BRILL

FASCISM 11 (2022) 31–58

FASCISM
JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE FASCIST STUDIES
brill.com/fasc

The Classocracy League of Canada

A Fascist Form of Canadian Multiculturalism?

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Abstract

This article recounts the neglected story of a group of radical-right intellectuals based in Montreal, who mobilized during the 1930s for the establishment of a new Canadian state. Inspired by Ukrainian ultraconservative thought, the Italian School of Elitism, and fascist corporatism, this diverse group founded an interwar movement called the Classocracy League of Canada. Their vision framed Canadian identity in Christian and European supremacist terms, while its leading members were engaged with other Canadian and transnational fascistic organizations, such as the Christian National Social Party and the Friends of National Spain. Although the Classocracy League of Canada remained ultimately marginal, its vision of racially restricted pluralism represented a novel form of exclusionary politics at the basis of which was fascist ideology.

Keywords

Canada – fascism – Classocracy League of Canada (CLOC) (1935–1939) – Christian nationalism – transnational fascism – multiculturalism – Walter J. Bossy (1899–1979)

This article sheds new light upon recent debates around the 'export' of Italian Fascism abroad, and specifically to discussions about the existence of a transatlantic fascism. By focusing on the establishment in 1935 of the Classocracy League of Canada, a group so far neglected by historiography, this article contributes to the study of fascism as a 'process-concept'[1] on both sides of the

1 Sven Reichardt, 'Fascism's Stages: Imperial Violence, Entanglement, and Processualization,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 82, no. 1 (2021): 88.

Atlantic before the outbreak of the Second World War. That is, to the study of the reformulations of the fascist commitment to 'nationalist, racist, anti-socialist, right-wing populist, anti-feminist or male chauvinist, and imperialist' beliefs.[2] Such reformulations created what Federico Finchelstein has called a fascist 'catalogue' of ideas,[3] expanding the core of what we often understand as the 'fascist minimum'.[4] Unlike Finchelstein and his groundbreaking study of Argentina's *nacionalistas*, however, the aim here is less to demonstrate that a particular Canadian form of anti-Marxist and anti-liberal radicalism fits the fascist mold. Rather, I will illustrate how Mussolini's Italy inspired the development of a specific form of Canadian extremism—one that was deliberately shaped according to the cultural context and the aspirations of those who pursued national reform. In short, this article is concerned not with how successfully the Classocracy League emulated Italian Fascism, but the ways in which Italy served as an example for the type of far-right revolution that was desired in interwar Canada.

The question of Italian 'Fascism for export' is important because it highlights the role of fascism in shaping the direction of the Classocracy League, while ultimately stressing its uniqueness. In doing so, this paper contends that fascism served as a model to be exported before being adapted to local needs and aspirations. So, is this a case of transnational fascism (or 'transnational radical right'[5])? I argue that it is, but in a way that recognizes the capacity for local actors to adapt fascism for their own purposes, regardless of whether this would ultimately benefit Mussolini's desire for an international fascism under Italian hegemony. Perhaps a better way to refer to this phenomenon, then, would be to talk about 'translocality', which highlights how ideas and movements 'need to be examined both through their situatedness and their connectedness to a variety of other locales', rather than as objects that remain stable through time and space.[6]

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that interwar Canada experienced a form of 'translocal' fascism that reproduced tenets we would today associate with multiculturalism. That is, a form of government that views cultural

2 Reichardt, 'Fascism's Stages,' 89.

3 Federico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy 1919–1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 6.

4 Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2013), 38.

5 Arnd Bauerkämper, 'Interwar Fascism in Europe and Beyond: Toward a Transnational Radical Right,' in *New Perspectives on the Transnational Right*, eds. Martin Durham, Margaret Power (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 39–66.

6 Katherine Brickell and Ayone Datta, eds., *Translocal geographies: Spaces, Places, Connections* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 4.

differences as legitimate representations of the nation protected by the state. Canadian multiculturalism has been widely praised in Canada and abroad.[7] Part of the reason for this is that, in principle, multiculturalism offers ethnic minorities[8] the possibility to claim rights and recognition. It is a compromise by which unequal group relations are meant to be bridged, rather than reproduced, with a view to create a more unified nationhood. This paper focuses precisely upon the historical efforts of one ethnic minority spokesperson to redefine Canadian identity and the place of ethnic groups in it. This person was the founder of the Classocracy League of Canada, Ukrainian Canadian Walter J. Bossy. In stressing the role of ethnic individuals in Canadian political thought, this article is a response to Marcel Martel's call to switch our focus from politicians to minority groups in our study of Canadian politics, bringing new voices into the interwar and early postwar debates on Canadian multiculturalism.[9]

This article is structured into five main parts. The first section focuses on the political background of Ukrainian Canadian Walter J. Bossy, the founder of the Classocracy League of Canada, and addresses the ideological origins of his ideas on Christian revolution. The following section analyses his first English-written work, *A Call to All Socially Minded Christian Canadians* (1934–1935), in which he suggested a Canadian cross-denominational revolution inspired by the European corporatist experiments—especially Fascist Italy. The third section turns to the nature of, and appeal to, Bossy's ideas on classocracy via his relationships with other local extreme right-wing ideologues and organizations. The fourth section then focuses on an unpublished text prepared by Bossy and Edward LaPierre, who became the National Leader of the Classocracy League, revealing fascist notions of spiritual and physical national rebirth tied to the classocratic project. These are highlighted for the purpose of shed-

7 See, for example: Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1995); Ian Angus, *A Border Within: National Identity, Cultural Plurality, and Wilderness* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997).

8 In this article, a distinction between 'ethnic' or 'ethnicity' and 'race' or 'racial' will be made, the former expressing an idea of an assumed set of characteristics shared by a particular group that may or may not be based on physical appearance (e.g. European, Jewish); while the latter will relate to prejudices entirely relying on physical appearance (e.g. Black, Asian). These terms are not 'neutral' and far from straightforward and, consequently, in this article such concepts will not be used with a view to mirror or reproduce prejudice, or to explain reality, but with the intention to pinpoint simplified understandings of the world and of social relations through the analysis of the discursive structures that give them meaning.

9 See Marcel Martel, 'Managing Ethnic Pluralism: The Canadian Experience, 1860–1971,' in *Meeting Global and Domestic Challenges: Canadian Federalism in Perspective,* eds. T. Greven and H. Ickstadt (Berlin: John F. Kennedy-Institut für Nordamerikastudien/Freie Universitat, 2004), 110.

ding light upon the presence of a 'fascist minimum' in Bossy's theory of classocracy. A concluding section argues that classocracy represents an early expression of 'right-wing multiculturalism'[10] and no less than a unique reformulation of fascism. By focusing upon the Classocracy League of Canada, and the circumstances that surrounded its establishment in the city of Montreal, this article demonstrates the extent to which fascist ideology directly influenced new ways of thinking about the nation in interwar Canada.

Classocracy

Born 21 May 1899, Walter J. Bossy[11] was originally from the Carpathian town of Yaslo (Austro-Hungary, later Poland), although he always stressed his Ukrainian descent.[12] Raised a Catholic, Bossy grew up to become an ardent anti-communist, fighting against the Bolsheviks with Ukrainian military formations between 1916 and 1920, and fleeing to Canada in April 1924, less than two years after the Soviet Union was established.[13] Already able to speak and write in several Slavic languages at the age of 25—including Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, Czech, and Serbian—in Canada he quickly learned to communicate in both English and French (Canada's two official languages).[14] Before

10 Alberto Spektorowski calls 'multiculturalism of the right' the 'rhetorical trope designed to include one's own ethnic communities and exclude Others from the body politic'. See: Alberto Spektorowski, 'The French New Right: Multiculturalism of the Right and the Recognition/Exclusionism Syndrome,' *Journal of Global Ethics* 8, no. 1 (2012): 41–61.

11 Walter J. Bossy's original name was Vladislav Lizislav Jacenty Bossy. See 'Interview,' April 1972, 1, file Walter J. Bossy, Biographical Material, 1912–1972, vol. 1, MG30 C72, Library and Archives Canada [hereafter: LAC].

12 Edward LaPierre, 'Biographical Notice of Walter J. Bossy,' file Walter J. Bossy, Biographical Material, 1912–1972, vol. 1, MG30 C72, LAC; 'Interview,' April 1972, 2, file Walter J. Bossy, Biographical Material, 1912–1972, vol. 1, MG30 C72, LAC.

13 J. Tarnovych, *Volodymyr Bossy: 40 Rokiv na fronti Ukrayinskoyi Spravy, 1914–1954* [Walter Bossy: 40 Years at the Forefront of the Ukrainian Cause], (Toronto: Lypynski Ukrainian Educational Institute, 1954), 14, cited in: Paul Michael Migus, 'Ukrainian Canadian Youth: A History of Organizational Life in Canada: 1907–1953' (Master's thesis, University of Ottawa, 1975), 88.

14 'Interview,' April 1972, 4, file Walter J. Bossy, Biographical Material, 1912–1972, vol. 1, MG30 C72, LAC; Robert Gagnon, *Histoire de la Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal* (Montreal: Boréal 1996), 186. Gagnon states that Bossy was unable to understand French, something that Bossy's personal papers prove untrue, as he undeniably engaged regularly in correspondence in French, as well as read French-Canadian literature and periodicals. It would seem that, even though he often received help with his writing (both in English and in French), by 1931 Bossy was able to understand both.

1925, Bossy had become a Canadian citizen (a 'naturalized' Canadian) and had founded the Canadian Sitch Association, later the United Hetman Organization (UHO), a conservative monarchist political organization officially supported by the Ukrainian Catholic Church. Having witnessed chaos in revolutionary Ukraine while fighting the Bolsheviks on the Eastern Front and during the Civil War, as he narrated, Bossy concluded that 'Ukrainian Canadians needed an organization capable of inculcating duty, discipline, and obedience to spiritual and secular authority'. Through the UHO, he promoted allegiance to the Berlin-based Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky,[15] a landowner and *Hetman* (general) who had ruled parts of Ukraine with the backing of the German army in 1918.[16] In doing so, Bossy hoped Ukrainians would achieve independent statehood in Europe. During the 1920s, Ukrainian Canadians, who were equally 'tired of political and denominational bickering' and who 'yearned for a strong authority', enthusiastically joined Bossy's call. The UHO quickly became the only non-communist Ukrainian 'mass organization' in Canada.[17]

During the 1930s, the Soviet and Polish repression of Ukraine radicalized many Ukrainian Canadians, who were desperate to find international support for the territory's independence. At the time, the only country that seemed willing and powerful enough to intervene was Nazi Germany.[18] Its aggressive

15 No substantive modern study on the Pavlo Skoropadsky Hetmanate or a biography of the Hetman is available. For an introduction to the problem and to the literature on the subject, see: A. Maliarevskii, *P. Skoropadskii Getman vseia Ukrainy* (Kiev: 1918), an official biography cited in Hans Joachim Torke, John Paul Himka, *German-Ukrainian Relations in Historical Perspective* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press—Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1994), 81. See also: John Stephen Reshetar, *The Ukrainian Revolution, 1917–1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), 143–207; or Taras Hunczak, 'The Ukraine under Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky,' in *The Ukraine, 1917–1921: A Study in Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1977), 61–81.

16 Ivan Skoropadsky was the last sovereign of an independent Ukraine until 1918, when his descendant Pavlo Skoropadsky, father of Prince Danylo, became Hetman of Ukraine. See: 'Heir to the Throne of the Ukraine,' file Neo-Canadian Activities Correspondence with United Hetman Organization 1924–1953, vol. 4, MG30 C72, LAC.

17 In 1939, when there were more than 300,000 Ukrainians in Canada, UHO membership stood at about five hundred, according to Orest T- Martynowych, as cited in: Jim Mochoruk and Rhonda L. Hinther, eds., *Re-Imagining Ukrainian Canadians: History, Politics, and Identity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 198.

18 While this article will not talk about organisations such as the OUN (Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists) or the UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) and the issues surrounding the collaborations between the Nazis and Ukrainian nationalists, these questions (as well as the importance of fascism and antisemitism in the OUN in particular) have

anti-communism and apparent support for self-determination made of Hitler a potential ally for any anti-communist Ukrainian Canadian.[19] Yet the 'Polish government's assimilatory and repressive measures against its Ukrainian minority, and Stalin's genocidal policies in soviet Ukraine, drove many Ukrainian Canadians . . . to despair'—leading to a realignment towards more Canada-focused movements. Looking for socio-political alternatives that suited Ukrainian Canadians unable to return home, Bossy delved into the works of the 'ideologist of modern Ukrainian conservatism', Viacheslav Lypynsky,[20] who in 1930 had created the Brotherhood of Ukrainian Classocrats-Monarchist Hetmanites (BUKMH) with a small group of followers.[21] A short-lived organization, the BUKMH promoted the establishment of 'classocratic' states, defined by the reorganization of society in corporatist-type guilds, overseen by a minority of technocrats and ruled by a monarch in cooperation with the Catholic Church. To Lypynsky, only classocracy would cement the loyalties of the different classes and ethnicities towards the state by offering the 'balance between power and liberty, and between conservative and progressive forces'.[22]

Lypynsky's idea of classocracy was influenced by a number of contemporary Western thinkers, such as Georges Sorel and Gustave Le Bon, but above all by Italian Elitist theorists Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto. These ideas fundamentally aimed at solving the problems caused by 'narrow nationalism and Marxism'.[23] Mosca and Pareto believed that elite rule is inevitable, and that a small minority consisting of members of the economic elite and policy-

been explored at length by scholars like Frank Golczewski, Dieter Pohl, Grzegorz Motyka, Franziska Bruder, Karel Berkhoff, Jeffrey Burds, and Timothy Snyder.

19 On Nazi sympathies among Hetmanites, see: Mochoruk, Hinther, *Re-Imagining Ukrainian Canadians*, 180–185.

20 Viacheslav Lypynsky (1882–1931) was a prominent figure in Ukrainian political life. He was a Ukrainian ambassador to Austria during Skoropadsky's Hetmanate and thereafter (1918–1919) and the leader of the Hetmanite movement in the 1920s. He was the founder of the state school in Ukrainian historiography and political thought and author of a number of influential historical, political-theoretical, and ideological works.

21 Ivan Lysiak Rudnytsky, 'Lypynsky, Viacheslav,' in *Encyclopedia of Ukraine, Volume III: L-Pf*, ed. Danylo Husar Struk (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

22 J. Pelenski, ed., 'The Political and Social Ideas of Vjaceslav Lypyns'kyj,' special issue of *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 9, no. 3–4 (1985); I. Rudnytsky, 'Viacheslav Lypynsky: Statesman, Historian, and Political Thinker,' in *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History*, ed. P. Rudnytsky (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1987); Alexander J. Motyl, 'Viacheslav Lypyns'kyi and the Ideology and Politics of Ukrainian Monarchism,' *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 27, no. 1 (1985): 31–48.

23 Motyl, 'Viancheslav Lypyns'kyi and the Ideology and Politics of Ukrainian Monarchism,' 32.

planning networks should hold power.[24] In other words, class was considered to be the decisive factor in the organization of society, as it allegedly determined the capacity for every individual to effectively contribute to the nation.[25] Although the ideas, methods, and aims of Mosca and Pareto were dissimilar, the cumulative effect of both their influence on educated Italian public opinion in general, and on the thinking of Benito Mussolini in particular, were equally important. Even though Gaetano Mosca lived to oppose Mussolini's regime, his views did much to bring the Duce to power. Pareto's studies on elitism, socialism, revolution and Marxism, on the other hand, were closely studied by Mussolini, who enrolled in two of Pareto's courses at the University of Lausanne prior to appointing him to the Fascist Italian Senate. This made Pareto at least a moderate supporter of Mussolini's regime. Since the elitist theory simultaneously attacked Marxism and liberal democracy—arguing that egalitarian society was a foolish illusion—it encouraged interwar European fascist ideologues like Mussolini in their hostility to liberalism. It also inspired Ukrainian conservative Lypynsky, who argued that societies should be organized hierarchically, based on class, and united politically through corporatist solidarity for the sake of national unity.[26] As he saw it, classocracy allowed for what he referred to as 'political integration', which would overcome class conflict while also surpassing quarrels based on ethnicity.[27]

In general, Lypynsky's ideas did not find broad support, either in Europe or in North America. However, they sparked a profound interest in Bossy, who in 1931 decided to tour Canada promoting Lypynksy's notion of the classocratic state as a defence against the communist threat. At that time, Bossy argued that communism was penetrating the Canadian press, associations, and schools; the only way to stop it was through the establishment of a state, rooted in the principles of Christianity, that promoted class cooperation.[28] Highlight-

24 Richard Bellamy, *Modern Italian Social Theory: Ideology and Politics from Pareto to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 34–35.

25 Patrick Dunleavy, *Theories of the State: The Politics of Liberal Democracy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1987), 136–138.

26 Vsevolod Holubnychy, *Soviet Regional Economics: Selected Works of Vsevolod Holubnychy* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1982), 134–135, 138.

27 Anton S. Filipeko, ed., *A Social and Solidarity Economy: The Ukrainian Choice* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 40.

28 This insight is from a 1931 tour that Bossy undertook around Canada to talk about bolshevism and 'the Muscovites'. In it, he preached that the Soviets were aiming at universally destroying Christianity through atheism. See: *La Presse*, May 28, 1931, 16. Bossy could be contradictory in his discourses on integral Christianity, for example seeking the support of Protestants at times and blaming them for the bolshevization of immigrants at others.

ing the relationship between intergroup cooperation and religious fulfillment was a timely choice, or rather an opportunistic one, for it followed the publication of Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno*, issued only days before Bossy began his tour. The Pope's encyclical advocated a system based upon hierarchy, class solidarity and the common good.[29] A corporatist view of society, inspired by the 'principle of subsidiarity', seemed a valid alternative to encourage grass-roots socio-political collaboration against social 'atomization' and the centralization of secular power. Pius XI was calling for a Christian revival; a return to the 'right and sound order'.[30]

To those who accused Christian corporatism of abetting the emerging Fascist Italian experiment, self-defined as a corporatist state,[31] many Catholic proponents responded with a rejection of Fascism due to its idolatrous statism, which they saw as incommensurate with Christian submission to God. Certainly, the Catholic praise of the structural elements of corporatism came from comparing it to a 'romanticized medieval guild system' rather than to Fascist Italy, which unlike Christian corporatism subdued the envisaged voluntary corporative bodies under a 'state-controlled labour system'.[32] Yet many felt that corporatism was the organizational framework best able to adapt to different political systems and beliefs—including non-democratic ones. This was the case with classocracy.

29 Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno: On Reconstructing the Social Order* (May 15, 1931), 81, 84. See also: Bernard V. Brady, *Essential Catholic Social Thought*, 2nd ed. (New York: Orbis Books, 2017).

30 Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, 36, 110.

31 The Italian Corporate State was based on the outlawry of social warfare in favor of class collaboration; and on the inclusion of the producers' organizations into the national state. Fascism regarded labor and the incorporation into syndicates, guilds or corporations 'a social duty': 'For every profession one organization, and only one, is legally recognized by the state'. Thus, under Fascism, '[a]ll members of a given profession are represented by the officially recognized organization of that group', which Bossy would later appropriate as 'Class Councils'. See: Carmen Haider, 'The Italian Corporate State,' *Political Science Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (1931): 228–230; 'Déclaration, thèse, statuts,' *L'École Sociale Populaire*, July and August 1935, no. 258–259, 26–28; *La Presse*, March 9, 1936, 9.

32 Craig R. Prestiss, *Debating God's Economy: Social Justice in America on the Even of Vatican II* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 2008), 202. See also: Antonio Costa Pinto, ed., *Corporatism and Fascism: The Corporative Wave in Europe* (London: Routledge, 2019).

'A Call to Socially-Minded Christian Canadians'

Thanks to Toronto's Catholic Archbishop, Neil McNeil, in 1931 Walter J. Bossy was offered work as an instructor with the Montreal Catholic School Commission (MCSC) in Quebec.[33] Although Bossy was living in Winnipeg (Manitoba) at that time, he 'sold everything . . . and with 3 dollars' in his pocket (as he recalled in 1972), he moved to Montreal.[34] While working for the MCSC, Bossy kept studying the works of Lypynsky, spreading his thought on classocratic state-building amongst 'Slavic groups'.[35] He also spied for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), something he had done since the late 1920s; reporting on 'suspicious' elements (namely communists), among the Ukrainian-Canadian community, while also leading the Ukrainian Hetmanate movement.[36] The nature of his cooperation with the RCMP was by no means unique. The RCMP had relied on Hetmanate leaders to obtain information on other Ukrainian organizations and alleged communist infiltration throughout the interwar period. Although the Hetmanites had shown sympathy for Nazism and other fascist movements, the RCMP considered the Hetmanites 'small and unpopular', suggesting that it did not see them as a threat.[37] Bossy's main contact at the RCMP was the English-born Protestant, Frederick John (Jack) Mead. Over the years, Colonel Mead and Bossy became close friends, and Mead was well aware of Bossy's thoughts on government—including his especial admiration for Lypynsky's classocratic theory. This is why, in 1934, Mead suggested to Bossy that he meet John J. Fitzgerald.[38]

33 'Interview,' April 1972, 1–5, file Walter J. Bossy, Biographical Material, 1912–1972, vol. 1, MG30 C72, LAC. See also: To the Principal from Director of Studies of the MCSC J.M. Manning, March 4, 1937, file MCSC Correspondence 1936–1939, vol. 9, MG30 C72, LAC, which mentions Bossy being employed as a teacher in the MCSC's schools for 'many years'; also 'Les catholiques étrangers sont ici trop isolés,' *La Presse*, August 28, 1937, 30, which mentions that Bossy had been employed by the MCSC since 1931 focusing on 'écoliers de langue autre que le français ou l'anglais'. The following letter from the secretary of the MSCS states that Bossy was employed in 1932 'à titre de professeur spécial': 'A qui de droit' [To Whom it May Concern] from Roméo Desjardins, secretary of the MSCS, 28 April, 1937, file MCSC Correspondence 1936–1939, vol. 9, MG30 C72, LAC.

34 'Interview,' April 1972, 6, file Walter J. Bossy, Biographical Material, 1912–1972, vol. 1, MG30 C72, LAC.

35 Ibid, 7.

36 Ibid.

37 On the Hetmanite movement's sympathies for Hitler, see: T. Dann to RCMP Commissioner, December 14, 1937, file 94-A-00180, vol. 38, RG146, LAC. On Bossy's particular sympathies for Hitler, see: file Ukrainian vol. 14, MG30 C72, LAC.

38 'Officer in RCMP Honored at Dinner,' file Correspondence F.J. Mead, 1933–1958, ca. June 1938, vol. 2, MG30 C72, LAC.

Son of well-known Irish philanthropists established in Montreal, Fitzgerald was born in Sherbrooke (Quebec) in 1892 and educated at a high school in Denver, Colorado, and at the English Catholic Loyola College in Montreal.[39] In the 1920s, Fitzgerald became a member of the Self-Determination for Ireland League, a pro-Republican organization formed in Montreal in 1920 by Prince Edward Island native Katherine Hughes, following instructions from Irish nationalist leader Éamon de Valera.[40] By the early 1930s, Fitzgerald had become Grand Knight of the global Catholic fraternal organization the Knights of Columbus, and editor of the only English-speaking Catholic newspaper in Montreal, *The Montreal Beacon*.[41] At that time, *The Montreal Beacon* was a relatively modest diocesan newspaper, with a weekly circulation of five thousand.[42] Nevertheless, Mead thought that the paper would be a great means to inform the Catholic English-speaking community in Montreal of Bossy's ideas on class cooperation and national unity.[43] As Mead saw it, the success of a system like classocracy might be able to overcome the old quarrels on the basis of denomination and ethnicity, which had confronted Anglo-Canadian Protestants and French-Canadian Catholics for generations—an achievement which would surely be attractive to those 'in between' such as Anglo-Canadian Catholics. Following Mead's advice, Bossy met with the editor of the *The Montreal Beacon*, which defined itself as the 'advocate of Social Justice and the Christian Reconstruction of the Social Order'.[44]

39 John J. Fitzgerald, 'Citizens,' file Fitzgerald Correspondence 1945, vol. 3, MG30 C72, LAC. Information on Fitzgerald's origins and life can be found in: 'Trade Board Ex-Secretary Dies at 67,' *Sherbrooke Daily Record*, October 21, 1960, 3.

40 Fitzgerald to Muszynski, March 21, 1944, file Correspondence Fitzgerald J.J. 1944, vol. 3, MG30 C72, LAC. On the Self-Determination for Ireland League in Eastern Canada, see: Patrick Mannion, 'The "Irish Question" in St. John's, Newfoundland, and Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1919–1923,' *Acadiensis* 44, no. 2, (2015): 46.

41 Fitzgerald to Swift, March 27, 1947, file Correspondence J.J. Fitzgerald 1947, vol. 3, MG30 C72, LAC.

42 Art Cawley, 'The Canadian Catholic English-Language Press and the Spanish Civil War,' *CCHA Study Sessions* 49 (1982), 28.

43 'Officer in RCMP Honored at Dinner,' file Correspondence F.J. Mead, 1933–1958, ca. June 1938, vol. 2, MG30 C72, LAC; 'Interview,' April 1972, 7, file Walter J. Bossy, Biographical Material, 1912–1972, vol. 1, MG30 C72, LAC: 'Mead brought me in contact with the Irishman, John J. Fitzgerald whose publishing [was] the only [English] Catholic newspaper in Montreal. The Montreal Beacon.'

44 *Un Mouvement, Une Oeuvre, Walter J. Bossy, 25 ans au service des Néo-canadiens (1925–1950)*, 17, file New Canadians Service Bureau, vol. 5, LAC, also in ARC-E 1. S46. T4. 5441, Montreal Catholic School Commission Archives. This booklet confirms the fact that Fitzgerald was the Editor of *The Montreal Beacon* when he met Bossy in 1934.

In rather broken English, Bossy shared with Fitzgerald his interpretation of Lypynsky's classocracy and its potential to facilitate the Christian unity of Canada. Fitzgerald made detailed notes.[45] The highly religious Fitzgerald gave Bossy's idea of a Canadian classocratic state his 'unqualified endorsement'. This was 'indeed a new social order for Canada . . . [for] it is for *every* citizen of Canada', he claimed.[46] And so, on 29 June 1934, *The Montreal Beacon* introduced Bossy's call for the implementation of a Canadian classocratic Christian state. It presented Bossy's proposal as 'the most vital message submitted to the Canadian people by the medium of script . . . [since] Jacques Cartier raised the cross on Canadian soil'. According to *The Montreal Beacon*—which unsurprisingly recommended 'this essentially Christian movement' highly—Bossy's project dovetailed with both 'the appeals of *Rerum Novarum*[47] [1891] and *Quadragesimo Anno* [1931]', for it suggested 'a channel for the realization of all constructive plans offered by sincere and earnest men groping in the maze of a confused and chaotic actuality'.[48]

Bossy's classocracy was received with enthusiasm by others as well. Having read his proposal in *The Montreal Beacon*, a Jesuit teacher at Loyola College and fervent anti-communist, William X. Bryan, urged the 'many social-minded Christian Canadians' who were losing faith in the old forms of administration and government to 'get in touch with the Classocracy League' (the group Bossy claimed to lead, but in fact intended to found), for it had the key to the 'Christian revolution'. '[Their] task is tremendous,' said the Catholic weekly *Prairie Messenger* (Saskatchewan), 'but that is not a reason for not undertaking it'. The time for revolution had come, argued the Saskatchewanian newspaper,

45 Fitzgerald to Swift, March 27, 1947, file Correspondence J.J. Fitzgerald 1947, vol. 3, MG30 C72, LAC.

46 Walter J. Bossy, *A Call to All Socially Minded Christian Canadians* (Montreal: The Classocracy League of Canada, 1934), 7. My emphasis.

47 *Rerum Novarum*, a papal encyclical issued in 1891 by Pope Leo XIII, advocated retrieving some sort of medieval guild system as a means to return to the organic constitution of societies against the accelerating social disintegration triggered by industrialization and modernization. His encyclical was thus 'built around a neo-Thomistic idealization of the medieval guild system', and presented corporatism as a 'third way' between atheistic communism and rampant capitalism. As Leo XIII saw it, corporatism offered a cooperation-based system that transcended both class conflict and extreme individualism. Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), which advocated a system based on hierarchy, class solidarity and the common good, built upon Leo XIII's own encyclical.

48 Bossy, *A Call*, 7. In the foreword, Fitzgerald explains that he helped produce Bossy's work, and no doubt this refers especially to his assistance in terms of grammar and composition, as will often occur thereafter.

and 'Classocracy [would] emerge as a leader, saviour and victor'.[49] The *Western Catholic* in Alberta concluded that classocracy was a 'healthy, logical and Christian' solution to modern social ills.[50] In a society corrupted by materialism, classocracy could save Christian civilization; 'isn't for this', asked the *Prairie Messenger*, 'that we have been praying for a long time?'[51] Even the liberal newspaper *Winnipeg Free Press* in Manitoba affirmed that classocracy constituted a 'constructive ideology for Canadians'.[52]

The Montreal Beacon published three articles on classocracy by Bossy in the summer of 1934.[53] All were published shortly thereafter as a short book entitled *A Call To Socially Minded Christian Canadians* (henceforth *A Call*). Appealing to a Christian ecumenic sense of unity that Bossy wanted the new order to embody, *A Call*'s preface also constituted an appeal to two of the leading Christian confessions in Canada: the Anglican and Catholic churches. Indeed, the preface was entirely composed by declarations made by Catholic Archbishop of Quebec Cardinal Villeneuve and Anglican Bishop of Montreal John Farthing, on the need to mobilize 'all the Christian forces of this country' in 'the war against Communism'. The only alternative to 'godless materialism' was 'to build up our lives . . . our institutions, our civilization, on the Christian teaching of a belief in God.'[54]

Holding that the current state-systems did not truly reflect modern society, *A Call* 'reject[ed] not only the distorted dictatorship of the proletariat or that of a nationalistic clique, but likewise the whole majority-partisan-geographic representative machinery of Democracy'.[55] Bossy depicted a Western world suffused in decadence, with modern democracy as a social structure that no longer

49 *The Prairie Messenger*, February 6, 1935, 2. On William X. Bryan, see: Frederick E. Crowe, *Lonergan* (MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 4; George Seldes, *The Catholic Crisis* (New York: Julian Messner, 1945), 80.

50 *Western Catholic*, April 3, 1935, page unknown, file CLOC Clippings, vol. 14, MG30 C72, LAC.

51 *Prairie Messenger*, February 6, 1935, 2.

52 *Winnipeg Free Press*, August 4, 1934, 9.

53 To be precise, Bossy's articles were published in *The Montreal Beacon* on May, 18, 1934; June, 15, 1934; and June 29, 1934. See: *The Montreal Beacon*, June 29, 1935, 10. In 'Interview,' April 1972, file Walter J. Bossy, Biographical Material, 1912–1972, vol. 1, MG30 C72, LAC, Bossy states that his first articles on Classocracy were reprinted in twenty seven Catholic newspapers. In March 1935, Bossy mentions that Fitzgerald has 'five English Catholic papers, more or less supporting Classocracy', but I have found no other reference to them or specification. See: Bossy to Fitzgerald, March 30, 1935, file Correspondence J.J. Fitzgerald, 1935–1937, vol. 3, MG30 C72, LAC.

54 Bossy, *A Call*, 3.

55 Edward LaPierre, 'Classocracy League,' *Social Forum*, June 1936.

suited the material or the spiritual needs of the people.[56] *A Call* was framed by the hypothesis that only a new social order based upon 'idealistic Christianity' could save civilization[57] from the moral chaos and poverty brought about by capitalism, secularism, rationalism and democracy.[58] Achieving 'idealistic Christianity' required the spiritual unity of all Canadians or, rather, the unity of all Christian Canadians. For Bossy believed that, 'with the exception of an insignificant percentage . . . Canadians are Christians', albeit from different denominations. According to Bossy, classocracy would allow for the harmonious integration of all Christian denominations into one nation.[59] In doing so, it would 'respect the traditions of Canadians' and their 'two main channels: French and English', while also allowing the 'variety of people' of Canada to cooperate.[60] Based upon the *Quadragessimo Anno* encyclical, Bossy explained that the only divisions that would exist under such a state would be those determined by professional 'guilds', which would be overseen by a minority of socially-minded Christians (the 'Providential tool') to ensure that the common good is met.[61]

A Call further explained that the composition of such a 'Providential' minority would be inspired by the 'good points' of fascism (effectively fighting communism, capitalism and democracy). These positive elements had allegedly empowered 'a new Christian elite (aristocracy)', formed by 'the most deserving, public-spirited and honest professionalists [sic]' in the nation. In its expressions in Austria and Italy specifically, Bossy claimed, the fascist revolution had resulted in a 'renaissance of Christian Idealism', which Canada would also be able to experience were it to embrace this 'spreading system'.[62] According to Bossy, however, there were two negative elements that needed attention with respect to existing forms of fascism: placing the nation above God, which needed to be the other way around; and the 'dictatorship of one party', which needed to be replaced by a corporatist technocracy, with 'government by the best specialists selected . . . from various [guilds and] vocational groups'—a notion inspired by Lypynsky's classocratic theory.[63] In the classocratic ideal,

56 Bossy, *A Call*, 9.
57 In Canada, as in the rest of western liberal democracies of the interwar period, 'civilization' often equaled 'Christianity' or Christian values and ideals.
58 Bossy, *A Call*, 14.
59 Ibid., 40.
60 Ibid., 41.
61 Bossy, *A Call*, 11, 40, 43.
62 Bossy, *A Call*, 11.
63 Ibid.

the professional groups, or 'organic classes',[64] were comprised of communities of interest; or what Bossy understood as 'classes', for which the state must be the 'juridic [sic] expression'.[65] Such groups would include the 'Primary Producers' Class (farmers, miners, lumbermen, fishermen); the Manufacturing Class; the Commercial Class; the Financial Class; the Transportation and Communication Class; the Professional Class; the Community Service Class (hotel, amusement, laundering enterprises, and so on); and the Civil Service Class'.[66]

There is no doubt that, at least to some extent, classocracy as a socio-economic model represented a Canadian parallel to Italian Fascist syndicalism and statist corporatism, as understood by Benito Mussolini's Charter of Labor (1927) and the National Council of Corporations (1930).[67] Above all, the corporate state in Fascist Italy was based upon obviating social warfare in favor of trans-class collaboration; but also through the inclusion of the producers' organizations into the national state. As a consequence of this form of corporatism, Bossy's classocracy, like Italian Fascism, entailed the incorporation of labor into syndicates, guilds or corporations as 'a social duty': 'For every profession one organization, and only one, is legally recognized by the state'. Under Fascist rule, allegedly, '[a]ll members of a given profession are represented by the officially recognized organization of that group'. For Canadian classocracy, this would entail what Bossy called 'Class Councils'.[68] Bossy noted that, under Mussolini, syndicates (guilds) were considered 'cells' of the big national organism, replacing 'political by economic alignments'.[69] As the Fascist Charter of Labor put it: 'The Italian Nation is an organism endowed with a purpose, a life,

64 The President of the Classocracy League Edward LaPierre defined 'organic classes' as 'groupings of similar or related occupations . . . naturally constituted'. He argues that each class fulfills a specific and natural social function and so contributes to the common good. See: LaPierre, 'Classocracy League.'

65 LaPierre, 'Classocracy League.'

66 One-page pamphlet entitled 'The Classocracy League of Canada,' MG C72, vol. 8.

67 Mussolini's Fascist syndicalism constituted a version of this type of syndicalism. According to Edward R. Tannenbaum, the 'Fascists syndicalists had wanted a new, autonomous labor movement, not the absorption of the workers into corporations dominated by the employers and controlled by the state.' See: Edward R. Tannenbaum, 'The Goals of Italian Fascism,' *The American Historical Review* 74, no. 4 (1969): 1184, 1186, 1192.

68 Haider, 'The Italian Corporate State,' 228–230; 'Déclaration, thèse, statuts,' 26–28; 'La Ligue de la Classocratie du Canada tient sa première réunion publique,' *La presse*, March 9, 1936.

69 Haider, 'The Italian Corporate State,' 228–230. In Bossy's Classocracy, 'organic classes' are 'mgroupings of similar or related occupations . . . naturally constituted'. It would be argued that, in Classocracy, each 'class' fulfills a specific and natural social function and so contributes to the common good. See: LaPierre, 'Classocracy League.'

and means of action transcending those of the individuals composing it. It is a moral, political, and economic unity which finds its integral realization in the Fascist State'.[70]

Finally, Bossy considered 'the Church as not belonging to any organic class, as an institution with its own hierarchy dedicated to the spiritual well-being of society. Every layman must therefore obey [the Church as a] religious authority in spiritual matters'.[71] An alliance between the Church and the state that respecting the independence of the former over 'its schools and institutions' undoubtedly echoes interwar European fascist and corporatist experiments, including those characterized by clerical fascism, like the Portuguese Estado Novo or Schuschnigg's Austria. In doing so, classocracy advocated turning the Catholic Church into a 'state within the state', just as Fascist Italy had done after 1929, in order to keep the 'workers' masses in check with the help of religion'.[72]

While generally praising Italian Fascism for having allowed Catholic elites to attain positions of power, by contrast, *A Call* viewed Nazism with suspicion. Bossy claimed that he rejected the 'deification of race' exemplified by the Third Reich's biologisation of the nation, which he rightly intuited would lead to 'bellicose imperialism'.[73] Only religious devotion, he said, could help overcoming those faults.[74] Yet, at the same time, Bossy's own thought was shaped by white supremacist prejudice. For instance, Bossy specifically excluded 'the yellow and black vandals' from his nation-building project.[75] The term that Bossy used to describe Canadians of East Asian and African descent is noteworthy. 'Vandal' typically refers to someone who deliberately destroys or damages public or private property and, via its Latin etymology, denotes the Germanic peoples who ravaged Gaul, Spain and North Africa in the fourth and fifth centuries—ultimately sacking the Vatican under Alaric in 410.[76] It is thus a noun ultimately signifying violence, paganism, and anti-Christian barbarism. The view that peoples of non-European descent are uncivilized had at that time been widely used by cultural, political and economic colonizers, who justified their often-

70 'The Charter of Labor (1927),' *Biblioteca Fascista*, March 1, 2012, http://bibliotecafascista.blogspot.com/2012/03/charter-of-labor-1927.html, accessed May 2021.

71 'Déclaration, thèse, statuts,' 47. Original in French. Translated by the author.

72 John Pollard, *The Fascist Experience in Italy* (London: Routledge, 1998), 127.

73 Bossy, *A Call*, 11.

74 Ibid., 21.

75 Ibid., 34. In *A Call* Bossy speaks in a more elaborate manner of Canada being strategic in keeping the 'yellow race' away through its Pacific frontier. See also: 'REPORT,' February 22, 1939, vol. 9, file MCSC Correspondence file 1936–1939, LAC, in which 'Jews and Asiatics' are not considered 'Christian foreigners' and so are not to be protected from the 'Red threat'.

76 'Vandal.' *Cambridge Dictionary* online, 2020, accessed September 15, 2020.

violent endeavors by arguing (not without some pushback) that the peoples they dominated were savages in need of (Christian and European) guidance. Given such an argument, 'civilization' and 'civilized' became signifiers of 'Christianity'; a view closely reflected in *A Call*: 'Christianity reared for us during nineteen centuries the culture and the civilization out of which it has produced acceptable social arrangements'.[77] According to Bossy, it was Europeans alone who 'by real sacrifice and toil made Canada what it is (their heritage to us now seized by the greedy few)'.[78]

Bossy also knew precisely who those 'greedy few' were. In *A Call*, he explained that 'present-day democracy with its entire system—parliamentarism and capitalism' was merely the rule of 'plutocracy (those who control the whole economic machinery) . . . . Those who control democracy (plutocrats) speculate with this capital and thereby enrich themselves at the cost of the pauperization of the masses'.[79] The plutocrats' main target was, he said, 'the Church of Christ', which was alleged under attack by 'rationalistic liberalism'.[80] Allegedly, 'plutocracy' stemmed from communism or 'internationalism', explained Bossy; but so did 'cosmopolitanism' and 'capitalism-democracy'. Against 'internationalism' or class-based commitment to international solidarity epitomized by socialism and communism, Bossy promulgated 'universalism', which aimed at global spiritual union and class cooperation at the national level.[81] During the interwar period, the association between democracy and so-called 'plutocracy' had been widely utilized by both Fascist Italy and especially Nazi Germany. In their conspiratorial narratives, 'plutocracy' referred to 'democracy perverted by financial domination by the Jews'.[82] By the end of the 1930s, Italian Fascists joined Nazism in arguing that Jews were outsiders who 'functioned best in a social environment which . . . preferred democratic parliamentary governments'.[83] Fascism distinguished between 'plutocratic democracy', described as the rule of the bourgeoisie or the Jewish capitalist, and what believed was 'real' democracy, achieved through totalitarianism. In much the same way, in 1936

77 Bossy, *A Call*, 9.
78 Ibid., 43.
79 Ibid., 30.
80 Ibid., 31–32.
81 Bossy, *A Call*, 18.
82 Nina Valbousquet, 'Race and Faith: The Catholic Church, Clerical Fascism, and the Shaping of Italian Anti-Semitism and Racism,' *Modern Italy* 23, no. 4 (2018): 355–371; Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2006), 310–311.
83 Gene Bernardini, 'The Origins and Development of Racial Anti-Semitism in Fascist Italy,' *The Journal of Modern History* 48, no. 3 (1977): 437.

the National Leader of the Classocracy League Edward LaPierre argued that classocracy was 'a true democracy'.[84]

By the time of the Italian Race Laws in 1938, both Hitler and Mussolini were convinced that 'International World Jewry' both existed and was 'by definition . . . a natural enemy of Fascism'.[85] Purportedly in league with Bolshevism, 'plutocracy or finance capitalism', *A Call* was an attempt to further justify this demonizing narrative. Democracy, argued Bossy, had 'rationalized' (by which he meant secularized) Europe and, as a consequence, it had exposed it to a 'threatening Bolshevism'. Like many across Europe at the time, Bossy believed that fascism was simply a political response to the chaos caused between 'collectivist Communism . . . and rationalist-democratic capitalism'.[86] Ultimately, he claimed, fascism had facilitated a Christian renaissance, by reforming 'the failings of capitalism' and jeopardizing 'the control of the anonymous capitalism-democracy'.[87]

In addition to condemning plutocracy, *A Call* also rejected 'cosmopolitanism'. Cosmopolitanism, lamented Bossy, diminished individual nations and promoted egalitarianism; a false belief in the sameness of all people.[88] This, as he saw it, led to 'atomization rather than to the construction of a unity'.[89] During the first half of the twentieth century, 'cosmopolitanism' was used as a euphemism by antisemites highlighting that, lacking a nation-state of their own, Jews constituted a parasitic element, allegedly posing as a 'destructive stranger' that infected self-described nations with intellectual and moral decadence.[90] In Canada, this type of antisemitism was not uncommon among the Ukrainian-Canadian community.[91] The Canadian Hetmanate weekly *Ukrainskyi robintnyk* [Ukrainian worker], for example, described Jews as 'a people without a Fatherland who felt no attachment to the countries in which they

84 Jean Blondel, ed., *Comparative Government: A Reader* (London: Macmillan, 1969), 197; LaPierre, 'Classocracy League.'

85 Bernardini, 'The Origins and Development of Racial Anti-Semitism in Fascist Italy,' 437.

86 Bossy, *A Call*, 11.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid., 19.

89 Ibid., 18–19.

90 Bernard Lazare, *Antisemitism: Its History and Causes* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2006), 140; Charles A. Small, ed., *Global Antisemitism: A Crisis of Modernity* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2013), 232. See also: Hyam Maccody, *Antisemitism and Modernity: Innovation and Continuity* (London: Routledge, 2006), 29.

91 For an in-depth understanding of Ukrainian-Jewish relations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see: Howard Aster, Peter J. Potichnyj, *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press—Canadian Institute of Uktainian Studies, 1990).

lived and who were averse to productive labour'. Bossy himself added that 'Jews were indifferent to their neighbors and only interested in securing material advantages for themselves'. The Jews, he argued, controlled the production and sale of armaments, while malignly influencing politics in the liberal democracies. They were supposedly doing 'all they could to promote international chaos and turmoil'.[92] References to the already-notorious Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy or to the disproportionately high percentage of Jews in the Communist Party and in the Soviet bureaucracy, for instance, appeared in a number of Ukrainian-Canadian weeklies during this period. Ukrainian Catholic workers were implored to create an anti-Bolshevik front, for 'what happened in Russia, in Mexico and in Spain can happen in Canada'.[93]

Montreal's Fascists and Francoists

The idea that Jews, liberal democracy and communism were intrinsically related to one another determined some of the social networks that Walter J. Bossy established throughout the 1930s. So-called Canadian *Führer* Adrien Arcand, for one, was a notorious example.[94] At the time, Arcand maintained relations with Virginio Gayda, editor of Italian newspapers and unofficial spokesperson for Mussolini's regime. He regularly received the fascist newspaper *l'Italia*, and systematically defended Fascism's repressive actions.[95] Inspired both by Hitler and Mussolini, Arcand was fervently antisemitic and the members of his party, the *Parti National Socialiste Chrétien* [National Socialist Christian Party], wore blue shirts. Just like Bossy, he was an ardent and reactionary Catholic, yet uncomfortable with the idea of secular authoritarianism. Despite this, Arcand believed that fascism in Italy and elsewhere was 'operating in the name of God . . . God was with the fascists because they also serve His cause'.[96]

According to Toronto's Hetmanite weekly newspaper *Ukrains'kyi robitnyk* [Ukrainian worker], in the 1930s Bossy and Arcand lived in the same Montreal neighborhood, Ahuntsic, and they established a relationship leading to

92 Volodymyr Bosyi [Walter J. Bossy], *Rozval Europy i Ukraina* (Montreal: Nakladom vyd. Katolytska Ukraina, 1933): 45, 78, 138–139.

93 *Ukrainski visty*, November 4, 1936. Translated into English by Orest Martynovych in Hinther, Mochoruk, *Re-Imagining Ukrainian Canadians*, 191.

94 See: Jean-François Nadeau, *The Canadian Führer: The Life of Adrian Arcand* (Montreal: Lux Éditeur, 2010).

95 Nadeau, 114.

96 Ibid., 116.

exchanges about an alleged world Jewish conspiracy.[97] For example, Bossy kept a copy of Arcand's antisemitic *La Clé du Mystère* [The Key to Mystery], published in 1938.[98] This booklet compiled several journal pieces containing 'testimonies' that were supposed to confirm the existence of a worldwide Jewish plot to bring about communist revolutions and national subversion. *La Clé du Mystère* argued that communism and free-masonry were the means by which the Jews conquered;[99] that communism in Russia and elsewhere was financed by the Jewish bankers in New York;[100] that, rather than a persecuted minority, Jews had historically been the most ferocious persecutors;[101] and that the League of Nations was a Jewish organization.[102] Another central argument in *La Clé du Mystère* was the idea that Jews can never become Canadian.[103] As Arcand saw it, Jews would never be able (or willing) to contribute to the national common good, for they work for the benefits of Jews only: 'They cannot be, they will never be Canadians, but always exclusively and fanatically Jews . . . . They are, like everywhere else, a danger for the country'.[104]

Arcand made sure that Bossy became acquainted with the literature published by the American Nazi sympathizer E. Sanctuary, author of *Are These Things So? A Study in Modern Termites of the Homo Sapiens Type*. This book, which Bossy closely studied, had been compiled by the World Alliance Against Jewish Aggressiveness (WAAJA).[105] In a fascist fashion, it compared Jewish communities to termite infestations: '[they] travel in colonies . . . they are now in the lower part of the building and are making inroads on the supporting beams and joists, threatening demolition of the structure'.[106] The metaphor was intended to express how Jews were inherently alien, and conspired to destroy civilization. One of the main arguments of the book was equally familiar: that socialism and communism are Jewish in both inception and direction. Sanctu-

97 *Ukrains'kyi robitnyk*, October 2, 1953, file Ukrainian, vol. 14, MG30 C72, LAC. This file contains some information in Ukrainian on Bossy's acquaintance with Arcand. I thank Professor Orest Martynowich for providing me with such information in April 2019.

98 See: file Jewish, vol. 14, MG30 C72, LAC.

99 *Le Clé du Mystère* (n.d.), 7, 19, Morisset Library, University of Ottawa, Adrien Arcand Collection (microform), FC 2924.1.

100 Ibid., 9.

101 Ibid., 14.

102 Ibid., 18.

103 Ibid., 20.

104 Ibid., 21. Original in French. Translated by the author.

105 Bossy to Fitzgerald, July 28, 1937, file Correspondence J.J. Fitzgerald, 1935–1937, vol. 3, MG30 C72, LAC.

106 Eugene Sanctuary, *Are These Things So?* (New York: E.N., 1934), page previous to Table of Contents.

ary explained that Marx, Lassalles and Engels, all described as Jews (although Engels was not, and Marx is not usually considered Jewish given his lapsed Christianity), seized utopian socialism and turned it into a subversive, revolutionary movement—overshadowing socialism's sympathy for the poor by the Marxist hatred of the rich. In consequence, the idea of cooperation was replaced by conflict. Jewish thought, Sanctuary concluded, introduced the idea of 'class war'.[107]

Bossy's acquaintance with Arcand continued throughout the interwar period. Bossy repeatedly invited the latter to events organized by the Ukrainian-Canadian community to speak on Bolshevism and the achievements of Nazi Germany. Revealingly, on 29 November 1937 Bossy invited Arcand to a banquet organized by a Ukrainian Catholic parish in Montreal to discuss the communist threat. Influenced by Arcand's speeches, Bossy claimed that 'Hitler would save the Christian world from the Jewish menace' and that, with Germany's help, 'Jewish bolshevism' would disappear to give way to a new world order.[108]

By the late 1930s, Bossy's desire for a corporatist revolution based on universal Christian ideals led him to get in touch with another Canadian manifestation of transnational right-wing extremism: the Friends of National Spain (FNS). Active in Montreal at least since 1938, the FNS' main aim was to propagate the nationalist cause in the Spanish Civil War, which broke out in July 1936 after a coup d'état against the democratically established Second Republic. Under General Francisco Franco, the insurrectionists launched an ultimately successful revolt against liberal democracy, and what he called at the time the Judeo-Masonic-Communist conspiracy.[109] After successfully defeating the Spanish Republic—with the financial assistance and direct intervention of both Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy—Franco ruled Spain under nearly forty years of dictatorship. As early as 1936, the FNS was founded in London, England,

107 Sanctuary, *Are These Things So?*, 221–222, 224.

108 Hinther, Mochoruk, *Re-Imagining Ukrainian-Canadians*, 183. In the 1940s Bossy switched from a restricted 'pluralism' to 'universalism' and so accepted the Jews. In April 1972 Bossy declared that he has 'never been enemy of Jews, I always study the Jews' and also that 'Hitler made me so mad that I turned and defended the Jews', referring to Hitler's occupation of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939. According to Bossy, once he began defending the Jews he received 'letters and letters', among which there was one from Arcand, threatening him. Bossy stated that the RCMP (Frederick J. Mead) warned him that Arcand was trying to kill him, and the RCMP helped Bossy hide from him. See also: Bossy to Mead, June 23, 1939, file Correspondence F.J. Mead, 1933–1958, vol. 2, MG30 C72. On Bossy's postwar meeting with Jacques Maritain and his repudiation of antisemitism, see *Ukrainskyi robitnyk*, October 2, 1953.

109 Javier Domínguez Arribas, *El enemigo judeo-masónico en la propaganda franquista, 1936–1945* (Barcelona: Marcial Pons, 2009).

by a group of British dissatisfied conservatives, including Anglicans, Catholics, Methodists, and Protestants. The ecumenic character of the FNS was partly the result of seeking to 'develop a mass membership which would cut across existing political divisions and reinvigorate the Right', while pursuing the restoration of 'the natural order of the monarchy and the Church'.[110] The secretary of the Canadian branch of the FNS, Edward LaPierre, was a Canadian of French and Irish descent. An English literature teacher and a devout Catholic, LaPierre believed that a Fascist-style corporatist reorganization of Canada would foster Canadian unity.[111]

The reason Bossy got in touch with the FNS was due to his closeness with LaPierre, who he had first met in 1934 at the offices of *The Montreal Beacon* (where Bossy published his first series on classocracy).[112] At the time, Bossy was planning to launch the Classocracy League of Canada (CLOC)—at that point only a 'paper organization'—but he was worried about how the people of Montreal would react. This was partly on account of Bossy's learning that the Irish Catholic community of Montreal was suspicious of the classocratic theory, since 'a foreigner Ukrainian . . . Walter Bossy was behind [it]'.[113] Correspondingly, Bossy came to believe that his identity was 'a tremendous obstacle' to the movement he wanted to lead.[114] For this reason, he approached Edward LaPierre to act as a kind of figurehead for the new movement. Bossy thought that LaPierre's ethnic origins and linguistic skills (particularly his elocution in both English and French without an accent) would help to secure

110 Tom Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 90; Bernhard Dietz, *Neo-Tories: The Revolt of British Conservatives against Democracy and Political Modernity (1929–1939)* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 170–173.

111 On Edward H. LaPierre, see: Fifth Census of Canada, 1911, province of Quebec, district number 183, Poll 37 in Ste. Marie Montreal, row 35; *L'illustration nouvelle*, March 27, 1936; *Le Devoir*, March 21, 1936; Edward H. LaPierre, *The Classocracy League of Canada. Order, Justice, Toil. Christian, Corporative, Monarchical*, January 30, 1936, file CLOC, vol. 8, MG30 C72 Walter J. Bossy, LAC; *La Presse*, March 7, 1936; *La Presse*, March 9, 1936; *Le Devoir*, March 21, 1936; *Social Forum*, June 1936.

112 The following letter indicates that by March 1935, LaPierre and Bossy had been in close contact for six months: Bossy to Fitzgerald, March 30, 1935, file Correspondence J.J. Fitzgerald, 1935–1937, vol. 3, MG30 C72, LAC. The following file gives information on LaPierre's position at the time: file Correspondence La Pierre, Edward 1935–1971, 1935, vol. 2, MG30 C72, LAC. Fitzgerald, Bossy and LaPierre seem to consecutively run *The Montreal Beacon* between 1934 and 1935, as mentioned in: Bossy to Fitzgerald, March 30, 1935, file Correspondence J.J. Fitzgerald, 1935–1937, vol. 3, MG30 C72, LAC. Apparently, as the same document indicates, by 1935 Fitzgerald controlled (financially?) 'five English Catholic papers . . . more or less supporting Classocracy' all over Canada.

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid.

the support of the two biggest Catholic groups of the city—the Irish and the French Canadian. When the Classocracy League of Canada was launched in July 1935, LaPierre was unveiled as its National Leader. He characterized the CLOC as a 'social and political organization', composed of 'Canadians of different nationalities . . . dedicated to rebuilding the political, social and economic life of Canada'.[115] Bossy was officially relegated to a supporting role, notwithstanding his behind-the-scenes leadership.[116]

Following the inauguration of the CLOC, its reform program entitled 'Déclaration, theses, statuts' (the Déclaration, or Declaration) was released in the Catholic monthly *l'École Sociale Populaire*, reaching a readership of over eight to nine thousand.[117] The CLOC was described as a movement dedicated to 'the establishment of a completely Christian state-system of universal applicability: the Classocracy'.[118] Since classocracy largely derived from social Catholicism, the Déclaration insisted that it alone would make Canada re-Christianize the country in the face of liberal democracy, which promoted secularism, unrestrained capitalism, utilitarianism, neo-paganism, and even the occult.[119] The formation of the CLOC, alongside the release of its program, was announced in the liberal dailies *Le Soleil* and *Le Nouvelliste*, the nationalists *Le Devoir* and *Le Bien Public*, and the social Catholic *L'Action Catholique*, which affirmed that the CLOC was based on 'Catholic philosophy and the teachings of the Supreme Pontiffs'.[120] The program made no mention of Walter J. Bossy, neither as the founder nor even as a member of the CLOC.[121]

Between 1935 and 1937, Edward LaPierre acted as the public representative of the CLOC and, together with Jesuit William X. Bryan and editor of *The Montreal*

115 'Déclaration, thèse, statuts,' 30; *L'Action Catholique*, July 22, 1935, 1. Original in French. Translated by the author.

116 Bossy to Fitzgerald, March 30, 1935, file Correspondence J.J. Fitzgerald, 1935–1937, vol. 3, MG30 C72, LAC.

117 Jean-Claude St-Amant, 'La propagande de l'École sociale populaire en faveur du syndicalisme catholique 1911–1949,' *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 32, no. 2 (1978): 209.

118 'Déclaration, thèse, statuts,' 30. Original in French. Translated by the author.

119 Ibid., 7–9, 32.

120 *L'Action Catholique*, July 22, 1935, 1; *Le Soleil*, July 23, 1935, 9; *Le Nouvelliste*, July 23, 1935, 2; *Le Devoir*, July 31, 1935, 8; *Le Progrès du Saguenay*, August 8, 1935, 6; and *Le Bien Public*, August 29, 1935, 12. Original in French. Translated by the author.

121 In fact, it barely mentioned any names, and that is because even though the group presented itself as fully formed, the only people who officially supported (or considered themselves to be members of) the CLOC were RCMP Colonel Jack Mead, John J. Fitzgerald, Edward LaPierre, and William X. Bryan, an ardent supporter who was promoting the classocratic state over the Catholic Half Hour radio program at the CBS-affiliate CKAC, a French-Canadian radio station in Montreal.

Beacon John J. Fitzgerald, he organized public symposiums on corporatism, fascism, and classocracy across Montreal.[122] In these symposiums, LaPierre promoted the aims of the CLOC, linking them to Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* of 1931. The latter was exemplified, he explained, by Benito Mussolini's policies in Fascist Italy.[123] In addition to organizing symposiums, LaPierre also wrote on classocracy and its potential application to Canada.[124] A classocratic Canada, he claimed, would truly embody a 'Christian, corporative, monarchical state-system'.[125]

While LaPierre led CLOC, Bossy dedicated his time working on behalf of the Montreal Catholic School Commission, with which he had been an instructor since 1931. In 1936, he was also given the position of 'representative concerning foreign problems', by which the Commission was hoping he would identify instances in which Christian Canadians were in danger of supporting communism. This new role was appropriate to the new political setting characterizing Quebec, which in 1936 brought fervent Catholic and anti-communist Maurice Duplessis to power, inaugurating what would be remembered as *La Grande Noirceur* [The Great Darkness]. Bossy's new job would thus contribute to Duplessis's hunt for communists, extending to the arrest of anyone promoting acts against the Christian character of Quebec—not only communists but Jehovah Witnesses and Jews as well.[126] In enthusiastically joining the national communist hunt, Bossy assisted RCMP officer and classocracy sympathizer Jack Mead by continuing to report on suspected communist elements in Montreal. Unsurprisingly, Bossy's recurrent method used to identify subversive communists essentially consisted in identifying (or imagining) Jews.[127]

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122 *L'Illustration Nouvelle*, March 3, 1936, 6; *La Presse*, March 7, 1936, 51; Fitzgerald to LaPierre and Bossy, July 24, 1937, file Correspondence J.J. Fitzgerald, 1935–1937, vol. 3, MG30 C72, LAC, mentions the patronage of Bryan and Archambault towards these talks.

123 *La Presse*, March 9, 1936, 9; *Le Devoir*, March 21, 1936, 6.

124 For instance, in *The Social Forum*, founded in Ottawa in 1935.

125 *Social Forum*, June 1936, page (?), vol. 14, MG30 C72, LAC. Supposedly, by July 1936 LaPierre was also working 'on the history of CLOC', as he informed Bossy, but I have found no other record of such an endeavor. See: LaPierre to Bossy, July 20, 1936, file Correspondence Edward La Pierre, 1935–1971, vol. 2, MG30 C72, LAC.

126 Bossy to Coonan, October 17, 1936, vol. 9, file MCSC Correspondence file 1936–1939, MG30 C72, LAC.

127 Mead to Bossy, November 27, 1939, file Correspondence F.J. Mead, 1933–1958, vol. 2, MG30 C72, LAC; 'Strictly Confidential. Memo. Re: Chief Postal Censor's Office', January 14, 1940, file Correspondence F.J. Mead, 1933–1958, vol. 2, MG30 C72, LAC. In these documents Bossy argues particularly against the recruitment of 'employees of Jewish extraction in the censorial work', stating that the Jewish community lacks any 'natural' ability to properly perform duties related to linguistics, and linking the appointment of Jewish employees to

The New Canadian Man

During the interwar period, the idea of the 'New Man' constituted a powerful symbol of the promise of political and anthropological revitalization of society, which could counteract perceived notions of crisis and decline. In keeping with the interwar radical right, in 1937 Walter J. Bossy and Edward LaPierre collaborated on an unpublished text entitled *One of Our New-Canadians*. The text advocated a 'new Canadian man' that would allegedly flow from a fascist-inspired corporatist Christian revolution. It argued that the 'Canadian Nation is a conglomeration of many different nationalities who . . . have in the first place brought with them from their native countries their culture and their beautiful specific customs and thus have enriched the organism of their adopted country—Canada'.[128] They called on 'every Canadian citizen to foster and facilitate this natural synthetic process' of nationalist amalgamation. Yet in their narrative, Bossy and LaPierre wholly excluded Indigenous communities in Canada, suggesting that the new Canadian nation would be defined solely by settlers. Even amongst those settlers, only Continental European' customs would be included in the creation of this multi-cultural Canada. In particular, they hoped that, with time, 'these various [European] strains will coalesce and merge, and so produce a rich and original Canadian nationality, distinguishable from all other contemporary nationalities, and distinguishable likewise from any of the various elements that compose it'.[129]

Just how distinct Canada would be from other nationalities remained unclear. In fact, Bossy's and LaPierre's aim to promote the ethnic intermixing of whites—while severely restricting access to such amalgamation—is little different from nativist approaches to the American idea of 'the melting pot' at the time.[130] On the other hand, their proposal differed in that they envisaged this amalgamation to derive from the collective contribution of European cul-

political favors by 'local Liberal committees'. See also: Mead to Bossy, August 19, 1943, file Correspondence F.J. Mead 1930–1958, vol. 2, MG30 C72, LAC. In this letter, Mead refers to Bossy's belief that Communist Party member (and communist spy) Fred Rose was elected member of the Canadian Parliament thanks to 'the Jewish vote'.

128 John J. Fitzgerald (in fact, Bossy and LaPierre), *One of Our New-Canadians* (unpublished, 1937), 1–5, file Walter J. Bossy, Biographical Notes, 1912–1972, vol. 1, MG30 C72, LAC.

129 Ibid.

130 The melting pot is a metaphor for a heterogeneous society gradually becoming more homogeneous. It has been used by some to characterize the United States since the eighteenth century. The theory has been rejected by proponents of liberal multiculturalism, who suggest nurturing diversity instead. Nativist approaches to the melting pot include excluding 'undesirable' groups (European or not) from the melting pot.

tures, rather than from the cultural assimilation of European whites into 'the preexisting cultural and social molds modeled on Anglo-Protestants'.[131] *One of Our New-Canadians* specifically insisted that every European 'national strain has some constructive factor in his culture and tradition to contribute to the ultimate national individuality of Canada'. To these 'new Canadians' as well as to English- and French-speaking Canadians, Bossy and LaPierre demanded an end to 'clinging jealousy and exclusively to an imported national culture which is bound to undergo a change and insisting upon a hyphenated designation that connotes this narrower outlook'. Their assessment constitutes an early, and exclusionary, expression of the idea that some sort of white multiculturalism would lead to a 'far more glorious and realistic' Canadian sense of unity and belonging than binationalism—a debate that only began some thirty years later.[132]

The classocratic idea of establishing a pluralist Canada of European descent, framed by Christian unity and organized according to the fascist economic model of corporatism, never appealed to Canadians to the extent Bossy and LaPierre thought it would. Bossy later had different theories on why that was the case. One of these theories is that the Irish-Catholic community of Montreal rejected his classocratic project because of his Ukrainian background. To date, I have found no proof of such statements. A second theory consists in blaming French Canadians for the failures of the Classocracy League of Canada, insofar as they refused forming a big union of Catholic minorities on account of being too obsessed with preserving their own ethnic purity. Without a doubt, it is possible that Bossy failed to attract a big portion of the French-Canadian community due to the leading corporatist discourse in French Canada shaped, instead, by the narrative of *la survivance* (French-Canadian national survival). As Filippo Salvatore has aptly put it, this was a 'made in Quebec' corporatism with little room for outside influences.[133] Bossy's non-credible insistence in the apolitical nature of his projects also was unlikely to help—even when there was some support. For instance, while Bossy's corporatist approach to Canadian identity seemingly exercised 'a considerable influence' (according to him) amongst Ukrainian Canadians, the latter appeared to show more interest in learning about which provincial and federal party Bossy supported rather

131 David A. Hollinger, 'Amalgamation and Hypodescent: The Question of Ethnoracial Mixture in the History of the United States,' *The American Historical Review* 108, no. 5 (2003): 1366.

132 Fitzgerald, *One of Our New-Canadians*.

133 Filippo Salvatore, *Fascism and the Italians of Montreal: An Oral History, 1922–1945* (Toronto: Guernica, 1998), 8–9.

than in joining his movement.[134] Similarly, when introducing the Classocracy League of Canada for the first time, the editor of the Catholic daily *The Prairie Messenger*, Cosmas W. Krumpelmann, spoke for many in stating: 'If I vote Liberal or Conservative I have a fair idea of what is going to happen, but when I advocate Classocracy God knows what might happen'.[135]

With the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, LaPierre moved to Kingston, Ontario, CLOC's 'Eastern Ontario Headquarters', where he remained for the duration of the conflict 'doing personnel work: interviewing recruits, candidates for special training, officer candidates, [Canadian Officers Training Corps] candidates at Queen's University etc.'[136] For his part, Bossy remained in Montreal although he was also recruited; in this case, as an instructor officer at Canadian Officers Training Corps at Loyola College. On account of the global conflict, the few existing classocrats and sympathizers dispersed. With ideological fellow-travelling with fascism being now considered unpatriotic, the Classocracy League of Canada disappeared from sight, never to return.

Conclusion: A Fascist Canadian Multiculturalism?

The Classocracy League of Canada (CLOC) emerged in 1935 upon the belief that, in order to thrive, Canada needed to experience a Christian revolution led by a 'socially minded' minority—what Roger Griffin has called 'a vanguard made up of those who are keenly aware'.[137] That claim was inspired by the classocracy theories of Ukrainian conservative Viacheslav Lypynsky, which were in turn influenced by the Italian School of Elitist Theory and especially the works of Italians Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto; theories that became highly influential in the development of the ideological foundations of Italian Fascism. The model for a successful socio-economic reconstruction promoted by the CLOC owed much to Mussolini's corporatist experiment which, according to Walter J. Bossy, the CLOC's founder, brought true Christian governance to power. To him, Mussolini's totalitarian rule demonstrated that God was behind Italian Fascism, which He used as a 'providential tool' to restore the Christian order and protect the Church in the West. He envisioned a Christian elite in

134 Bossy to J.J. Penverne, Conservative Candidate, October 2, 1935, file Political Activities Correspondence 1930–1965, vol. 8, MG30 C72, LAC.

135 Cosmas W. Krumpelmann, March 16, 1935, vol. 8, MG30 C72, LAC.

136 April 1948, November 1948, file Correspondence Edward La Pierre, 1935–1971, vol. 2, MG30 C72, MG30 C72, LAC.

137 David Renton, *Fascism: Theory and Practice* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 37.

Canada, which would oversee the observance of labor as a social duty, organizing citizens according to guilds or professional associations sanctioned by the state. A Christian revolution would march forward hand in hand with the persecution of elements threatening Christian civilization or promoting 'plutocratic democracy', especially communism and the 'International Jewry'. The result would be a 'new' Christian ecumenic nation composed of merging European white groups: a new Canadian people resulting from 'national rebirth'.

Unlike the Italian and other fascist experiments, however, since the classocrats believed that decadent modernity was led by anti-Christian groups who distorted the organic composition of societies—namely their natural division into guilds—they also claimed that Canada's spiritual and physical rebirth depended upon the country's re-Christianization. Another reason why the classocrats stressed the religious element of their revolution was intrinsically related to the nature of the social landscape in Canada at the time. Indeed, it would have been impossible for Bossy to claim a revolution based on ethnic superiority, not least as he was personally considered to be a minority or a foreigner (a 'new Canadian') due to his Ukrainian origins, with neither an Anglophone or Francophone accent.[138] The only elements that, in principle, united him and his close friends to the 'host community' in Canada were Christianity and their European roots. If his wish was to reform the nation in a way that it allowed him to obtain a new sense of recognition and belonging, then, his rhetoric had to focus upon those two elements. Christianity and European supremacy might legitimize Bossy playing a leading role in the process of national transformation. In doing so, previously discriminated white ethnic communities or 'in between' groups would undertake a process of uplifting at the expense of new 'others'—let alone Indigenous communities—who, in turn, would be excluded on the basis of racial and religious prejudice. Due to this, both fascism and corporatism had to be substantially adapted to the local circumstances as well as to the limitations of Bossy's own identity. His was, I argue, a translocal expression of fascism utilized for the application of a right-wing extremist form of Canadian multiculturalism.

This quixotic notion has been demonstrated through focus upon the establishment of a short-lived organization in Montreal, inspired by the fascist corporatist experiments in Europe—above all, Fascist Italy. That both local factors and identity were crucial in bringing about a form of fascism that was unprecedented is central to this article, even though the Classocracy League of Canada

138 Fitzgerald to Bossy, January 6, 1935, file Correspondence J.J. Fitzgerald, 1935–1937, vol. 3, MG30 C72, LAC. Here, Fitzgerald points at Bossy's accent at being the main obstacle for his and CLOC's success.

presented itself merely as a faith-based, new form of authoritarian government. Yet CLOC was unprecedented on account of appropriating the 'fascist minimum' in an entirely different way: it proposed national rebirth through the mixing of diverse ethnic groups of Christian and European descent, with a view to incorporate 'new Canadians' into a revised national fact.

Even though Walter J. Bossy and the CLOC were wholly unsuccessful, their story is relevant because it sheds light upon the many Canadian imaginaries that existed during the interwar period, often in the minds of those who felt they did not quite belong. By returning to this multiplicity of Canadas, we can begin the task of reassessing the processes by which historical possibilities were (re-)fashioned, and identities negotiated. On the other hand, the existence of the CLOC illuminates the nature of transatlantic fascism as a seductive phenomenon taking place with local actors who shaped it according to their needs—and the needs perceived in their countries. In this case, the temptation of fascism in Canada was largely constrained by the need to address the issue of inclusion. This owed much to local agency as a determinant of its form and appeal as a transnational interwar phenomenon. In sum, fascism was not simply exportable but rather locally informed. As this pertains to Canada, the Classocracy League of Canada was an expression of Canadian fascism, for Italian and other fascisms were as important to its Catholic proponents as the Canadian social, cultural, and economic conditions which they recognized as crucial in shaping a version of a reborn nation mirroring their own political aspirations.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Emeritus Professor Matthew Feldman for his comments on an earlier draft. I also thank Professors Roberto Perin, Marcel Martel, and Adrian Shubert for their thoughts on my broader study of far-right ideas in interwar Montreal.