

zioni del diritto pubblico del mondo moderno, è un fatto che qui si deve solo accennare.

Se poi si fosse inclini a chiedersi come mai quel ricorso alla statistica da parte degli apparati avvenne allora, e raramente in seguito, la risposta forse si può ritrovare in una pagina di Max Weber, in contraddizione apparente con la sua delineazione dell'apparato burocratico-statale dominato dall'impersonalità dei rapporti e dall'applicazione formale-razionale della legge. Scriveva Weber che lo «spirito» della burocrazia non era solo costituito dal formalismo, richiesto da tutti coloro che potevano vantare dignità di *status* all'interno dell'ordinamento, ma anche,

«dall'inclinazione dei funzionari ad un'esecuzione dei propri compiti d'ufficio in senso materialmente utilitaristico, al servizio del benessere gli amministrati. ... Questa tendenza alla razionalità materiale trova l'appoggio di tutti quegli amministrati che non appartengono allo strato – delineato al punto precedente – degli individui interessati ad 'assicurare' le possibilità di cui sono in possesso. La problematica in questione appartiene alla teoria della 'democrazia'»⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ M. WEBER, *Economia e società*, trad. it. a cura di P. Rossi, Milano 1974⁵, I, p. 220.

Quebec: a Nation at the Crossroad

Roberto Perin

It is likely that within a year Quebeckers will be called upon to decide by referendum whether they should form a sovereign state. In 1980 a similar vote was held and the independence option was defeated, but the question posed was ambiguous. It asked the electorate to authorize the provincial government to begin negotiations on sovereignty with Ottawa and presumed that another popular consultation would be held before Quebec could actually become sovereign. Rejecting the earlier policy of *étapisme*, the current leadership of the *Parti québécois* now intend to make the referendum question clear and straightforward. At present, however, public opinion is very divided on the issue of sovereignty and it remains to be seen whether in fact the *Parti québécois* can win this second referendum. Although few Quebeckers doubt that they comprise a national community, they are split over the question of whether their interests are best served within a loose Canadian federation or as a sovereign state. English-speaking Canadians, for their part, have generally rejected such claims to nationhood and have resisted attempts either to decentralize the Canadian state or to concede greater constitutional powers to Quebec. Ironically it may be this resistance that will determine Quebeckers to opt for sovereignty.

Contemporary liberal theorists of nationalism contend that nationality is largely an artificial mental construct¹. But Quebeckers' sense of distinctiveness was a natural outcome of an emigration from France limited both in number and time, of distance from the mother country, of rapid integration to the North American environment, and of the emergence of a relatively homogeneous colonial population. Most Quebeckers are descendants of the 8500 or so Frenchmen who made New France their

¹ H. KOHN, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History*, Princeton-New Jersey 1965; E. KEDOURIE, *Nationalism*, New York 1967; E. GELLNER, *Thought and Change*, London 1964, chap. 7.

home in the latter half of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. While many regions of France were represented in the new colony, the bulk of its settlers came from the northern and western parts. Within a short time variations in speech melded into a standard idiom, a process that was achieved much later and more laboriously in the mother country.

Some of the women and soldiers sent to the colony by Louis XIV were Huguenots. But they soon made the transition to Catholicism, especially since public worship was forbidden to Protestants. A tiny percentage of the colonists was not of French extraction. These Amerindians, Englishmen, Portuguese, Dutch, and Italians too were quickly absorbed². Almost everyone had had some fleeting connection with the fur trade, the colony's economic staple, whose dominion extended deep into the continent, as far south as the Gulf of Mexico and as far west as the Rockies. But a colonist's youthful fling with adventure gave way to a desire for stability and continuity that only agriculture could satisfy. As a result, eighty per cent of the colonial population was rural. New France was certainly not socially homogeneous. Real class cleavages existed, even in the countryside³. But such differences did not affect the colony's cultural homogeneity which was reinforced by the requirement that all adult males bear arms. The civilian militia, led by a Canadian officer corps, assured the defense of New France. Most of the parish clergy were born in the colony, as were members of the female and male religious communities, with the exception of the Sulpicians and the Jesuits. Even the last governor of New France was Canadian-born. In the eighteenth century, colonists referred to themselves as Canadians in their wish to distinguish themselves from the elite of administrators, upper clergy, large merchants, and top-ranking army officers who were perceived as metropolitans⁴.

This sense of difference was reinforced in the latter half of that century by three major events. The first was the defeat of France in the Seven Years War and the subsequent cession of New France to England. The second, a direct outcome of the first, was

² H. CHARBONNEAU et al., *Naissance d'une population. Les Français établis au Canada au XVIIIe siècle*, Montréal 1987; P. MOOGK, *Reluctant Exiles: Emigrants from France in Canada Before 1760*, in G. TULCHINSKY (ed), *Immigration in Canada. Historical Perspectives*, Toronto 1994.

³ L. DECHÈNE, *Habitants et marchands de Montréal au XVIIIe siècle*, Montréal 1974, pp. 374-402.

⁴ G. FRÉGAULT, *La civilisation de la Nouvelle France 1713-1744*, Montréal 1969, conclusion.

the American Revolution and the unsuccessful attempt by republican forces to capture Quebec. The third was the French Revolution. These events confirmed that although British subjects by virtue of conquest, Canadians were not culturally British; although Americans by virtue of geography and French by ancestry, they remained outside the revolutions that represented the fundamental experiences of Americanness and Frenchness⁵.

It was not that the ideas of liberty and equality left Canadians indifferent. Clerical and civil leaders deplored the spread of subversive ideologies and the insubordination of the people. But Canadians distrusted the American invaders who arrived in 1775, promising them religious freedom at the same time as they denounced the Quebec Act recently adopted by the British parliament as a papal plot. The French, for their part, offered their former colonists nothing more than noble words of incitement to insurrection in the 1770s and again in the 1790s⁶. This half century was the crucible in which a distinct Canadian identity was born.

Of the three events, the conquest of New France was undoubtedly the most portentous for Canadians. England's initial attempt to force the province of Quebec as it was now called into the British colonial mould provoked a vigorous response by different segments of the population. Petitions variously denounced the heavy restrictions placed on the colonial Catholic Church, the wholesale imposition of English law, and the discrimination practiced against Canadians in government, commerce, and the distribution of patronage. While Britain did not deviate from its long-term goal of assimilating the Canadians, troubles in the colonies to the south soon prompted concessions in matters of religion and law. These were enshrined in the Quebec Act that British officials clearly saw as a temporary measure to keep Quebec at least securely within the empire. In any event, the struggles initiated by Canadians after the Conquest reinforced their sense of belonging to a distinct community whose characteristics were the Catholic faith, the *coutume de Paris*, and the French language⁷. These are the elements identified by some theorists of na-

⁵ M. RIOUX, *Les Québécois*, Paris 1974, pp. 5-21.

⁶ M. TRUDEL, *La révolution américaine: pourquoi la France refuse le Canada*, Montréal 1976, chap. I and conclusion; M. WADE, *Quebec and the French Revolution of 1789: the Missions of Henry Mezière*, in J. BUMSTED (ed), *Canadian History Before Confederation*, Toronto 1979², pp. 228-47.

⁷ H. NEATBY, *Quebec: The Revolutionary Age 1760-1791*, Toronto 1966, chap. 9.

tionism as objective criteria defining the nation⁸.

Feelings of discrimination did not disappear after passage of the act. They remained alive particularly among Canadian merchants who called for a popularly elected assembly, but who were rapidly being marginalized by recently established British and American traders⁹. A certain prosperity that benefitted some segments of the population as well as the judicious appointment of a few Canadians to government offices, however, kept this discontent contained. Britain did eventually establish representative institutions in Quebec, not because of pressures coming from the colony, but because of its determination to have Canadians pay for their governmental administration. For it was only through popularly elected institutions that colonials could be taxed after the American Revolution. British officials intended the resulting Constitutional Act of 1791 to create a government properly balanced between the executive and legislative branches so as to avoid the worst excesses that had led to rebellion in the former American colonies. The power of the popularly elected assembly would be checked by the veto of a legislative council whose members would be nominated by the governor for life. The colony would thus enjoy the image and transcript of the British constitution¹⁰.

The new constitutional arrangement, however, had the effect of institutionalizing ethnic conflict in the colony. Elected by almost universal male suffrage, the Legislative Assembly very soon was dominated by the *Parti canadien* that expressed the aspirations of the Canadian people, whereas the Legislative Council became the tool of the resident British elite which the Colonial Office saw as the colony's natural leaders. The *Parti canadien's* platform was inspired by liberal principles. Its adherents fought for the independence of the judiciary, the supremacy of the elected branch of government, its right to control the colony's finances and to advise the executive. Against the sometimes arbitrary measures adopted by colonial administrators, they championed basic civil liberties, including freedom of speech, assembly, religion, and the press.

⁸ D. KITSIKIS, *Le nationalisme*, in «Études internationales», II, septembre 1971, pp. 347-370.

⁹ J.-P. WALLOT, *Un Québec qui bougeait*, Montréal 1973, pp. 253-318.

¹⁰ V.T. HARLOW, *The Founding of the Second British Empire, 1763-93*, II, London 1964, chap. 10; P. TOUSIGNANT, *Problématique pour une nouvelle approche de la constitution de 1791*, in «Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française», 27, 2, septembre 1973, pp. 181-234.

As in other parts of the Americas and Europe, liberalism complemented another rising ideology, nationalism, that found clear expression in the early nineteenth century in the colony now called Lower Canada. The distinction between the two ideologies was not clear-cut since the struggle for popular government and national self-determination often coincided. But as the crisis deepened in Lower Canada during the 1830s, some public figures opted more explicitly for liberalism. In any case, a nationalist ideology was enunciated in response to the oppressive and discriminatory policies of the governing British elite against French Canadians of all classes and their institutions¹¹.

Liberal theorists have downplayed the factor of oppression in the rise of nationalism¹². They have focused instead on the motives and political objectives of its promoters, the nationalist intelligentsia, depicting them as restless, reactionary, and rapacious, ready to manipulate popular discontent to their advantage. It is true that nationalism was promoted by the Canadian petty bourgeoisie who rallied to the cry: «Nos institutions, notre langue et nos lois». There is no doubt too that this group, while having a voice in government, were excluded from the benefits of office and that they would have stood most to gain from a change of regime. Yet theirs was not a nostalgic nationalism. While defending the prerogatives of the Catholic Church against Anglican pretensions, they advocated the advent of a secular society where education and the social services would be in the hands of the State. While opposing common schools, they favoured the latest techniques in popular education. While rejecting the English system of land tenure, they were open to reforms in the seigneurial system that would make land more available to farmers and seigneurial charges less onerous. They also promoted scientific agriculture, sought to encourage commerce and industry, as well as make justice more accessible to the public¹³. The petty bourgeoisie was clearly not disinterested, but they possessed a broad view of the needs of different social categories in the population.

Ethnic conflict led to insurrections in 1837 and again in 1838. The newly constituted *Parti patriote* was determined to wrest

¹¹ J.-P. WALLOT, *Un Québec qui bougeait*, cit.; G. PÂQUET-J.-P. WALLOT, *Patronage et pouvoir politique dans le Bas-Canada*, Montréal 1973, chap. 4.

¹² J.E.E.D. ACTON, *Essays on Freedom and Power*, Glencoe 1948, while recognizing national oppression in the Russian and German empires, was blind to it in Austria and Britain. Similarly Kedourie, *Nationalism*, affirms that there is no such thing as British or American nationalism.

¹³ H. TAFT MANNING, *The Revolt of French Canada, 1800-1835*, Toronto 1962.

power away from the Governor and his clique. Parallel military and judicial structures were set up before the outbreak of armed confrontation. Those who held government appointments were «encouraged» to give them up. Contraband and the manufacture of previously imported goods were encouraged in order to choke off the regime's revenues. A succession of mass rallies were organized to build popular support for political agitation. The objective was to achieve national self-determination and the end of autocratic rule¹⁴. The British were determined not to cede control of the St Lawrence which was their only access to the interior of the continent and their settler colony of Upper Canada¹⁵. They forcefully repressed the uprisings. They then united the two colonies; abolished the use of French as an official language; and deprived the French Canadians (as they were now known to distinguish them from their English-speaking fellow colonials) of their rightful representation in the new legislature. In the 1841 election, although the French Canadians constituted half of the population of the United Canadas, they held less than a quarter of the seats in the chamber. Within a few short years, however, this deliberate policy of assimilation was reversed. French Canadian politicians succeeded in making themselves indispensable to the administration of the colony¹⁶. In return for a share of power, they had to renounce their former opposition to the economic programme of the resident British bourgeoisie. They accepted in effect the structures that had made French Canadians economically inferior since the Conquest¹⁷.

With the crushing of the insurrections, liberal nationalism faced a dead-end. Britain firmly rejected the development of its North American colony along liberal-democratic lines. As well as consolidating the domination of the English-speaking economic and political elite, the Colonial Office rewarded the ecclesiastical authorities in Quebec for combatting the insurrections¹⁸. The

¹⁴ A. GREER, *The Patriots and the People. The Rebellion of 1837 in Rural Lower Canada*, Toronto 1993, chap. 8.

¹⁵ P. BURROUGHS, *The Canadian Crisis and British Colonial Policy, 1828-1841*, Toronto 1972, chap. 6.

¹⁶ J. MONET, *The Last Cannon Shot. A Study of French Canadian Nationalism, 1837-1850*, Toronto 1969.

¹⁷ J.-P. BERNARD, *Définition du libéralisme et de l'ultramontanisme comme idéologies*, in «Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française», 25, septembre 1971, pp. 244-246.

¹⁸ M. BRUNET, *L'Église catholique du Bas-Canada et le partage du pouvoir à l'heure d'une nouvelle donne, 1837-1854*, in J.-P. BERNARD (ed), *Les idéologies québécoises au 19^e siècle*, Montréal 1973, pp. 83-97.

constraints placed on the Catholic Church at the time of the Conquest were finally lifted. Britain was forcing French Canada into a conservative mould. In the spiritual vacuum that followed the defeat of the uprisings, a powerful religious revival took hold of French Canadians. Whereas before 1837, politics had channelled their collective will and expressed their identity; afterwards, it was religion that would do so. Over the next century, there would be a fiftyfold increase in the number of women and men in religious life. Ultramontane piety with its fervid and ostentatious devotions, processions, pilgrimages became an integral part of a unique publicly affirmed culture in North America¹⁹. Religion was the central component of a new French Canadian identity in which language assumed a subsidiary, but vital position, as indicated by the expression *La langue, gardienne de la foi*.

After the Union, the French Canadian identity faced new challenges that were perhaps more formidable than at the time of the Conquest. Despite the ease with which French Canadian politicians overcame their exclusion from public office in the 1840s, there is no doubt that the new economic and political structures posed a threat to the collective existence of French Canadians who were becoming a minority within the united colony as a result of large-scale immigration from the British Isles. But this period in Canada's history also coincided with industrialization and urbanization. An overwhelmingly rural people, French Canadians would be seeking their livelihood in ever greater numbers in the cities where the English-speaking elite dominated and the French Canadian culture lacked an institutional framework adapted to the new environment. At this point the Catholic Church played a crucial role. In league with politicians who successfully pressed for a *de facto* federation of the Canadas, the Church took complete control of French Canadian institutions of health, education, and social services in Quebec. The constitution of the new Dominion of Canada, adopted in 1867, made these areas exclusive fields of provincial jurisdiction, giving Quebec the formal guarantees of cultural autonomy that it had been seeking since the Union. Because of the Church's extensive financial and human resources, Quebec developed a network of institutional care that was perhaps the most developed in the country at the beginning of the twentieth century²⁰. At the same

¹⁹ Ph. SYLVAIN-N. VOISINE, *Réveil et consolidation. Tome 2, 1840-1898. Histoire du catholicisme québécois*, II, Montréal 1991.

²⁰ N. LAURIN-D. JUTEAU-L. DUCHESNE, *A la recherche d'un monde oublié. Les communautés religieuses de femmes au Québec de 1900 à 1970*, Montréal 1991, p. 183.

time, the Church actively promoted the establishment of economic and social organizations, such as credit and trade unions, farming cooperatives, and other professional associations. Because of the Church, the culture and institutions of Quebec were unique in English-speaking and Protestant North America.

French Canadian nationalism reflected these new realities. The goal of political sovereignty was now at most a distant dream evoked in Jules-Paul Tardivel's futuristic novel, *Pour la patrie*, published in 1895²¹. Nationalists were more often content to demand equality within Confederation. For them this meant autonomy for Quebec which would allow French Canadians to develop their culture freely in the only province where they comprised a solid majority. But it also implied some degree of autonomy for the French and/or Catholic communities outside Quebec who should enjoy much the same privileges as the English-speaking Protestants of their province²². This minority which accounted for less than a fifth of Quebec's population, but included Canada's powerful economic elite, had complete control of their health, social service, and educational institutions up to and including university. Their establishments were among the best endowed in the country. Nationalists realized that Catholics outside Quebec could never enjoy the same degree of cultural autonomy as did French Canadians in the province where Catholicism was an integral part of the legal, municipal, educational, and social service systems. At the very least, these communities could develop and expand by exerting control over their local institutions.

But the fact was that these minorities were not as privileged as the English-speaking Protestants of Quebec. In the Maritime provinces where they formed one-third of the population, Irish, Scots, Acadian, and Amerindian Catholics were ethnically and linguistically divided and occupied the lower end of the social scale. In Ontario, the minority was even more ethnically diverse and represented less than 20% of the province's population. Their influence in economic and political life was minimal. As for the Prairies, the French-speaking and Catholic Métis who had fought for economic and cultural rights in two insurrections led in 1869 and 1885 by their visionary leader Louis Riel were soon overwhelmed by immigrants from Ontario and Europe. At the

²¹ J.-P. TARDIVEL, *Pour la patrie. Roman du XXe siècle*, Montréal 1976.

²² R. PERIN, *Clerics and the Constitution: the Quebec Church and Minority Rights in Canada*, in «Canadian Catholic Historical Association, Historical Studies», 56, 1989, pp. 31-47.

turn of the century Prairie Catholics were the most culturally heterogeneous in all of Canada and had little more demographic, economic, and political significance than their coreligionists in Ontario²³. It was only by accepting the majority's language and values that Catholic minorities under the direction of Irish Canadian bishops eventually carved a place for themselves in Canadian public life.

But many nationalists believed that the destinies of these minorities and the French Canadians of Quebec would eventually merge. They dreamed of a future when French Canadians would «conquer» all of Quebec's existing territory and expand westward in a continuous chain of settlement along the Canadian Shield and across the Prairies to the Rocky Mountains, thus reinforcing scattered Catholic settlements²⁴. This expectation was rooted both in demographic reality since French Canadians had one of the highest birthrates in the Western world and in the deeply held belief in the special mission of French Canadians to bring spiritual values to a continent dominated by materialism and egoism. Nationalists did not seek to foist their model of society on anyone. In fact, they often insisted that their vision would in no way impinge upon other ethnic groups, most especially the English-speaking Protestants of Quebec. Unlike the contemporary Irish American episcopate whose own sense of mission made them impose dominant American values on ethnically varied Catholic communities²⁵, «the vocation of the French race in America» would be realized by a physical and spiritual *rayonnement*. The nationalists entertained boundless hopes for the future that were rooted in a keen sense of the past. Their history was dominated by the Church and divine providence. It stressed conformity and social harmony²⁶. It was a story of struggle against Amerindian enemies, American colonists to the south, British conquerors, and the forces of nature. It established the historical roots of French Canadians' vocation by illustrating the

²³ R. PERIN, *Rome in Canada: The Vatican and Canadian Affairs in the Late Victorian Age*, Toronto 1990, chap. 1.

²⁴ G. DUSSAULT, *Le curé Labelle. Messianisme, utopie et colonisation au Québec 1850-1900*, Montréal 1983; R. PAINCHAUD, *Un rêve français dans le peuplement de la Prairie*, Saint-Boniface 1987.

²⁵ J. HENNESEY, *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community of the United States*, Oxford 1981.

²⁶ F. DUMONT, *Idéologie et conscience historique dans la société canadienne française*, in C. GALARNEAU-E. LAVOIE (edd), *France et Canada français du XVIe au XXe siècles*, Québec 1966, pp. 269-290.

exploits of soldiers, merchants, and missionaries across an entire continent²⁷.

Nevertheless, nationalists had to come to terms with some bitter realities. One million French Canadians emigrated from Quebec in the century after the insurrections. Their destination, however, was not westward along the Canadian Shield, but south mostly to the factories of New England where they encountered economic and cultural oppression²⁸. The Irish American hierarchy was especially anxious to see them assimilate to the American way of life. Catholic minorities outside Quebec, for their part, hardly fared any better in the half century after Confederation. They saw their educational rights severely restricted. In all provinces except Ontario and Quebec, such rights lost whatever legal sanction they possessed and ultimately depended on the goodwill of a sometimes intolerant majority. Meanwhile French lost the status that it had enjoyed in public life and education outside Quebec²⁹. After the First World War, the growth of urbanization brought efforts to centralize provincial social services, which undermined the cultural cohesion of Catholic minorities throughout Canada.

In international affairs, nationalists deplored Canada's association with the mother country's imperialist exploits and objectives in the fifteen years prior to the First World War³⁰. When the Canadian government imposed conscription for military service in 1917, more than one French Canadian must have wondered what country this was that oppressed his language and religion and that forced him to fight in a war with which he and his compatriots could not identify. A second conscription crisis shook the country during the Second World War as the government-sponsored referendum of 1942 once again underlined the existence of two Canadas: French Canadians voted massively against

²⁷ S. GAGNON, *Le Québec et ses historiens de 1840 à 1920*, Québec 1978.

²⁸ B. RAMIREZ, *On the Move. French Canadian and Italian Migrants in the North Atlantic Economy, 1860-1914*, Toronto 1991; Y. FRENETTE, *La genèse d'une communauté canadienne-française en Nouvelle Angleterre: Lewiston, Maine, 1800-1880*, in «Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers», 1989, pp. 75-99.

²⁹ P. CRUNICAN, *Priests and Politicians. Manitoba Schools and the Election of 1896*, Toronto 1974; M. LUPUL, *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question. A Study in Church-State Relations in Western Canada 1875-1905*, Toronto 1974; R. CHOQUETTE, *Language and Religion. A History of English-French Conflict in Ontario*, Ottawa 1975.

³⁰ J. LEVITT, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf. The Social Program of the Nationalists of Québec, 1900-1914*, Ottawa 1972, chap. 1.

conscription and English Canadians just as massively for it. The hopes of equality and autonomy entertained by French Canadian nationalists lay in tatters.

The optimism of the Confederation period gave way to a profound pessimism in the wake of the First World War. Nationalists believed that the cohesion of French Canadians and of Catholic communities outside Quebec was under attack. Even in Quebec the domination of the economy by English speakers and the first incursions of consumer culture posed serious challenges to the existence of French as a public language. Nationalists urged women, as principal consumers, to play a crucial role by demanding service in their language in department stores, banks, and large corporations. They also castigated the federal civil service for failing to hire and promote qualified French Canadians, thus further limiting the use of French not only in Ottawa, but Quebec. In addition, campaigns were launched to promote the use of «proper French» against the increasing encroachment of anglicisms and americanisms in popular speech³¹.

While nationalists continued to regard political sovereignty as an object of speculation, the province of Quebec increasingly came to be seen as the only effective instrument for protecting French Canadian interests. Past and present French Canadian politicians in Ottawa were severely criticized for failing to defend the interests of their compatriots and of the country's minorities. Already at the turn of the century a political economist, Errol Bouchette, had argued that the problem of French Canadians' economic inferiority could only find an effective solution inside Quebec. Using Prussia as his model, he called on the province to intervene in the economy in order to promote French Canadians' economic interests. Nationalists pursued this line, hoping somehow to convince Quebec governments, which did not share their hostility to foreign investment, to use their exclusive control over natural resources to promote French Canadian entrepreneurship³². At the same time, they opposed the federal government's growing incursions in social policy, urging the province to adopt its own social legislation. Ottawa's initiatives had been prompted by a desire to regulate the effects of industrial capitalism, especially the terrible social dislocation caused by the Depression. But such measures also undermined the autonomy that Quebec

³¹ S. MANN TROFIMENKOFF, *Action Française. French Canadian Nationalism in the Twenties*, Toronto 1975.

³² Y. ROBY, *Les Québécois et les investissements américains (1918-1929)*, Québec 1976.

had enjoyed since the Union years. That autonomy was not simply, nor even primarily, a political-constitutional phenomenon. It derived from the control exercised by the Church over health, educational, and social service institutions, which ensured the relatively free development of French Canadian culture. For such institutions were not dependent on governments that had accorded greater importance to the interests of the Protestant majority, as well as American and English Canadian capital.

Ottawa's encroachments in social policy became a veritable invasion during and after the Second World War. Its desire to set «national norms» threatened to place French Canadian institutions in the hands of English-speaking politicians and civil servants who had never shown any sensitivity to Quebec's distinctiveness. As a result, the age-old issue of French Canadians' collective survival within a short time took on a constitutional dimension. After the war, nationalists successfully pressured the Quebec government to set up a commission of inquiry to respond to Ottawa's ambitions to create a highly centralized state. Reporting in 1956, the Royal Commission on Constitutional Problems (Tremblay Commission) affirmed that Canada was a bicultural country, possessing both a French Catholic and English Protestant culture. Since the first found its fullest expression in Quebec, it followed that the national government of French Canadians was in Quebec City. English Canadians whose culture was dominant everywhere else had their national government in Ottawa. In this perspective, the commission maintained that Quebec had to have fiscal autonomy, as well as enhanced powers in the areas of economic and labour policy, social welfare and culture in order to protect and expand its particular identity. The position laid down in this report became the constitutional agenda of successive Quebec governments in the 1960s and 1970s³³.

Nationalism began to have a powerful impact on Quebec public life in the period of political renewal known as the Quiet Revolution that began in 1960. This was a time when Quebec's traditional institutions were secularized, coming directly under State control. The province's French character was promoted. The government attempted to mitigate the economic inferiority of French Canadians by intervening in the economy and creating managerial jobs in the public sector. Strong demands were formulated for constitutional autonomy in such areas as social policy,

³³ W. COLEMAN, *The Independence Movement in Quebec 1945-1980*, Toronto 1984, chap. 3.

foreign affairs, immigration, and taxation³⁴.

The period also witnessed the flowering of a new national identity. Influenced by the literature of decolonization, especially the writings of Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Jacques Berque, and Aimé Césaire, intellectuals came to see Quebec as a colonized society and attempted to free themselves and their compatriots from an identity imposed by the colonizer. They rejected the designation «French Canadian», a wretched symbol of the psychological dualism inherited at the Conquest. For they were neither French, nor (English)Canadian. Instead they coined the term «Québécois» which both emphasized the territorial homeland of the French Canadians and reflected the contemporary social reality of Quebec which was attracting a new wave of mass migration from Europe and elsewhere³⁵. The word was intended to embrace everyone, irrespective of origin, religion, or race living in Quebec and identifying with the essential element of its culture, the French language. By contrast, the expression «French Canadian» had for too long been associated with people of a common ancestry and religion. At first, only a few poets and intellectuals who wished to make a political statement called themselves Québécois. But by the 1970s the term was commonly accepted, especially by generations born after the war.

For the first time since the insurrections, political parties emerged on both the left and the right that called for outright independence³⁶. Although these early groups had little electoral support, their influence on public discourse was far-reaching because it coincided with the province's challenge to Ottawa's constitutional hegemony. By the mid-1960s, however, Quebec was encountering resistance to its attempts to achieve decentralization and recognition of the two nations thesis. This prompted a conservative Quebec premier to launch the slogan *Égalité ou indépendance*, which was a measure of the power of the independentist message. A short time later, the *Parti québécois*, a social democratic formation that attempted to rally all independentist opinion, was born. It advocated political sovereignty for Quebec together with an economic association with the rest of Canada. The party distanced itself from earlier groups not only on the

³⁴ K. McROBERTS, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, Toronto 1988, chap. 5.

³⁵ P. CHAMBERLAND, *De la damnation à la liberté*, in «Parti pris», *Les québécois*, Préface de J. Berque, Paris 1967, pp. 75-113.

³⁶ K. McROBERTS, *Quebec*, cit., is an excellent overview of events in Quebec from the turbulent 1960s to the present.

question of independence, but also on minority rights by advocating respect for the historic status of the English-speaking population of Quebec. In its first electoral contest in 1970, the *Parti québécois* made a major breakthrough by capturing over 20% of the popular vote.

In addition to the constitutional question, nationalists worried about the future viability of their culture in North America. In the 1960s the birth rate among French Canadians began to decline drastically to the point that in the mid-1970s it was below the level of population replacement. As well, post-war immigrants overwhelmingly chose to have their children educated in English schools with the result that the ranks of Quebec's minority were swelling. Demographers, who had already noted a slight slippage in linguistic retention among French Canadians since the war, were predicting that if trends were maintained French Canadians would eventually become a minority in their own territory. This problem led some local school officials to try to impose French as the language of instruction in the largely Italian immigrant suburb of St-Léonard in Montreal, provoking a more or less violent confrontation between the two contending parties. A few years later a government-appointed commission of inquiry revealed the extent to which English remained the effective language of work in Quebec, which explained why immigrants were so keen to choose English-language education.

Meanwhile throughout the 1960s left-wing nationalists pursued their analysis of Quebec as a colonized society, especially in the pages of a new periodical *Parti pris* dedicated to socialism, secularism, and nationalism. A member of this group, Pierre Vallières, published his international best-seller *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* in 1968, which was partly autobiographical and partly a call to arms. Statistics from the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, created by Ottawa in 1963, revealed the magnitude of French Canadians' economic inferiority. Intellectuals began to refer to French Canadians as an ethnic class whose liberation lay in socialist revolution. They saw the growing militancy of the Quebec labour movement and the recent outbreak of sporadic acts of violence as signs of Quebecers' coming appointment with destiny. In October 1970 a small group of unemployed young men, under the banner of the *Front de libération du Québec*, kidnapped the British trade commissioner as well as the Quebec labour minister who was later assassinated. They issued a widely distributed manifesto that evoked public sympathy because its vivid depiction of economic oppression.

The October Crisis finally allowed Ottawa, which throughout

the 1960s was constantly having to react to Quebec's social, political, and intellectual agenda, to take the initiative. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, a long-time anti-nationalist, took decisive action against the sovereignty movement, already the object of surveillance by Canada's security services. He invoked the War Measures Act which suspended civil liberties throughout Canada, thus allowing 400 *Parti québécois* sympathizers to be arrested without being charged. But Trudeau's was a carrot and stick approach. He realized that intimidation alone could not win the hearts of the Quebecers. The prime minister fostered the use of French in the federal civil service, in government offices located in regions with significant French-speaking communities, and in state-run corporations. He promoted French Canadians to key positions in government and the bureaucracy. Contrary to the Tremblay Commission of 1956, he wanted French Canadians to regard Ottawa as their government and all of Canada as their homeland. As a result, he made no significant concessions regarding the devolution of constitutional power to Quebec.

But Trudeau's policies while they appealed to the Quebecers did not deal with the fundamental question of their survival as a distinct group in North America. In 1976 the *Parti québécois* under the leadership of René Lévesque was brought to power following the defeat of a government rife with corruption. In response to nationalist concerns about the linguistic question, the new government introduced the Charter of the French Language which made French the only official language of Quebec. The Charter took a narrower approach in defining the rights of the English-speaking minority than in the past. For example all public signs had to be in French only, except for those relating to public safety. The legislation, however, did not significantly alter the status of English-speaking Quebecers who continued to enjoy an enviable position among Canada's minorities. In any event, the Supreme Court of Canada eventually struck down portions of the Language Charter, including the controversial sign law.

The Quebec government also dealt with the constitutional question by calling a referendum on sovereignty in 1980. Prime Minister Trudeau strongly intervened in the campaign, promising the Quebecers a thorough constitutional reform if they rejected the *Parti québécois's* call. His appeal was undoubtedly decisive in defeating the referendum proposal. What exactly the prime minister meant by this reform became obvious in 1982 when, against the Quebec government's wishes, Ottawa and the

nine other provinces agreed to place the constitution which had remained an item of British legislation entirely under Canadian control. Quebec opposed this move because the formula for amending the constitution did not explicitly recognize its right of veto. This meant that if a fairly broad consensus was achieved in English-speaking Canada, as had been done in 1982, Quebec's autonomy could be undermined by constitutional amendment without its approval. When Quebec sought legal redress against this initiative, the Supreme Court of Canada stated that, although Quebec had enjoyed a customary veto, this prerogative was not recognized in law. The court thus confirmed the legality of Trudeau's actions in 1982.

The prime minister soon announced his resignation, having achieved his major objectives. His party was then defeated by the Conservatives in the following general election. The *Parti québécois*, for its part was badly split on the issue of whether to continue to fight for sovereignty or seek some kind of accommodation with the new government which included strong Quebec nationalists in its ranks. It was thought that such an understanding should recognize some of Quebec's key constitutional concerns. Lévesque led a faction who supported dialogue with Ottawa, while the unconditional proponents of sovereignty, directed by Jacques Parizeau, quit the party. Two attempts were made to resolve the constitutional dilemma, in 1987 and again in 1992. Both sought to recognize Quebec's minimal constitutional demands and both failed: the first ran into opposition in two provincial legislatures, as well as among certain segments of the Canadian population; the second was decisively rejected, even by the Quebec electorate, in a Canadian referendum. Thirty five years of constitutional wrangling have produced stalemate. Quebec's constitutional status is weaker than it has ever been in the past. English-speaking Canadians, exasperated with the demands of the «spoiled brat of Confederation», have resisted both a general decentralization of constitutional authority or the devolution of power to Quebec alone. In the face of this resistance, a revived *Parti québécois* under the leadership of Jacques Parizeau has just come to power, determined to seek independence for Quebec. At this point, it really seems as if compromise is out of the question.

The history of Quebec is not a history of its nationalism. Particularly during the period from the Union to the Quiet Revolution, nationalism had little impact on public life apart from the moments of crisis that punctuated relations between French and English speakers in Canada, such as the hanging of Louis Riel in

1885 and the issue of conscription in 1917 and 1942. Still, the nationalists of that period established the economic, cultural, constitutional, and social foundations for a movement that came into its own during the Quiet Revolution.

Liberal critics of nationalism have emphasized its fundamentally totalitarian and xenophobic nature³⁷. There were certainly nationalist thinkers, especially but not only in the Depression years, who displayed such qualities. Antisemitism even found expression in mainstream organs of nationalist thought in this era. But such tendencies never became the prime focus of the movement. On the whole, nationalists advocated respect for minority rights in Quebec, seeing the treatment of English-speaking Protestants as the prototype for the status of minorities throughout Canada. Nationalists were certainly vocal critics of their members of Parliament throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Some commentators have interpreted such comments as a condemnation of liberal-democratic institutions *tout court*. Once again, however, one would be hard-pressed to find a sustained and consistent critique of such institutions. Lionel Groulx, the cleric who was the undisputed nationalist leader in the inter-war years, maintained that people rather than institutions needed to be changed. As a result, he spent the better part of his life trying to bring about a mental and spiritual transformation of his people. It is true that in the thirties he declared himself to be an admirer of authoritarian leaders of European Catholic countries; but he did so out of ignorance of international affairs, essentially seeing these men as symbols of decisive action.

Similar comments have been made about the nationalism that emerged during the Quiet Revolution. Some immigrant groups have certainly felt themselves targeted since the 1960s as the Quebec government abandoned its traditional policy of communal autonomy, instituted to accommodate the English-speaking Protestant minority, in favour of a more proactive approach to the integration of newcomers into mainstream society. They have not easily forgotten the confrontation at St-Léonard. Incidents of racism have occurred in Quebec against visible minorities who have been immigrating in greater numbers to Canada since 1967. There have also been tensions between Quebeckers and certain

³⁷ Apart from the sources already cited, see P.E. TRUDEAU (ed), *La grève de l'amiante*, Montréal 1956, chap. 1; E. DELISLE, *The Traitor and the Jew: Anti-Semitism and the Delirium of Extreme Right-Wing Nationalism in French Canada from 1929-1939*, Toronto 1993.

Amerindian communities, especially at Oka in 1991. These occurrences, while deplorable, do not set Quebec apart from the rest of Canada, which has experienced similar incidents. The leaders and the discourse of nationalism have recognized the pluralistic nature of Quebec society and have accommodated to it. Political leaders, such as Jean-Marie LePen, and xenophobic factions, such as Germany's Republican Party, are simply non-existent in Quebec.

Nationalism arose in Quebec as a legitimate reaction to the chauvinism of a British ruling elite who imposed their economic, social, and political dominion after the Conquest. It sought civil liberties, equal access to the privileges of citizenship, and eventually self-determination. After the Union, nationalism reacted against attempts to place French Canadians in a situation of inferiority that was demographic, economic, social, political, and cultural. The dream of equality and autonomy to which it gave rise was sustained by a messianic vision that sprang from demographic reality and a particular interpretation of the past. After the Second World War, this nationalism sought to counter Ottawa's attempts at subverting the traditional autonomy that Quebec had enjoyed, as well as to expand the bounds of that autonomy. Throughout its history, this nationalism has been a defensive one in marked contrast to English Canadian nationalism that was often chauvinistic. Whatever the outcome of the referendum on sovereignty, the nationalism that has played such an important role in Quebec's history will continue to be at the heart of Quebecers' collective experience.

Il luogo chiuso della sicurezza*

Roberto Escobar

«E voi, uomini nati a vivere in tenebre, simili alle foglie, misere genti impastate di fango, ombre vane, effimere creature senz'ali, infelici mortali simili a sogni ...»¹

«... l'uomo è più malato, più insicuro, più mutevole, più indeterminato di qualsiasi altro animale, non v'è dubbio – è l'animale malato ...»²

Protanthropos: l'artificio

C'è un'immagine greca dell'uomo dei primordi che è l'antipodo delle «sognanti idee»³ relative all'età dell'oro e alla convivenza felice tra mortali e dèi. La condizione di questi uomini arcaici, scrive Károly Kerényi, è riprovevolmente carente e «richiede un superamento, come uno stato non-ancora-perfetto»⁴. Il Prometeo di Eschilo – incatenato da Efesto, per ordine di Kratos (Dionio), alla roccia dell'*axis mundi*⁵ – così descrive quelle «creature puerili» dei primordi:

* Sviluppo qui alcuni temi emersi in occasione della presentazione di *Il principato democratico. Per una teoria realistica della democrazia* di Danilo Zolo presso il Dipartimento di Politica, Istituzioni, Storia dell'Università di Bologna, nell'ambito del Corso Avanzato di Storia delle Dottrine politiche (5 maggio 1994). Dei numerosi spunti offerti prima dagli interventi e poi dalla discussione, privilegio la questione di una antropologia *realistica*, di una definizione 'non metafisica' dell'uomo, e del significato di questa antropologia in rapporto alle nozioni di istituzione e spazio politico. Tale questione, a mio parere, percorre tutto *Il principato democratico*, talora esplicitamente, con riferimento soprattutto all'antropologia filosofica di Arnold Gehlen, e talora implicitamente, sempre però in maniera decisiva.

¹ ARISTOFANE, *Gli uccelli*, in ARISTOFANE, *Le commedie*, a cura di R. CANTARELLA, Milano 1956, p. 121.

² F. NIETZSCHE, *Genealogia della morale*, in F. NIETZSCHE, *Opere*, a cura di G. COLLI e M. MONTINARI, VI, tomo II, Milano 1968, p. 325.

³ K. KERÉNYI, *Miti e misteri*, Torino 1979, p. 369.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 389.

⁵ J. KOTT, *Mangiare dio*, Milano 1977, pp. 35 ss.