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# The Oppressor's Matrix: McGill University's Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1963-1973

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See table of contents

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Article abstract

After the Israel-Hamas war erupted in October 2023, McGill University in Montreal was one of many North American institutions where students set up encampments in what they described as solidarity with the Palestinian cause. Some have linked this phenomenon to prior student movements, such as those during the Vietnam War or Apartheid in South Africa. But the earliest demonstrations at McGill associated with the Arab-Israeli conflict occurred during Quebec's Quiet Revolution (1960-1970), a time of significant upheaval in the province. This included unprecedented unrest at McGill: in 1969, ten thousand people marched in "Operation McGill Francais," a rally that was as much about the French language as it was about anti-colonial revolution. Focusing on this incident, a turning point in Quebec's anti-imperialist movement, this paper considers the origins of Quebec-Palestine solidarity and analyzes the phenomenon's impact on McGill–including its Jewish students. Understanding this historical context can shed light on the recent sensitivity of the Israel / Palestine debate at McGill and offer insight into the wider historiography of political tensions on university campuses.



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# The Oppressor's Matrix: McGill University's Arab–Israeli Conflict, 1963–1973

## Abstract

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## Résumé

*Après le déclenchement de la guerre entre Israël et le Hamas en octobre 2023, l'université McGill à Montréal a été l'un des nombreux établissements nord-américains où les étudiant.es ont installé des campements en solidarité avec la cause palestinienne. Certain.es dressent un parallèle entre cette mobilisation et les mouvements étudiants passés, tel que ceux ayant eu lieu durant la guerre du Vietnam ou l'apartheid en Afrique du Sud. Cependant, les premières manifestations associées au conflit israélo-arabe à McGill ont commencé pendant la Révolution tranquille (1960–1970), une période d'effervescence au Québec. Cela inclut des soulèvements à McGill : en 1969, 10 000 personnes participèrent à l'Opération McGill Français, une manifestation qui portait autant sur la langue française que sur la révolution anticoloniale. En mettant l'accent sur ce tournant du mouvement anti-impérialiste québécois, cet article réexamine les origines de la solidarité Québec–Palestine, analysant son impact sur l'université McGill, y compris sur son corpus étudiant juif. La compréhension de ce contexte historique peut éclairer la récente sensibilité au débat sur Israël/Palestine dans cette université, tout en offrant un aperçu de l'historiographie plus large sur les tensions politiques sur les campus universitaires.*


In the early hours of July 10, 2024, private security guards hired by McGill University surrounded a cluster of tents arrayed on the lower field of its downtown campus, pushing through a fenced enclosure and ejecting its occupants. This surprise operation brought a sudden end to the "Liberated Zone" encampment, which groups such as Solidarity with Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR) and Montreal for Palestine had

set up on April 27 to pressure McGill to divest from entities associated with Israel.[1] Long a source of tension within the university community, these ties became most sensitive after war erupted in October 2023 between Israel and Hamas–the terrorist faction that controls the Palestinian territory of Gaza–after its operatives attacked Israel, killing about 1,200 Israelis and taking 251 hostages. The Israeli military entered the enclave days later, reducing much of it to rubble in an aggressive campaign some have described as disproportionate and inconsistent with international law.[2] The conflict sparked a wave of activism across North America, culminating in dozens of encampments on university property.[3] McGill's lasted longer than most, surviving multiple legal challenges.[4]

The spring 2024 encampment was significant, but it was not the first occupation at McGill, nor was it the first one to emphasize solidarity with Palestine. In March 2022, students set up tents inside the McCall MacBain Arts building in great part to pressure the Board of Governors to divest from companies active in Israel and the West Bank.[5] Throughout McGill's history, similar occupations have highlighted other issues: in 2015, students calling for McGill to divest from fossil fuels camped outside the James McGill Administration building for five days.[6] Decades earlier, in 1968, members of the Political Science Students' Association (PSSA) occupied a floor of the Stephen Leacock Building for ten days because they believed students had a right to participate in the department's hiring process, which they considered to have been rigged in favour of those committed to upholding the "status quo."[7]

Demonstrators incensed by what they consider to be McGill's complicity in Israel's actions since October 2023 have at times identified their movement with activism in Montreal during the period historians call the "Long Sixties."[8] Observers in the media, too, have described the contemporary mass-movement as reminiscent of the zeitgeist on university campuses in the turbulent mid-20th century, when thousands marched in opposition to Canadian support for the United States-led Vietnam War, among other causes.[9] As recent protests have promoted an economic and cultural boycott of Israel, some have also posited that the movement can be traced to the student-led campaign in the 1980s to sanction Apartheid South Africa.[10] McGill was the first Canadian school to divest in 1985, an event the *McGill Daily* described in January 2024 as a form of "historic activism" that serves as a "precedent" for contemporary Palestinian solidarity.[11] Members of the McGill senate advanced similar arguments in response to the university's crackdown on a 2022 Palestine policy.[12] Groups involved in such activities, including the McGill encampment, do not appear to favour any one historical analogy, although some have drawn explicit links to the late 1960s.[13] Instead, many frame their advocacy as means of continuing a universal, trans-historical struggle against Western imperialism, global capitalism, and donor influence over university affairs.[14]

This theory of historical progression can be traced to the ideological origins of Palestinian solidarity in North America.[15] Within the context of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union, Palestinian solidarity became an important theme of the anti-imperialist New Left that emerged in Western societies, most importantly in higher education, in the 1960s.[16] Arab student organizations in North America have advocated for the Palestinian cause since the 1950s, but it did not become a focus of the New Left until Israel's decisive victory in the 1967 Six Day War.[17] After the fighting, Israeli forces occupied the Sinai Peninsula, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank, placing Israel in a position of control over hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. The conflict drew a lasting wedge between Israel-supporting Jewish students, many of whom had contributed to the early ascent of the New Left, and the mainstream anti-imperialist movement, which denounced Israel as an imperial power and embraced the Palestinian cause.

The New Left directly influenced a series of social, political, and economic transformations in Quebec remembered as the Quiet Revolution (1960-1970).[18] During this period, some Quebec nationalists interpreted the unequal relationship between the English speaking, largely Anglo-Saxon minority, and the Francophone majority, as a proxy for the Cold War pitting the capitalist West against the Soviet-led "Third World."[19]After 1967, many Quebec revolutionaries embraced Palestinian solidarity in the belief that it represented a common front against U.S-backed imperialism and industrial capitalism.[20] This alignment influenced Jewish attitudes toward Quebec's liberation movement, as most Jews in Quebec spoke English and operated within the Anglophone milieu.[21]

Even though Jews faced, in some ways, a more menacing degree of antisemitism from English Canada before the 1960s, few Quebec nationalists perceived the Jewish community as partners in solidarity.[22] On the whole, as Pierre Anctil describes it, Quebec Jews "suffered more from public indifference," although certain activists vilified them to support "a much wider national agenda."[23] One of these agendas was fascism, as personified in the figure of Adrien Arcand (1899-1967). But after the end of the Second World War, some members of Marxist-Leninist groups such as the Front de la Liberation du Quebec (Front for the Liberation of Quebec, FLQ) targeted Jews as well.[24] This terrorist organization took a particular interest in the Palestinian cause and on one occasion attempted to kidnap an Israeli diplomat.[25]

Some historians have accused the FLQ and similar groups of employing antisemitic tropes.[26] Nationalists at times targeted McGill University, which itself had an unofficial quota on Jewish enrolment, possibly into the 1960s, with invectives connected to Jews' perceived influence.[27] One reason for this may be that McGill had close ties to Montreal's Jewish elite, despite its history of discriminating against Jewish applicants. Prominent Jews, such as Samuel Bronfman, donated vast sums to McGill

as it expanded in the post-war period.[28] In 1964, the Independent Order of B'nai Brith noted that McGill's Hillel Society, part of a network of student centres that the organization sponsored at the time, had forged a close relationship with McGill's administration.[29]

This study will not delve into the impact of antisemitism on Quebec's liberation-nationalist movement on university campuses, although scholars such as Daniel Rickenbacher have analyzed the phenomenon.[30] Instead, this paper argues that the liberation-nationalist discourse prevalent in Quebec during the 1960s influenced the trajectory of McGill student engagement with the Arab-Israeli conflict. This link is critical to inform the historiography of revolutionary activity at McGill, with implications for the critical study of radicalism on campuses across North America. Drawing on essays in student publications, tabloids distributed to organize protests, and other materials, it examines how figures in Montreal's New Left, such as Michel Chartrand, leader of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux, (Confederation of National Syndicates, CSN) coordinated with student activists to make the cause of Palestinian liberation a core element of anti-imperialist activity. In doing so, they linked the Quebecois' revolutionary struggle to that of other marginalized groups, particularly the Palestinians. This radical synergy came to a head during a March 1969 event called Opération McGill Français (Operation French McGill), when ten thousand trade-unionists, students, and activists marched for a variety of reasons, above all to transform McGill into an institution that served the interests of the working-class Quebecois.

## The Quiet Revolution and McGill

Before the Quiet Revolution, the Francophone population lacked many of the social, economic, and political advantages associated with the English-speaking minority. These disparities were especially pronounced in higher education.[31] In 1960, for instance, 10 per cent of Anglophones aged twenty to twenty-four attended university, while only 2.9 per cent of Francophones matriculated.[32] These figures were relatively low compared to Ontario or the United States.[33] Most Ashkenazi Jewish pupils during this period fell within the Anglophone system as so-called "honourary protestants" and many later studied at McGill.[34]

Under public pressure, Premier Jean Lesage (in office 1960-1966) established a commission to devise means for improving access to education in Quebec. This "Parent Commission"—named for its chair, Mgr. Alphonse Parent—consisted of eight experts drawn from both linguistic communities. Over three years, the body recommended some five hundred reforms.[35] The Quebec National Assembly eventually implemented most of these proposals, placing education under secular, state administration in 1964. Months later, the government replaced Church-run Classical

Colleges with heavily subsidized post-secondary academies, in English and French, called General and Vocational Colleges (CEGEPs). In 1968, the province chartered a low-tuition, French-language University of Quebec system.[36]

This era coincided with the maturation of the "baby boomer" generation (1946-1964): about eighty thousand youths entered higher education in the late 1960s, a demographic transformation so significant that historian Eric Bedard credits it with democratizing the education system.[37] These changes meant more Quebecois earned advanced degrees, entering professional classes in which the Anglophone minority had traditionally been dominant. As the higher education sector expanded, the government increased funding for schools: in 1961-1962 and 1964-1965, grants-per-student at French language institutions rose from $977 to $1,295—a 33 percent increase.[38] This outpaced the corresponding 11 percent increase in support for English universities, including McGill, which had historically depended on alumni donations.[39]

McGill's student population rose 45 percent from 1961-1966, doubling in size to 14,500 in 1970.[40] The student body also became more diverse, enrolling more Francophones and lower-income students. Nevertheless, Francophones continued to perceive McGill as inaccessible, even for those graduating from the nascent CEGEP system: tuition was expensive, and the school did not have enough seats to accommodate all prospective students.[41] At the same time, nationalist groups such as the Movement for French Quebec (MQF) and the St. Jean Baptiste Society criticized a law called Bill 63.[42] This legislation, a product of the Parent Commission's recommendations, was controversial because it allowed parents to choose the language in which their children would be educated. Nationalists feared parents would prefer English schools, as English speakers held an economic advantage over those who could only speak French. Critics of the bill warned that this would, in the long run, undermine national solidarity and reinforce the existing social hierarchy.

Because policies such as Bill 63 appeared to favour the Anglophone community, many Francophones interpreted them as an existential threat to their cultural existence.[43] Under the lens of anti-imperialism, these problems stood out as hallmarks of colonization and capitalist exploitation. As disaffected students, labour activists, and others turned to revolutionary literature for comfort and inspiration, authors such as Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi became bestsellers in Montreal, where readers were able to engage with the texts in their original French.[44] According to historian Sean Mills, Fanon's 1963 book, *The Wretched of the Earth,* exerted particular influence.[45] Sometimes described as the "bible of decolonization," this work argued that violence could be justified if it was directed at colonizers, including members of what Fanon defined as the "colonized elite"—individuals who shared the oppressed population's ethno-national character but opposed its collective liberation.[46]

Despite McGill's association with the Anglophone community, many students—or at least, those whose opinions were represented in the student press—supported Quebec's liberation movement. The "McGill United Front," for instance, formed in November 1969 to organize resistance against the "fascist" Montreal mayor Jean Drapeau's crackdown on the FLQ and nationalist demonstrations.[47] Quebec's liberation movement gained traction at McGill at a time when the Vietnam War was radicalizing students across North America.[48] Canada was not an active participant in the conflict, but its universities and industries supported the American effort. In 1966, the *McGill Daily* editor Sandy Gage exposed the Faculty of Engineering's relationship to the US military. Under pressure from the university, the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) fired Gage, although she was reinstated following a Canadian University Press investigation. During the controversy, a group of protesters briefly occupied the James McGill administration building.[49] The affair marked the culmination of the *Daily*'s transformation into a New Left publication.[50] In the decades that followed, it became a leading voice for the growing anti-imperialist movements on campus and in Montreal, including Palestinian nationalism.[51]

The Gage scandal, among others, prompted 150 activists to create an organization called "Students for a Democratic University" (SDU) in November 1967, which remained active for years on campus.[52] From its outset, Stanley Gray, a Marxist and Jewish lecturer at McGill, played a central role in the SDU's activities, which included disrupting McGill Senate and Board of Governors meetings.[53] In late 1968, the SDU reconstituted itself as the "Radical Student Alliance" (RSA). One of its co-founders, Nigel Hamer, later joined the FLQ and helped kidnap a British diplomat during the October Crisis.[54]

According to McGill historian Peter McNally, 1968 was the "high water mark" for student radicalism on campus, although this was the case across North America.[55] It was a year of global disruption: in April, James Earl Ray assassinated Black Civil Rights activist Martin Luther King, and in August, Soviet forces invaded Czechoslovakia to curb a student-led reformist movement.[56] In October, Montreal students, inspired by similar demonstrations overseas, took to the streets to demand greater access to education, generating momentum for the government to create the University of Quebec system.[57]

On McGill's campus, student protests reached a crescendo.[58] One of the most striking incidents was the ten-day PSSA occupation. But the protesters' concerns about faculty selection were not addressed, and discontent continued into 1969, escalating after McGill hired Jayanto Nath Chaudhuri, a former British officer and Indian general accused of war crimes.[59] For the *Daily,* this was not only about the general but also a "very specific form" of the campaign against imperialism in Quebec.[60] Nevertheless, other students rejected the anti-Chaudhuri demands, and the is-

sue became highly polarizing. In one incident, a brawl reportedly broke out between a group of anti-imperialist clubs, including the Palestine Society, and counter-protesters. In the aftermath, the McGill "Committee for the People's Democratic Rights" denounced the SSMU and an unspecified "Zionist" for calling the police on protesters.[61] By the year's end, McGill had conceded to students' demands for greater power, giving them seats at the University Senate.[62] The 1968 revolution left a permanent mark on McGill, although not without backlash: at the start of 1969, the conservative *McGill Weekly* decried the New Left's campus take-over.[63]

## Palestine and the New Left in Montreal

Many early New Left thinkers and activists were Jewish.[64] As Jews, they sympathized with Israel's cause, often citing its founders' Labour Zionist beliefs.[65] But after Israel's military victory in the 1967 Six Day War, which ended with an intractable Israeli military occupation of territories predominantly inhabited by Palestinian Arabs, supporting Israel became increasingly difficult for some progressives to justify.[66]

The Six Day War divided large anti-Vietnam war coalitions like the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC), which included Jewish groups. Mainstream Jewish organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of B'nai Brith resisted calls to adopt positions in favour of a "Free Palestine." As the US prepared to scale down its involvement in Vietnam, an ADL observer accused anti-war leaders of conspiring to turn the movement into an "anti-Israel campaign."[67] In June 1967, the US Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) newsletter published its first issue dedicated to the "Palestine Problem" and defined it as a matter of critical importance to the Third World.[68]

With growing support from the anti-imperialist movement, the Organization of Arab Students (OAS) and other Arab groups became increasingly influential within the New Left.[69] In Canada, the Canadian-Arab Federation (CAF), building on emerging public support, lobbied Ottawa to discontinue support for Israel.[70] The Palestinian liberation movement was, for many Arab Canadians, an existential calling: Palestine was, according to one OAS chairman, the "most important single problem in the mind of Arabs everywhere." Arabs may have differed on any policy issue, "*except the one issue of Palestine*."[71]

In Montreal, where there was already a large Arab immigrant community, including a small number of Palestinian refugees, Quebec nationalists embraced solidarity with Palestine shortly after the Six Day War.[72] In February 1969, Pierre Vallieres, an early FLQ member, and Charles Gagnon—another early FLQ member who also edited the group's journal, *La Cognee* (The Axe)—distributed a pamphlet called "Pour un front commun Quebec-Palestine" ("For a Quebec-Palestine common front").[73] The

document asserted that all national liberation struggles were "inseparable" from one another," and that "the ideal of Palestinian resistance is identical to that of Quebec resistance."[74] This call for solidarity with Palestine had an impact throughout the New Left in Quebec.[75] Within weeks, the CSN Central Council, at Michel Chartrand's request, endorsed a platform of solidarity with Palestine. As Quebec–Palestine solidarity gained traction, the CAF also cultivated ties with political parties such as the Parti Québécois (PQ).

In 1969, Palestine also became a distinct feature of political activism at McGill. In November, the McGill Palestine Society organized various lectures, including one on "Palestine and Vietnam."[76] Hillel, for its part, circulated a leaflet authored by two US professors titled "The Dialectics of the Israeli Arab Dispute: Apocalyptic Politics."[77] The essay argued that while Israel was socialist, "despotic" Arab pressure forced the Jews to depend on "imperialist" Western nations. This "apocalyptic warfare," rooted in antisemitism, had forced Israel into its partnership with the U.S, although the authors stressed that it would be "myopic" to deny Palestinians' suffering.[78] The ADL reported in 1970 that, throughout 1969, clubs such as McGill's Afro–Asian Society (A–AS) distributed "Arab propaganda" denouncing Israel–some criticizing Jewish Montrealers' large donations to Israeli institutions.[79] One of these pamphlets appears to have been a copy of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)'s September 1966 publication, "Do You Know? 20 Basic Facts about the Palestine Problem."[80] It alleged that Israel, with American support, was imposing "apartheid" on Palestinians.[81] In addition to spreading literature, members of the A–AS and other anti–imperialist groups reportedly attempted to physically disrupt Hillel meetings.[82] According to the US Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), Palestinian representatives at a January 1970 Montreal conference tried to recruit students for an "international brigade."[83]

Marxist clubs at McGill were among the university's most active supporters of the Palestinian liberation effort. In 1970, the Marxist *McGill Student* glorified the Palestinians' "brilliant successes" throughout 1969, lauding their "just" struggle against "US Imperialism and Zionism."[84] Around the same time, the Latin American Student Movement (LASM), another McGill club, distributed an edition of its *El Machete* magazine (also the name of Mexico's Marxist party newsletter) that denounced an "international Zionist conspiracy" against indigenous peoples.[85] Another article in this *Machete* volume described a January 31, 1970, "Solidarity Day with Palestine," during which progressive groups from Quebec, Canada, and the US gathered at McGill to express "militant support" for Palestine.[86] The LASM celebrated the event as a show of unified resistance in the Third World, but the only "authentic" Marxists in Palestinian society belonged to the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DPFLP), according to a French Communist cited in an October 1969 *Daily* issue.[87]

Events at McGill responded to trends within Montreal's radical spaces, and clubs at the university that supported Palestinian liberation helped to raise its profile within the broader anti-imperialist community. This relationship influenced a March 1970 "Solidarity Week," the first of its kind in Canada, during which Palestine became an important theme.[88] The CSN leader Chartrand and Reqez Faraj, a Palestinian Canadian activist, organized the city-wide event, which included rallies at government buildings, combined with events at McGill and other universities. The summit featured representatives of the Black Panthers, the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN), the FLQ, and other revolutionary groups, as well as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a US organization.[89] On March 2, Charles Gagnon moderated a global anti-imperialism conference at McGill, delivering a teach-in on Palestine and proposing a motion endorsing the cause.[90] On March 5, the McGill Arab Students' Society (also known as the Arab Student Network, ASN), the McGill Palestine Society, and the Quebec-Palestine Committee (CQP) hosted Chartrand and SDU leader Stanley Gray at McGill's Leacock Building. Panelists framed the Palestinian struggle as a class war and praised the DPFLP. A transcript linked to the event, signed with the name of the DPFLP and the McGill ASN's logo, criticized the "alliance between Jewish capitalism and world capitalism."[91] After the conference, the crowd marched from McGill to the Israeli and US consulates.

Organizers dedicated two full days of the week-long program to Quebec-Palestine solidarity. Later, Chartrand invited Faraj to speak on the subject before the CSN's Montreal council, leading it to issue its first resolution in support of the Palestinian cause on March 17.[92] In September that year, Faraj and his allies helped to establish a "Palestine House" in Montreal with the goal of generating "support from the Arab and Quebecois people against Zionism supported by US imperialism."[93] At Faraj's invitation, Chartrand went on to participate in a "solidarity tour" of the Middle East, including Lebanon, Egypt, and Algeria.

Solidarity with Palestine was also an important feature of the second-generation, Marxist-Leninist FLQ. Although the FLQ started in 1962 as a subsidiary of the right-wing Rally for National Independence (RIN), police apprehended most of this 'old guard' in 1962-1963, leaving room for more progressive youth to take their place.[94] Some of these second-generation members later denounced the RIN as "little elites."[95] After 1963, FLQ cells increasingly exploited labour disputes to stoke support for the cause and built relationships with other Marxist-Leninist groups around the world.[96] One of these was the Marxist DPFLP, which helped train two FLQ operatives in June 1970, according to *La Presse*.[97] The DPFLP split off from the PFLP in February 1969.[98] Unlike the PFLP, which was a comparatively right-wing Islamist organization, the DPFLP, like the FLQ, saw itself as a revolutionary Third World movement.[99]

The FLQ's alliances with the DPFLP and other revolutionary causes linked Quebec's liberation movement to the larger project of international anti-imperialism.[100]

Its operatives may have dedicated at least one bombing to the Palestinian cause: in August 1969, police discovered the initials "FLQ" and a poster reading "Support the National Liberation Struggle of the people of Palestine–Smash US imperialism and Zionism" (sic) at the site of a bombing at the National Revenue Agency in Montreal, which injured one security guard."[101] Later, during the lead-up to the October Crisis, the FLQ attempted to kidnap the Israeli consul general, although an operative later said he would have been content with any Jewish diplomat.[102]

## Jewish Students' Responses

McGill made Montreal one of North America's four primary hubs of Jewish student activism during the late 1960s, according to Israeli historian Yosef Gorney.[103] As in the United States, until the 1967 Six Day War, this included support for the State of Israel, after which many Jewish students "drifted" away from progressive spaces because many rejected Zionism as a form of imperialism.[104]

These students did not all become reactionaries. On the contrary, many of the political science students who occupied McGill's Leacock building in 1968 were Jewish, as were several professors in the department.[105] That same year, two Jewish students co-authored a handbook on birth control, defying laws against disseminating information about contraception.[106] With important exceptions such as Stanley Gray and some Jewish editors of the *Daily*, many Jewish students appear to have sought to reconcile progressive ideals with Zionism. Those in this ideological camp were drawn to institutions such as Hillel, despite its status-quo ethos. In fact, Hillel appeared to tolerate a broad range of ideologies: one 1969–1970 brochure invited all "Anarchists, Communists, Maoists, and Zionists" to its end-of-year party.[107] According to Harold Troper, the enduring relevance of Hillel at McGill set it apart from other Canadian campuses, where student activists, even those supportive of Israel, tended to congregate outside of Hillel because it was considered too reactionary and associated with what they called the "establishment."[108]

McGill's Hillel Society sponsored a network of Jewish-led social and political action committees, although the Hillel House itself served mainly as a space for Jewish religious life.[109] One of Hillel's affiliates was the McGill Student Zionist Organization (MZO), which advocated for Israel.[110] In 1969, the McGill Hillel Society established a Montreal chapter of the "Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry" (SSSJ).[111] This group organized a 1970 rally at the Soviet consulate to protest the Kremlin's restrictions on Jewish emigration from the country, as well as its decision to cut ties with Israel three years earlier.[112] Hillel clubs also led Israel solidarity rallies, notably during the Six Day War and, in 1973, the Yom Kippur War.[113] Its influence at McGill can in part be attributed to the size of the Jewish student population, which numbered almost three thousand in the mid-1960s, making it the largest in Canada at the time.[114]

The fact that many writers and editors of the *McGill Daily* in the late 1960s were Jewish appears to have been a source of friction within the community. In one October 1969 episode, students discovered that newsstands had been stocked with a fake *Daily* edition replete with antisemitic cartoons, a bogus article about how SSMU wanted its members to protest Montreal groceries for selling pork—an "anti-Zionist" provocation—and an archivist's "discovery" that James McGill was Jewish.[115] The following Monday, the real *Daily* noted in a disclaimer that some "former McGill students" and Queens' University students had distributed the paper as a "prank."[116] Another critic of the *Daily* was the *Other Stand,* a short-lived MZO outlet founded sometime in 1968, which ridiculed the student newspaper on multiple occasions.[117] In March 1969, *Other Stand* recirculated M.J. Rosenberg's "To Uncle Tom and Other Such Jews," a harsh critique of young left-wing Jews who embraced "Black nationalism" but opposed Zionism. Any such Jew, in Rosenberg's view, rejected their ethnic roots and became a Jewish "Uncle Tom"—a "leftist American, talking liberation and aspiring WASP [White Anglo-Saxon Protestant]."[118] Although Rosenberg, a New Yorker, was not writing about Quebec or McGill, his piece contained a general message directed at all Jews who embraced the New Left.

Rosenberg's essay spoke to a generational crisis dividing Jewish communities across North America. During a May 1970 Quebec-Palestine solidarity march at McGill, a Jewish woman told a *Canadian Jewish News* (*CJN*) correspondent that she was searching for her nephews, who she worried might have been involved because they had joined "radical left-wing organizations" on campus. She did not find them in the crowd, but at least one protester was, according to the *CJN*, a Jewish student wearing a kippah, although most were of Arab descent.[119] Among the Jewish people watching the procession, the *CJN* identified a few who belonged to Jewish extremist groups, such as the Jewish Defense League (JDL). At an event that same week in Montreal, JDL leader Rabbi Meir Kahane urged Montreal's Jewish leaders to find a way to "redirect" students' energy away from the Palestinian cause. He argued that Zionism should be offered as an equally valid alternative mode of radical politics, one that built on the legacy of the Jewish resistance in British Mandatory Palestine. Zionism, he believed, was just as capable of quenching youths' thirst for rebellion, if only the Jewish establishment could present it as a bona fide revolutionary movement. The *CJN* remarked, with some surprise, that Kahane had not attacked students for adopting the worldview of the New Left—only those who he felt had "strayed too far."[120]

Despite the salience and general political orientation of Quebec-Palestine solidarity, McGill's Zionist *Other Stand* often sympathized with Quebec nationalists, if not the New Left itself. One opinion in March 1969 warned that bourgeois elements in the Quebec liberation movement had violated socialist principles by misdirecting public rancour towards Anglophones and McGill rather than the "aspiring bourgeoisie and technocrats who emerged during the Quiet Revolution."[121] The same month, a group

of self-described "Jewish radicals and radical Jews" from McGill met with community leaders at the Shaar Hashamayim Synagogue in Westmount, widely viewed as the most influential congregation in the city, to protest what one of the group called a "'WASP' mentality permeating the [Jewish] community … which sees Jewish life bound up totally with Anglophones and thus effectively precludes empathy for French nationalism."[122]

## Nationalist Stirrings and McGill

Even though Quebec eventually implemented most of the Parent Commission's recommendations, the nascent Ministry of Education was unable to accommodate university placements for thousands of young Quebecois graduating from CEGEP in 1969.[123] For many, this symbolized the unkept promises of the Quiet Revolution.[124] At McGill, a group called the "School Integration Movement" (MIS) occupied a data center in December, chanting "*McGill en français* (McGill in French)."[125] On January 27, all one hundred and fifty RSA members, chanting nationalist slogans, swarmed a McGill Board of Governors meeting, forcing the meeting to adjourn prematurely.[126] In February, the FLQ bombed the Montreal Stock Exchange, one of about 160 attacks claimed by the group, heightening the population's fears of imminent social fragmentation and internecine violence.[127]

With tensions already inflamed in the city, the CEGEP issue offered nationalists a galvanizing accelerant. Some soon began preparing for a major rally at McGill's Roddick Gates, which they pitched as a popular uprising to achieve institutional change. Organizers called it "Opération McGill Français" (Operation French McGill) and outlined a plan to radically reconstruct McGill.[128] The *Other Stand*, among others, reacted to word of the planned rally in a March 19, 1969, editorial, sharply criticizing what editors David Kaufman, J.J. Goldberg, and Peter Shizgal dubbed "Operation Sell-Out."[129] Nonetheless, the event became one of the Quiet Revolution's most recognizable flashpoints, as well as an important turning point for Montreal's anti-imperialist movement.

The March demonstration followed several smaller "McGill Francization" protests in February, one of which reportedly featured slogans such as "Death to the Jews."[130] Opération McGill Français' most immediate catalyst may have been the CEGEP controversy, although McNally suggests that this was based on a "misperception" about the number of seats at Quebec's universities. But the spectre of revolution loomed larger than any policy disagreement.[131] Many activists joined the demonstration to protest McGill's decision to dismiss Stanley Gray in February for his SDU-related actions.[132] Some also cited McGill's decision to award an honourary degree to the chairman of a mining company, identifying it as proof of the university's fealty to the "English managerial elite."[133]

Supporters depicted Opération McGill Français, above all else, as a grassroots movement to return McGill "to the Quebecois" by making it "a French and democratic university."[134] A promotional pamphlet, *Bienvenue à McGill* (*Welcome to McGill*), defined McGill as an institution "dedicated to the preservation of the privileges of a dominant minority… and the education of its elite." McGill, it said, operated "in service of Anglo-American monopolies and that these work against the interests of the Quebecois people." *Bienvenue à McGill* also included essays by Stanley Gray and Michel Chartrand, whose CSN funded its production.[135] In his missive, Chartrand declared it "unacceptable, in 1969" to "endure one nation's domination by another."[136] In the week preceding the rally, activists associated with the CSN distributed more than ninety thousand copies in schools, factories, metro stations, and during political events.[137] With a confrontation imminent, on the eve of March 28, Quebec Premier Jean Bertrand defended the protesters' right to assemble as long as they did so in a peaceful manner.[138]

In the end, more than ten thousand people assembled at McGill's Roddick gates.[139] Police met them, along with dozens of spectators and counter protesters singing "God Save the Queen."[140] Students were not in class at the time as McGill's administration had evacuated the campus because it feared a riot would ensue.[141] Nonetheless, aside from a few skirmishes and some cases of vandalism, the march ended without incident.[142] The next day, the *Daily* claimed that the administration was at fault for contriving an "atmosphere of impending carnage and violence." Opération McGill Français had succeeded in principle, the paper declared, because it exposed the "division between oppressor and oppressed." It remains unclear how many McGill students participated, although *Other Stand* contradicted the *Daily*'s reporting that most students remained home, writing instead that most of those marching were CEGEP students, McGill students involved in radical clubs, or members of the CSN.[143] The *Daily*, for its part, dismissed the CSN as a "negligible fringe" despite its role in organizing the event.[144] The SSMU president, Julius Grey, and the Hillel president, Morton Weinfeld, attributed the chaos to "self-described progressives" who had joined with what they called "reactionary, ultra-nationalistic" factions to "manipulate" the student body.[145]

In fact, violent nationalist groups such as the FLQ had been involved in Opération McGill Français from its outset. The RSA, with Gray and Nigel Hamer at its head, led the McGill student contingent.[146] Hamer's role is significant considering his later role in the October Crisis. Raymond Lemieux, a lawyer who represented FLQ members, participated in the demonstration as well.[147] Mario Bachand, who some historians believe to have been the "leader" of the FLQ, was with Hamer on the night of February 12, 1969, when organizers convened at the General Union of Quebec Students (UGEQ) to plan the rally. An informant told the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) that some of those at the meeting discussed using the rally as cover

to bomb a McGill building, according to declassified records viewed by journalist Michael McLoughlin for his 1998 book, *Last Stop, Paris: The Assassination of Mario Bachand and the Death of the FLQ*. If this is true, then at least some of those involved in Opération McGill Français intended for it to be a "dramatic and destructive occupation of McGill."[148] The RCMP arrested Bachand a few days before the march, releasing him after he promised not to attend.[149]

The fact that Opération McGill Français ended without violence does not make it any less historically significant. Historian Sean Mills argues the 1969 protest was a pivotal event that brought the CSN into the broader Montreal anti-imperialist movement.[150] It cemented what Mills describes as "oppositional politics" in Montreal.[151] Apart from Mills, however, few have examined the incident, which some appear to regard as "just one more '60s' riot."[152] Scholars such as Eric Bedard, for instance, contend that the rally was less significant than Mills believes, and more concerned with preserving the French language than revolutionary politics.

There is no question that McGill's language policies and the CEGEP issue mattered.[153] But these were features of McGill's oppressive matrix: for the revolutionaries, severing the university's Anglophone elite appendages was to be the means, not the end result, of Quebec's national liberation.[154] They viewed the Operation as a collective catharsis—a symbolic and material reflection of Quebec's solidarity with international causes, including that of Palestine.[155] Then-Canadian ADL director Sol I. Littman understood the demonstration's international dimensions: it was part of a movement at McGill, he wrote, to bring "death to U.S. Imperialism and Zionism."[156] The Operation was conceived in the context of "global interdependence," according to the Socialist German Students' Union (SDS), whose statement appeared in *Bienvenue à McGill*.[157] International solidarity was not limited to questions of "moral sympathy" for specific liberation struggles; repression against any one movement equated to repression against all.

## Conclusion

By the week of the March 1970 solidarity demonstrations, Palestine had become a mainstay of Montreal's anti-imperialist movement.[158] McGill played a vital role in this development—not only as a hub for student activism but also as a hated vestige of Anglo-American imperialism and industrial capitalism. McGill was at the heart of this axis of oppression that, for the New Left in Montreal, connected Quebec to Palestine. After 1967, the Arab-Israeli conflict became the focus of growing tension on campus, opening fissures within the McGill community that have endured for decades.

Non-student groups such as the CSN propounded Palestinian solidarity, ushering it to the fore of anti-imperialism in Montreal. Opération McGill Français, a rally largely organized with the CSN's assistance, elevated the syndicate to a position of moral leadership over the city's diverse radical movements. In the years that followed, the CSN, with Chartrand as president, continued to consolidate Palestinian solidarity in Montreal and Quebec. The CSN has retained a pro-Palestine position—during the most recent Israel-Hamas conflict, it mobilized its members to join student-led demonstrations.[159] But the historical depth of this relationship has largely faded from popular memory. One reason for this may be that, since the PQ's election in 1976, the mainstream Quebec nationalist movement has drifted rightward, away from the Third World and anti-imperialist solidarity.[160]

This paradigm shift has redefined Quebec-Palestine solidarity. Drawing connections to activism in the twenty-first century is complicated considering that other geopolitical issues have preoccupied McGill students since the 1970s, with some drawing links to Palestine. The Boycotts, Divestments, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign targeting Israel, for instance, emerged in 2005 and employs a strategy protesters used in the 1980s to pressure Apartheid South Africa.[161] SSMU cited this movement as the historical basis for its April 2025 "Strike for Palestine," one of only a handful of strikes proposed since the early 2000s to have obtained the requisite votes to become official.[162] That McGill students had participated in earlier forms of Palestinian solidarity appeared to be absent from the public discourse. Knowledge of the origins of this phenomenon can provide valuable historical context for those seeking to make sense of the recent Israel / Palestine debate on campus. The relationship may not be causal in nature, but contemporary unrest contains echoes of the 1960s, when Montreal's revolutionary counterculture gained momentum and first connected McGill and Quebec to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Although Opération McGill Français was not directly linked to Palestine, the causes were joined in a common thread of anti-imperialist solidarity that continues to draw protesters to McGill's Roddick Gates today.

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**1**
Hargurdeep (Deep) Saini, "Dismantlement of Lower Field Encampment," Messages to the McGill community, July 10, 2024, https://www.mcgill.ca/president/article/communications-messages-community/dismantlement-lower-field-encampment.

**2**
Israel disputes the claim that its forces have operated in a manner contrary to international law.

**3**
A May 2024 survey found that almost 40 percent of Canadian adults opposed the pro-Palestinian encampments. There were about twenty-five such occupations in Canada. See Robert Brym and Jack Jedwab, "Public Opinion and Canadian Jewry, 2024," *Canadian Jewish Studies / Études juives canadiennes* 39 (2024): 101-108.

**4**
Jason Magder, Katelyn Thomas, Rene Bruemmer, Harry North, and Andy Riga, "Movement 'Will Not End with the Encampments,' Pro-Palestinian Protester Says," *The Montreal Gazette*, July 10, 2024, https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/mcgill-pro-palestinian-encampment-dismantle-montreal-police. McGill had previously filed for an injunction to remove the encampment, but the Superior Court of Quebec rejected the request.

**5**
Madison Edwart-Wright, "Divest McGill Occupies Arts Building, Plans to Stay Overnight for At Least One Week," *The McGill Tribune*, March 8, 2022, https://www.thetribune.ca/news/divest-mcgill-occupies-arts-building-plans-to-stay-overnight-for-at-least-one-week/. The Divest manifesto endorsed the Palestinian cause.

**6**
Martin Lukacs, "Why Graduates of a Top Canadian University are Returning their Diplomas," *The Guardian*, March 15, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/true-north/2016/mar/15/why-graduates-of-a-top-canadian-university-are-returning-our-diplomas.

**7**
Bill Reid, *Occupation* (National Film Board of Canada, 1970), https://www.nfb.ca/film/occupation/.

**8**
Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey, eds., *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 3.

**9**
Sinead McEneaney, "Gaza Campus Protests: Why Understanding 1960s Student Demonstrations and Police Reaction is Relevant Today," *The Conversation*, May 7, 2024, https://theconversation.com/gaza-campus-protests-why-understanding-1960s-student-demonstrations-and-police-reaction-is-relevant-today-229314. For a column arguing *against* the comparisons between the 1960s anti-war movement and the self-described Gaza solidarity protests at McGill, see Gerald Batiste, "I Protested in the '60s; What I see Today is Different," *The Montreal Gazette*, June 15, 2024, https://montrealgazette.com/opinion/opinion-dialogue-is-difference-between-1960s-antiwar-movement-and-now.

**10**
Daniel Manulak, "Are the Campus Protests Just Noise? A Look Back at the Anti-Apartheid Movement Offers Insights," *The Globe and Mail*, May 14, 2024, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-are-the-campus-protests-just-noise-a-look-back-at-the-anti-apartheid/.

**11**
"South Africa Sets a Precedent for the Palestinian Cause," *The McGill Daily*, January 8, 2024, 3.

**12**
Senators Levey and Tureli to Senator Fabrice Labeau, Deputy Provost of Student Life and Learning, "Question Regarding Administration's response to the SSMU's Palestine Solidary Policy" (Montreal: McGill University Senate, April 19, 2022), 1, https://archive.org/details/03.-question-regarding-administrations-response-to-the-ssmus-palestine-solidary-policy (digitally archived April 27, 2025).

**13**
A Concordia University group linked its pro-Palestine activism to the 1969 Sir George Williams Affair. It stated, among other things, that contemporary demonstrations were based on the "same principles of the '69 occupation" and part of a shared legacy of "resistance." See @sphrconcordia and @pasuconcordia, "Remembering the Occupation

of 69," January 29, 2025, Instagram Post, https://www.instagram.com/pasuconcordia/p/DFbVdpcgoW5/?img_index=1.

**14**
In June 2023, the McGill encampment promoted a "Revolutionary Youth Summer Program" with an itinerary that contained references to 1960s-era Palestinian resistance movements. See @sphrmcgill, "The Youth Summer Program," June 12, 2024, Instagram Post, https://archive.org/details/sphr-youthprogram (digitally archived April 27, 2025). For McGill's statement, see Deep Saini, "SPHR Summer Program," Messages to the McGill community, https://www.mcgill.ca/president/article/communications-messages-community/sphr-summer-program.

**15**
In a 2025 essay, Harvard historian Derek J. Penslar describes the Palestinian cause as a "palimpsest" onto which various peoples "project problems within their own countries." This, he argues, can help to account for the distinct passion which the Arab-Israeli conflict appears to evoke not only on university campuses but throughout society. See Derek J. Penslar, "Passion and Palestine," *Aeon*, February 3, 2025, https://aeon.co/essays/why-does-the-world-have-such-an-intense-stake-in-israel-palestine.

**16**
Michael R. Fischbach, "Give Peace a Chance? The Anti-War Movement and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *The Sixties* 13, no. 2 (2020): 77-78.

**17**
Pamela E. Pennock, *The Rise of the Arab American Left: Activists, Allies, and Their Fight Against Imperialism and Racism, 1960s-1980s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 47-78.

**18**
Jacques Rouillard, "La Revolution Tranquille, Rupture ou Tournant ?" *Journal of Canadian Studies / Revue d'études canadiennes* 32, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 23-51.

**19**
FLQ, "Les manifestes du FLQ, "in *Le deuxième manifeste du Front de Libération du Québec*, ed. Jean Yves (Montreal: Vertiges éditeur, 2019), 1, https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/4072967.

**20**
Sean W. Mills, *The Empire Within: Montreal, The Sixties, and the Forging of a Radical Imagination* (PhD diss., Queen's University, 2007), 334-335.

**21**
Simon-Pierre Lacasse, *Les Juifs de la Revolution tranquille : Regards d'une minorite religieuse sur le Quebec de 1945 a 1976* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2022), 14-15; 193-194; 292.

**22**
Pierre Anctil, "Interlude of Hostility: Judeo-Christian Relations in Quebec in the Interwar Period, 1919-29," in *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation*, ed. Alan Davies (Waterloo, ON.: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2006), 159-160.

**23**
Ibid.

**24**
Ira Robinson, *A History of Antisemitism in Canada* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015), 71.

**25**
Michael McLoughlin, *Last Stop, Paris: The Assassination of Mario Bachand and the Death of the FLQ* (Toronto: Viking, 1998), 118.

**26**
Daniel Rickenbacher, "The Anti-Israel Movement in Québec in the 1970s: At the Ideological Crossroads of the New Left and Liberation-Nationalism," *Canadian Jewish Studies / Études juives canadiennes* 29 (2021): 85-90.

**27**
There is some debate about the exact timeline of McGill's Jewish quota. Gerald Tulchinsky writes that it continued in the Faculty of Medicine, at least, into the 1960s. See Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 318-321, 415. Also see Robinson, *A History of Antisemitism*, 113.

**28**
Gilles Cournoyer, letter to the editor of *Le Devoir*, October 1, 1969, in Michael M. Solomon, "Canada," *American Jewish Yearbook* 71 (1970): 356. Many students and faculty were Jewish, notwithstanding the quota, according to Stephanie Tara Schwartz, "*Occupation and*

*20 ans apres*: Representing Jewish Dissent in Montreal, 1967-1977," *Canadian Jewish Studies / Études juives canadiennes* 25 (2017): 64.

**29**
Abel Selick, Esther Quint, Micael M. Resin, et al., eds., *History of B'nai Brith in Eastern Canada,* First Edition (Montreal: Apex Press, 1964), 77-79.

**30**
Rickenbacher, "The Anti-Israel Movement in Québec in the 1970s," 85-90.

**31**
André LeBlanc, "The Educational Literature of the Quiet Revolution," *McGill Journal of Education / Revue Des Sciences De l'éducation De McGill* 7, no. 2 (1972): 175-179.

**32**
Paul-André Linteau, *Quebec Since 1930* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1991), 248.

**33**
Ibid.

**34**
David Fraser, *"Honorary Protestants" The Jewish School Question in Montreal, 1867-1997*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 11-12. Montreal also has a significant population of Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews, the latter of which grew exponentially during the Quiet Revolution. Their experience differed in important ways from that of Ashkenazim. See Yolande Cohen, *Les Sépharades Du Québec: Parcours d'Exils Nord-Africains* (Montréal: Del Busso Éditeurs, 2017), 44.

**35**
Magdelhayne F. Buteau, "Retrospective on the Parent Report," *McGill Journal of Education / Revue Des Sciences De l'éducation De McGill* 7, no. 2 (1972): 189–204.

**36**
Peter F. McNally, "McGill University and Quebec City in the 1960s," *Fontanus* 13 (2013): 107.

**37**
Eric Bedard, "October Crisis, 1970: Crackdown ignited by authorities' fear of young people," *The Conversation*, October 12, 2020, https://theconversation.com/october-crisis-1970-crackdown-ignited-by-authorities-fear-of-young-people-147554; also see Eric Bedard, *Chronique d'une insurrection appréhendée: Jeunesse et crise d'Octobre* (Québec: Septentrion, 2020), 15-23; 25-53.

**38**
Peter F. McNally, "McGill University and Quebec City in the 1960s," 110.

**39**
Ibid.

**40**
Ibid.

**41**
Ibid., 113.

**42**
See "Le Bill Sixty-Three : L'assassinat du francais," *L'information national,* November 6, 1969, Series 2, file 30, MG 4319, McGill University Archives (MUA). The same edition included a submission by Stanley Gray, "Contre l'etat policier."

**43**
Ibid.

**44**
Mills, *The Empire Within*, 361.

**45**
Ibid., 411.

**46**
Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2005), 1-52. Fanon published the text in 1961, and many in Montreal read the work in the original French.

**47**
"The McGill Student Front," November 13, 1969, Series 2, File 10, MG 4319, MUA.

**48**
This was the case across Canada, but this study will focus on Montreal. Students often intended to depict their campuses as hotbeds of rebellion and confrontation. Consider Tim and Julyan Reid, eds., *Student Power and the Canadian Campus* (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1969).

**49**
Andrew Mullins and Sean Pierre, "Salaries for Students (and Other Cries of Protest)," *The McGill News: Alumni Quarterly,* (Winter 1997), https://mcgillnews-archives.mcgill.ca/w97/salaries.htm.

**50**
Mills, *The Empire Within*, 286.

**51**
Sandy Gage's 1997 reflection on the *Daily* for *The McGill News: Alumni Quarterly* corroborate this analysis. In her tenure, the *Daily* became "fully supportive of Third World liberation movements," although previous editors initiated this trend. Another editor, George Kopp, recalls that the *Daily* experienced countervailing pressures from different radical influences, including Maoists. See "The McGill Daily Editors: Resurrected," *The McGill News: Alumni Quarterly* (Winter 1997), https://mcgill-news-archives.mcgill.ca/w95/2.htm.

**52**
Jean-Philippe Warren, "L'Opération McGill français. Une page méconnue de l'histoire de la gauche nationaliste," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 16, no. 2 (Winter 2008): 99.

**53**
Julius Grey, "The Paradox of Stanley Gray," *Canadian Dimension* 6, no. 5 (November 1969): 6-9, http://quescren.concordia.ca/en/resource/GB4WQ5XP.

**54**
McLoughlin, *Last Stop, Paris*, 99-100; 124.

**55**
McNally, "McGill University and Quebec City in the 1960s," 110. Students famously "revolted" at Columbia University in New York in April 1968, occupying five buildings at the school for seven days. Paul Cronin, *A Time to Stir: Columbia '68* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), xxxi-l.

**56**
Ibid.

**57**
Leon Debien, "Esquisse d'une genèse de la contestation étudiante d'octobre 1968", *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 16, no. 2 (Winter 2008): 89-92.

**58**
Sean W. Mills, "The Language of Liberation," in *Actions that Speak: Aspects of Quebec Culture in the 1960s and 1970s*, ed., Michele Theriault (Montreal: Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, 2012), 18-19; "Demonstrate November 15: World Solidarity with Vietnam," November 14, 1969, in Series 1, File 018, MG 4319, MUA.

**59**
"McGill Committee to Oppose General Chaudhuri," October 16, 1969, in "Student Activities: Radicalism, 1969-70," series 2, file 30, MG 4319, MUA. After completing a three-year term as the High Commissioner of India to Canada, General Chaudhuri was hired as a visiting professor by McGill's Center for Developing Areas Studies (today the Institute for the Study of International Development). He was never convicted of the alleged war crimes in question.

**60**
Devinder Garewal, "Mercenary at McGill: Untold Story," *The McGill Daily*, November 5, 1969, 9.

**61**
Committee for the People's Democratic Rights (CDDP) to H. R. Robertson and M. K. Oliver, undated (1969?), 1, in Series 2, File 30, MG 4319, MUA. The Palestine society's involvement is mentioned in *Student Front* 1, no. 3 (January 1970): 8, in Series 2, File 114, MG 4319, MUA.

**62**
McNally, "McGill University and Quebec City in the 1960s," 109.

**63**
Jon Meacham, "What the Tumultuous Year of 1968 Can Teach Us About Today," *The New York Times*, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/24/books/review/what-the-year-1968-can-teach-us-about-todays-divisions-jon-meacham.html.

**64**
Fischbach, *The Movement and the Middle East,* 11.

**65**
Ibid., 59.

**66**
Ibid., 4.

**67**
Ibid., 86. The ADL in Canada reconstituted itself as the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith in 1970. See "Introduction," in R. Lou Ronson Fonds, MG31 H158, Library and Archives Canada, 4, http://data2.archives.ca/pdf/pdf001/p000000269.pdf.

**68**
"Third World: The Palestine Problem," *The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Newsletter* 1, no. 4 (June-July 1967): 4, Civil Rights Movement Archive, https://www.crmvet.org/docs/sv/6707_sncc_news-r.pdf. The "Did You Know?" section appears to be identical to that contained in the PLO pamphlet distributed at McGill.

**69**
The OAS represented students in Canada as well. See Geoffrey Levin, "Arab Students, American Jewish Insecurities, and the End of Pro-Arab Politics in Mainstream America, 1952-1973," *The Arab Studies Journal* 25, 1 (Spring 2017): 53.

**70**
Rickenbacher, "The Anti-Israel Movement in Québec in the 1970s," 83.

**71**
Levin, "Arab Students, American Jewish Insecurities," 35.

**72**
Canada's short-lived Palestinian refugee resettlement program has only recently elicited scholars' attention. Many moved to Quebec as they were proficient in French, much like emigres from Algeria or other Middle Eastern or North African territories previously within France's sphere of influence. See Jan Raska, "Forgotten Experiment: Canada's Resettlement of Palestinian Refugees, 1955-1956," *Social History* 48, no. 97 (November 2015): 445-473.

**73**
Jean Francois Nadeau, "Carles Gagnon, 1939-2005: Parcours d'un revolutionnare", *Le Devoir*, November 19, 2005, https://www.ledevoir.com/societe/95593/charles-gagnon-1939-2005-parcours-d-un-revolutionnaire.

**74**
Mills, *The Empire Within*, 334.

**75**
Charles Gagnon, "The Quebec Liberation Struggle," *The New Left Review* 64, no. 1 (November 1970): 1-62.

**76**
"Palestine Society presents a series of lunch-hour lectures," November 18, 1969, in Series 2, File 15, MG 4319, MUA.

**77**
Paul Flohr and Carol Bosworth, "The Dialectics of the Israeli-Arab Dispute: Apocalyptic Politics, 1-4," October 15, 1969, in Series 2, File 15, MG 4319, MUA.

**78**
Ibid.

**79**
Sol I. Littman, "Anti-Zionism on the McGill Campus," excerpt from *ADL Intercom*, in *Highlight: B'nai Brith Bonaventure Lodge,* 7, no. 8 (May 1970): 7, P00/10, box 1, I0081, Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives (hereafter CJA), Montreal, Canada.

**80**
Munazzamat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyah and Markas al-Abhath, "Do You Know? Twenty Basic Facts About the Palestine," *Facts and Figures Series*, No. 1. (Beirut: PLO, 1966), 4, in Series 2, File 15, MG 4319, MUA.

**81**
The authors are not named in the McGill source. But it seems to be the same document as the one listed on Google Books, https://archive.is/Ce7uj (digitally archived April 27, 2025).

**82**
Littman, "Anti-Zionism on the McGill Campus," 7.

**83**
Federal Bureau of Investigation, "The Fedayeen Impact—Middle East and United States" (June 1970), 51, https://www.governmentattic.org/2docs/FBI_Monograph_Fedayeen-Impact_1970.pdf.

**84**
"Palestinian Guerillas Win Brilliant Successes in 1969," *The McGill Student,* winter 1970, 7, in Series 1, File 23, MG 4319, MUA.

**85**
The Latin American Student Movement (LASM), "Agonia del imperialismo yanki!" *El Machete* 1, no. 2, 1970, 6, in Series 2, File 49. MG 4319, MUA.

**86**
LASM, "Solidarity Day with Palestine," *El Machete* 1, no. 2, 1970, 5, in Series 2, File 49, MG 4319, MUA.

**87**
Amin Kassam, "French Writer Advises Palestinian Commandos," *The McGill Daily*, October 27, 1969, 3.

**88**
Fernand Foisy, *Michel Chartrand: Le colère du juste 1968-2003* (Outremont, Québec : Lanctôt, 2003), 207.

**89**
Mills, *The Empire Within,* 336. The SDS, Black Panthers, and others are listed on the agenda for March 2. (The SDS in this context was probably the American group, and not the German SDS referred to in this paper, because it is listed in the "USA" category on the agenda). Gagnon presided over the meeting. See "Teach In," Schedule and Agenda, March 2, 1970, 1, in Series 2, File 30, MG 4319, MUA. Beginning in 2005, pro-Palestinian activists began holding "Israel Apartheid Week" events during the same month. It is unclear if the two are related.

**90**
"Teach In," Schedule and Agenda, March 2, 1970, 30, in Series 2, File 30, MG 4319, MUA.

**91**
"Comite Quebecois de Solidarite avec le Peuple Palestinien and the Arab Students' Society present Michel Chartrand… et al," March 5, 1970, in Series 2, File 15, MG 4319, MUA.

**92**
Mills, *The Empire Within,* 336.

**93**
Ibid., 334-335.

**94**
Ibid., 336.

**95**
McLoughlin, *Last Stop, Paris,* 98.

**96**
Ibid., 71; 191.

**97**
Ibid., *Last Stop, Paris,* 239. Interestingly, McLoughlin speculates that the FLQ members were secretly working for the RCMP, and that the rendezvous was not an accident.

**98**
United States Department of State, "Patterns of global terrorism" (1989), 58, https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/125318NCJRS.pdf.

**99**
Ibid., 70.

**100**
McLoughlin, *Last Stop, Paris,* 190.

**101**
Anthony Kellett, Bruce Beanlands, and James Deacon, "Terrorism in Canada: 1960-1989." *Public Safety Canada,* no. 1990-16 (November 15, 2000), 267, https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/lbrr/archives/hv%206433.c2%20t4%201990-eng.pdf.

**102**
Jean-François Nadeau, *The Canadian Führer: The Life of Adrien Arcand*, trans. Robert Chodos, Eric Hamovitch, and Susan Joanis (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 2011), 268-70. Also see McLaughlin, *Last Stop, Paris,* 118.

**103**
Harold Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 197.

**104**
Ibid.

**105**
Stephanie Tara Schwartz points out that even the crew who filmed *Occupation* were Jewish. Stephanie Tara Schwartz, "*Occupation* and *20 ans apres*: Representing Jewish Dissent in Montreal, 1967-1977," *Canadian Jewish Studies / Études juives canadiennes* 25 (2017): 63.

**106**
Ibid., 68.

**107**
"Hillel Closing Bash," in Series 2, File 34, MG 4319, MUA.

**108**
Troper, *The Defining Decade*, 199.

**109**
Ibid., 198; B'nai Brith Hillel Fonds 1393, Series 1, Files 00010-00013; Files 00125-00130, 9-6G, Ctn. 2, Jewish Public Library

(JPL). Another Hillel committee during this period dedicated itself to global human rights advocacy.

**110**
Morton Weinfeld, "Reflection," *Canadian Jewish Studies* 30 (2020): 174-176.

**111**
Mark Zarecki, "Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry" (SSSJ), undated, P05/06, box 1, I0081, CJA. In December 1969, the McGill Hillel chapter of SSSJ held a "Chanukah Freedom Party" to raise awareness. See Series 2, File 00128, 9-5F, Ctn 2, JPL.

**112**
"The Jewish Community of Montreal is Urged to Express Solidarity with the Jews of the U.S.S.R," October 18, 1970, in Series 2, File 167, MG 4319, MUA. The USSR cut ties with Israel in 1967 in protest over the Six-Day War.

**113**
Troper, *The Defining Decade*, 43.

**114**
Selick et al., *History of B'nai Brith in Eastern Canada*, 79.

**115**
Sol Lipshitz, "Students to Protest;" and Frank Zilberburg, "McGill's Bar Mitzvah Forgotten by Many;" in '*The McGill Daily,'* October 23, 1969, 1-5, in Series 1, File 33, MG 4319, MUA. For a disclaimer see *The McGill Daily*, October 27, 1969, 1. According to the disclaimer, the parody listed real *Daily* editors, but the writers were not involved in the fake publication. It is unclear who created the mock-paper, but the contents suggest it was politically motivated satire.

**116**
Michael Carin, "Reader's Forum: On *The McGill Daily,*" in *The McGill Weekly* 1(1), November, 1969, in Series 1, File 13, MG4319, MUA. Also see the editorial in this edition.

**117**
Consider "Alice in Daily Land" and "Quote of the 'Dayly,'" in *Other Stand* 1, 7 (April 9, 1969): 2, in RC0263, Folder 9, McMaster University Libraries and Archives (MULA). Students also published a magazine called *Strobe*. Hillel had a "Publications" committee during the 1960s, which may have overseen these publications. See Selick et al., *History of B'nai Brith in Eastern Canada,* 77. Morton Weinfeld, who was President of Hillel during the late 1960s, later recalled that the McGill Student Zionist Organization produced *Other Stand,* which he described as a "radical magazine." See Weinfeld, "Reflection," 174-176.

**118**
M.J. Rosenberg, "To Uncle Tom and Other Such Jews," *Other Stand* 1, no. 6 (March 19, 1969), 3, in RC0263, Folder 9, MULA. The original Uncle Tom was a figure in Harrier Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Black Americans tended to use the term to deride Blacks who sought excessive approval from white people. Hence, Rosenberg uses "Uncle Tom" to embody Jews who, in his view, only embraced progressive ideals because they appealed to non-Jews. His article was photocopied from a February 16, 1969, issue of *The Village Voice*, according to a note in Series 1, File 9, MG 4319, MUA.

**119**
Frank Dimant, "Impressions: March Against Peace," *Canadian Jewish News*, May 22, 1970, 2. The rally proceeded to the Israeli consulate, where, the *CJN* reported, Jewish onlookers became angry, performed Nazi salutes, and hurled insults at the demonstrators.

**120**
Hayim Benditsky, "A New Movement: JDL," *Canadian Jewish News*, May 22, 1970, 2.

**121**
David Kaufman, Peter Shizgal, and J.J. Goldberg, "March 28 march: Operation Sell Out," *Other Stand* 1, 6 (March 19, 1969), in RC0263, Folder 9, MULA.

**122**
Bernie Shaicovitz, "The Passover Plot Revisited," *The Other Stand* 1, 7 (April 9, 1969): 6, in RC0264, Folder 9, MULA.

**123**
Mills, "The Language of Liberation," 16.

**124**
Ibid., 17.

**125**
*The McGill Daily*, October 27, 1969, 1.

**126**
McLoughlin, *Last Stop, Paris*, 97.

**127**
Judy Torrance, *Public Violence in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 37.

**128**
Mills, *The Empire Within*, 277.

**129**
Kaufman, Shizgal, and Goldberg, "March 28 march," RC0263, Folder 9, MULA.

**130**
The JDL tried, without success, to recruit McGill students in response to incidents such as this. Hillel leaders dismissed the group as a "joke," according to *La Presse*. See Solomon, "Canada," 357-358.

**131**
McNally, "McGill University and Quebec City in the 1960s," 110.

**132**
"McGill Contre Stan Gray," *Bienvenue à McGill*, Montreal, March 1969, 7, in RC0263, Folder 1, MULA.

**133**
Robert Chodos, "Operation McGill: Hitting a sore spot," *The McGill Daily,* Extra, 58, no. 88, April 2, 1969, 4-5.

**134**
"McGill Contre Stan Gray," *Bienvenue à McGill*, 2, RC0263, Folder 1, MULA.

**135**
Mills, *The Empire Within*, 300-301.

**136**
*Bienvenue à McGill*, 6, RC0263, Folder 1, MULA.

**137**
Ibid.

**138**
"Bertrand, Lesage, McGill studenten vernen kegn umren...," *Der Kenader Adler*, March 27, 1969, 1 (Yiddish).

**139**
Bronwyn Chester, "McGill Français and Quebec Society," *The McGill Reporter*, April 8, 1999, http://reporter-archive.mcgill.ca/Rep/r3114/francais.html.

**140**
Ibid.

**141**
McNally, "McGill University and Quebec City in the 1960s," 113.

**142**
McLoughlin, *Last Stop, Paris*, 106-107.

**143**
Kaufman and Shizgal, "Alice in Daily-Land," *Other Stand* 7, 1 (April 19, 1969): 2, in RC0263, Folder 9, MULA. The *Daily* reported that "large numbers who supported Operation McGill stayed home" because they feared police. See Mark Wilson, "Twilight of the Gods," *The McGill Daily,* Extra, 58, no. 88, April 2, 1969.

**144**
Wilson, "Twilight of the Gods."

**145**
Kaufman and Shizgal, "Alice in Daily-Land."

**146**
Ibid.

**147**
Mills, *The Empire Within*, 276.

**148**
McLoughlin, *Last Stop, Paris*, 99-101; 103.

**149**
Ibid., 105.

**150**
Mills, *The Empire Within*, 292.

**151**
Mills, "The Language of Liberation," 16.

**152**
Marc V. Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal: Language Policy and Social Change in a Bilingual City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 76-77.

**153**
The St. Jean Baptiste Society expressed a similar view a few months after the demonstration. The language question demonstrated McGill's failure to "serve the interests of the Quebecois." The Society argued that the rally, paradoxically, allowed "reactionaries and great capitalists" to intensify their control over McGill. See St. Jean Baptiste Society, "La

réponse de McGill a la population québécoise : La Répression Augmente," in *L'information National,* November 9, 1969, 1 in Series 2, File 30, MG 4319, MUA.

**154**
Mills, *The Empire Within*, 277.

**155**
McNally, "McGill University and Quebec City in the 1960s," 113.

**156**
Littman, "Anti-Zionism on the McGill Campus." The image featured in the article is one of Opération McGill Français, underscoring the fact that Littman perceived the rally as an expression of anti-Zionism on campus.

**157**
National Bureau of the SDS of Germany, "Message de solidarite avec la manifestation McGill," in *Bienvenue à McGill,* 5.

**158**
Mills, *The Empire* Within, 335.

**159**
Stephanie Giroux, "Major Quebec unions join demonstration in support of Palestinians," *CTV News*, March 23, 2024, https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/major-quebec-unions-join-demonstration-in-support-of-palestinians-1.6819872.

**160**
Daniel Beland, "A Decade of Shift in Quebec's Identity Debate," *Policy: Canadian Politics and Public Policy,* February 28, 2023, https://www.policymagazine.ca/a-decade-of-shift-in-quebecs-identity-debate/.

**161**
Manulak, "Are the campus protests just noise?"; Rene Bruemmer, "Protesters demand McGill divest from companies linked to Israel. What does that mean?" *The Montreal Gazette,* May 1, 2024, https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/protesters-demand-mcgill-divest-in-companies-linked-to-israel-what-does-that-mean.

**162**
"Motion Regarding Strike in Support of Palestinian Liberation," moved by Rama al Malah, General Assembly of the SSMU, March 26, 2025, https://archive.org/details/copy-of-march-strike-motion-for-palestinian-liberation-google-docs (digitally archived April 27, 2025). This motion was adopted at a general assembly and subsequently ratified in an online ballot. Students then participated in the strike during early April.