives, increased significantly in the postwar era. In the late 1930s, Jewish voices like Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath had to lobby the English-speaking media merely to report on Arcand's antisemitism. As my entry in this forum shows, this lobbying initially led to sympathetic reporting about Arcand, not condemnation. Arcand leveraged both overt and quiet antisemitism among reporters and readers, combined with anglophone naiveté about his history, to briefly enjoy favourable media coverage outside of Quebec.

Both studies suggest that antisemitism in Canada, although persistent, was neither hegemonic nor unopposed. While Arcand could find followers and garner attention, he never achieved mass legitimacy. Furthermore, he did not face formal censorship after the Second World War; he retained his right to free speech and could run in elections. His downfall—or failure to ascend—was hardly inevitable. It was the result of work by activist Jewish leaders and their supporters, and eventually by a Canadian society increasingly unwilling to tolerate overt antisemitic ideas.

Pierre Anctil is a professor emeritus of contemporary Canadian history and Canadian Jewish history at the University of Ottawa. He has written extensively on the history of the Montreal Jewish community and on current debates regarding cultural pluralism in Montreal. Among his contributions are translations from Yiddish to French of memoirs written by Canadian Jewish immigrants in the first part of the twentieth century. He is the author of a literary biography entitled, *Jacob-Isaac Segal: a Montreal Yiddish Poet and his Milieu* (2017). Recent publications include *A Reluctant Welcome for Jewish People: Voices in Le Devoir's Editorials, 1910-1947* (2019) and *History of the Jews in Québec* (2021). His last book in French is a study entitled *Antijudaïsme et influence nazie au Québec: le cas du journal L'Action catholique 1931-1939* (2021), which examines the influence of Catholic doctrinal teachings on the dissemination of antisemitism in Francophone Canada during the thirties. In 2023, he published in collaboration with Richard Menkis, a collection of Jewish Canadian historical documents entitled, *In a "Land of Hope": Documents on the Canadian Jewish Experience 1627-1923*.

Simon-Pierre Lacasse holds a PhD in history from the University of Ottawa (2020). His research examines the Canadian Jewish community, with a particular focus on relations between Jews and French Canadians in the twentieth century, through the lenses of intellectual, social, and political history. His recent book, *Les Juifs de la Révolution tranquille: regards d'une minorité religieuse sur le Québec de 1945 à 1976*, explores how Jewish periodicals represented Quebec and French Canadians during the three decades following the Second World War. The book received a special citation at the 2023 Canadian Jewish Literary Awards and was shortlisted for the J. I. Segal Prize. Lacasse has also studied the emergence of

the Hasidic community in Montreal during the same period. More broadly, his work highlights the importance of integrating the voices of ethnic and cultural minorities into mainstream narratives of Canadian history. He currently teaches in the Department of History at Concordia University and at the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada.

Tyler Wentzell holds an SJD (PhD in law) from the University of Toronto Faculty of Law (2025). His research examines transnational illiberal movements, foreign fighters, and public order policing. He is the author of *Not for King or Country: Edward Cecil-Smith, the Communist Party of Canada, and the Spanish Civil War* and a forthcoming monograph about William Krehm and the League for a Revolutionary Workers' Party, a predominantly Jewish revolutionary organization in Toronto and Montreal during the 1930s. Wentzell teaches defense studies at the Canadian Forces College in Toronto.

1

See Jean-François Nadeau, *Adrien Arcand, führer canadien* (Lux éditeur, 2010), 404; Hugues Théorêt, *Les chemises bleues: Adrien Arcand, journaliste antisémite canadien-français* (les Éditions du Septentrion, 2012), 410; Hugues Théorêt, "Influence et rayonnement international d'Adrien Arcand," in a special issue of the journal *Globe* entitled, "Nouveaux regards sur le phénomène de l'antisémitisme dans l'histoire du Québec," 18, no. 1 (2015): 19-45.

2

Pierre Ancil, 'À chacun ses Juifs', 60 éditoriaux pour comprendre la position du Devoir à l'égard des Juifs, 1910-1947 (Éditions du Septentrion, 2014), 452, and from the same author, *Antijudaïsme et influence nazie au Québec; le cas du journal L'Action catholique (1931-1939)* (Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2021), 441.

3

See, "Meyor Houde un di antisemitische 'Goglu' khevre" ["Mayor Houde and the antisemitic gang of the 'Goglu'"], *Der Keneder Odler*, April 18, 1930, 4. All translations from Yiddish to French are by the author of this article.

4

Adrien Arcand was first mentioned in the *Odler* on April 15, 1930. See, "Ver shtet hinter di dozike paskvil?" ["Who stands behind these pamphlets?"].

5

Ibid.

6

"Ofene antisemitische karten" ["Playing the card of anti-Semitism openly"], *Der Keneder Odler*, July 27, 1930, 4.

7

"Der sof fun antisemitische shmutz bleter" ["The end of abject anti-Semitic newspapers"], *Der Keneder Odler*, August 30, 1931, 4.

8

"Vos men tor nit in Daytshland meg men in Montreal?" ["Will what is possible in Germany become possible in Montreal?"], *Der Keneder Odler*, August 19, 1932, 4. "Antisemitic charlatans" refers to Adrien Arcand and Joseph Ménard.

9

"Krig iz derklert gevoren tsum yidishen folk!" ["War is declared to the Jewish people!"], *Der Keneder Odler*, July 22, 1935, 4.

10

Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf: Fascist Movements in Canada in the Thirties* (Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1975), 103-7.

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"80,000 Montreal Men Join Fascist Banner to Force New Order," *Toronto Daily Star*, November 26, 1937.

12

Ken MacTaggart, "Largest Fascist Unit is Led from Quebec," *Globe and Mail*, December 2, 1937; Ken MacTaggart, "Fascist Unit has an Organ Printed Here," *Globe and Mail*, December 8, 1937.

13

MacTaggart, "Largest Fascist Unit is Led from Quebec."

14

David Griffin, "Montreal Fascist Leader Aspires to Dictatorship of Canada," *Toronto Daily Star*, February 10, 1938.

15

Ibid.

16

Ibid.

17

"Le chef du P.N.S.C. avec sa femme et ses enfants," *le Fasciste canadien*, March 1938.

18

David Martin, "Adrien Arcand, Fascist—An Interview," *Nation*, February 26, 1938.

19

Ibid.

20

Charles Herbert Huestis, "Canada Begets a Fuehrer," *Toronto Daily Star*, March 31, 1938.

21

"Soldiers of the King Listen to Fascist Harangue," *Toronto Daily Star*, June 7, 1938.

22

Regarding the progression of Arcand's rallies in Toronto and the anti-fascist resistance, see Tyler Wentzell, "Scenes of Berlin: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in Toronto during the Summer of 1938," *Canadian Jewish Studies / Études juives canadiennes* 35 (2023): 16–39.

23

Adara Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada: Exclusion, Inclusion, Transformation, 1947–1955* (University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 12.

24

Ibid., 13.

25

Simon-Pierre Lacasse, *Les Juifs de la Révolution tranquille: Regards d'une minorité religieuse sur le Québec de 1945 à 1976* (University of Ottawa Press, 2022).

26

Théorêt, *Les chemises bleues*, 259.

27

Ibid., 274.

28

In April 1947, two months after the publication of the last issue of *Le Goglu*, the *Congress Bulletin* scolded *The Gazette* for printing articles about Arcand's movement. "J. H. Fine Protests Publicity Given to Montreal Fascist," *Congress Bulletin*, April 1947, 4.

29

Théorêt, *op. cit.*, 275.

30

Ibid.

31

"Le Goglu Suspends Publication," *Congress Bulletin*, April 1947, 11.

32

Ibid., 276.

33

Louis M. Benjamin, "The Jews and the French-Canadians," *Congress Bulletin*, May 5, 1947, 8.

34

Saul Hayes, "Catholic Conversionist Activities," *Public Relations Committee Information Bulletin*, Volume 1, April 15, 1947.

35

Saul Hayes, "Interview with Archbishop of Montreal," *Public Relations Committee Information Bulletin*, Volume 1, April 9, 1948.

36

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