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(1984)

"L'identité des Québécois francophones: perspectives théoriques et tendances / The Identity of Francophone Quebecers: Theoretical Perspectives and Trends"

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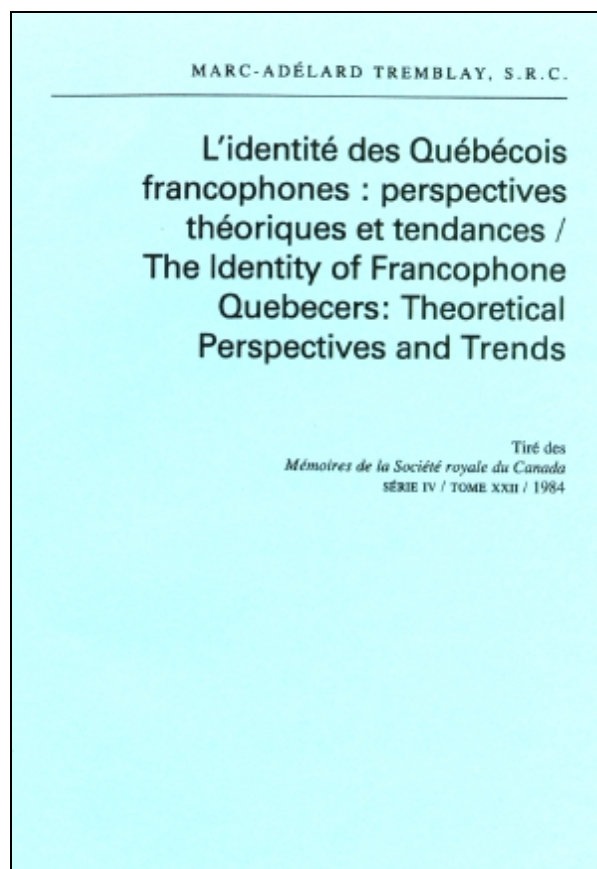Édition électronique réalisée avec le traitement de textes Microsoft Word 2004 pour Macintosh.

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I. Identité culturelle
et moteur de changement [1]

Il existe une relation consubstantielle entre l'identité ethnique et le développement national en ce sens que la vitalité d'un peuple est liée à la vigueur des sentiments d'appartenance de ses membres. L'identité culturelle est une notion complexe regroupant trois éléments indissociables : (a) l'image collective de soi ; (b) l'ensemble des institutions qui encadrent le mode de vie d'une ethnie toute entière ; et (c) les différents projets qu'entretiennent les membres de l'ethnie. Ainsi, le progrès d'une nation peut être freiné ou accéléré par une myriade de

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[1] Cette présentation sur l'identité culturelle s'inspire principalement de l'ouvrage que nous avons publié sur le sujet *(L'identité québécoise en péril)* au mois de mai 1983. Mais elle intègre également les résultats des observations et des analyses qui ont ponctué nos recherches sur le même sujet durant l'année suivante. Celles-ci ont d'ailleurs fait l'objet, soit de présentations orales à l'occasion de colloques ou d'articles qui mettent en relief l'un ou l'autre des aspects particuliers englobés dans la perspective d'ensemble apparaissant ici. Je réfère, en particulier, à « La société québécoise », une entrée qui doit paraître en 1985 dans *The New* Canadian *Encyclopedia,* ainsi qu'au texte sur la « Crise d'identité et développement du Québec français », dans Actes du Colloque sur le thème de Cultures et développement (sous la direction d'Andreas *Buss), Revue de l'Université Ste Anne,* 1983 : 1-11. À ces textes s'ajoutent deux communications présentées à l'University of Western Ontario en janvier 1984, soit : « Ethnic Identity in French Quebec and the Crises of the Nation-State in Historical Context » et « Les enjeux de la souveraineté politique, les stratégies de l'État-Nation et la question nationale ».

conditions socio-culturelles particulièrement significatives, soit pour affaiblir ou renforcer tant les principes de l'identité ethnique que le genre de vie qui les incarne.

Conçue de cette manière, l'identité culturelle représente un puissant moteur d'évolution de toute communauté ethnique dans le sens de ses intérêts propres et de ses orientations collectives spécifiques. Cette problématique se dissocie des conceptualisations de quelques spécialistes de l'ethnicité pour qui les structures politiques, les paramètres économiques ainsi que les rapports de force représentent les enjeux ethniques majeurs sur lesquels se greffe l'identité d'un peuple et se façonne son destin. Il est indéniable, par ailleurs, que le statut politique, la position de classe et l'autonomie culturelle d'une ethnie sont des conditions qui influencent directement la nature de l'identité culturelle. Je ne sous-estime pas l'impact de ces dynamismes sociaux. Je désire les replacer dans des ensembles plus vastes dans le but de mieux définir leur position relative et dans celui de reconstituer, avec le plus de justesse possible, l'histoire de leurs interrelations. Un autre fait est percutant pour mon propos : l'identité ethnique constitue de plus en plus un objet d'interventions systématiques soit des états nationaux ou d'organismes à vocation ethnique.

Dans le contexte d'une intervention étatique, la notion de développement culturel soulève plusieurs interrogations. À l'ère du « village planétaire », bon nombre de techniciens oeuvrant dans le cadre de projets de changement planifié ont tendance à uniformiser le progrès et à le représenter dans des termes identiques pour toutes les ethnies. Cette représentation apprécie la qualité du progrès à l'aune de critères ethnocentriques occidentaux tels que l'avancement technique, le produit national brut, le revenu per capita, le taux de chômage désaisonnalisé, l'endettement national, l'analphabétisme, l'espérance de vie, le taux de mortalité et ainsi du reste. C'est une vision de la réalité qui nie, à toutes fins utiles, la vocation pluraliste du progrès et la nécessité de sa culturalisation. En principe, à tout le moins, toute ethnie doit elle-même concevoir ses propres lignes de développement et doit inventer des projets collectifs qui respectent ses visions du monde et qui permettent la réalisation d'aspirations partagées.

L'acculturation, la confusion culturelle et la déculturation sont autant de processus sociaux qui ne peuvent servir de terrau à la créativité et à la réalisation de projets de société. Au Québec d'expression française, il existe une crise profonde de l'identité culturelle qui met en péril le progrès de tout un peuple. J'entends, aujourd'hui, documenter une hypothèse de travail qui pourrait s'énoncer ainsi : la maîtrise, par les francophones, de cette situation critique dépend d'une prise de conscience de la situation vécue, d'une vision consensuelle de l'avenir et d'une concertation des efforts arrimés à des objectifs d'épanouissement culturel. J'illustrerai comment cette prise de conscience peut être réalisée et comment cette vision consensuelle de l'avenir peut être recherchée, mettant de côté, dans le cadre de cet exposé, la praxis de l'intervention. Je reconstitue cette crise de l'identité ethnique en définissant, d'abord, le concept d'identité culturelle, en mettant en relief, ensuite, divers éclairages théoriques d'arrière-plan pour en représenter la complexité, en identifiant, par après, ses principales manifestations et en proposant, en dernier lieu, un type de cheminement susceptible de susciter à tout le moins des prises de conscience, sinon des visions convergentes de l'avenir de la francophonie québécoise.

II. The components of cultural identity

As I have explained, the cultural identity of an ethnic group refers back to collective self-image, to the kinds of socio-cultural institutions established to ensure the functional adaptation of individuals to the natural environment, to the collective representations of its fundamental values and basic customs, and to the ways in which it projects itself into the future. It is a fact that these perceptions, views, and understandings are shared by a large segment of that ethnic group which creates a principle of identification, a sense of belonging, and, in the end, diverse forms of solidarity and interdependence. In ethnological terms, these various social realities are the very elements of culture which constitute the 'ethnic we' as different from all others.

Can the cultural identity of the Quebec francophones ever be defined without reference to Quebec's history? Any historical analysis requires a baseline, that is, a precise historical moment that would allow us to view, as in stereoscopic film, 0 the culture patterns of an ethnic group at a given moment and to follow its evolution through time. The year 1880 was chosen to be the starting-point against which to measure later developments. The reasons for such a choice are striking. At that time, the 'national values' of the Québécois and their social institutions were so well defined that they constituted a specific ethnic profile on the North American continent that would remain relatively unchanged until the beginning of the Second World War. Since then, many fundamental changes have been recorded in the systems of thought and in the ways of life of the members of that ethnic group. Therefore, it is necessary to track them down to their origin and to follow their transformations up to the present. The building up of that historical fresco will rest upon a span of a century in time, thus allowing me to separate the purely accidental events from trends which have acquired over time a degree of permanency, some level of depth. I am aware that the temporal proximity of the immediate past will impose some epistemological constraints that may dwarf somewhat the analytical framework. As for earlier years, the retrospective horizon is wide enough to provide me with great freedom of movement with respect to range, focus, and level of analysis.

III. Theoretical perspectives on the object

I. A Multifactorial Analysis

The scientific examination of a complex phenomenon such as cultural identity requires the use of an interdisciplinary approach, within which findings and conceptual models of many 'human sciences' (economics, ethnology, history, psychology, political science, sermology, and sociology) serve as foundations and instrumentations in capturing and understanding that social reality.

Although such a perspective produces novel and suggestive viewpoints, the latter have relative weight as explanatory schemes since they are being advanced by a lone observer. Such an observer is incapable, indeed, of building an exhaustive ethnic compendium on the Québécois culture. That alone represents a monumental task. Moreover, for comparative purposes, that task would have to be accompanied by similar ones on each ethnic community living on the Quebec territory. This intercultural parallelism is the more fundamental since one of these ethnic communities, the Anglo-Saxon, because of its numerically dominant status in North America, constitutes a prime force within the wider dynamisms of change that push the Quebec society towards greater uniformity with the rest of the North American continent. What are, then, the various theoretical frameworks that must be used for the analysis of the crumbling of the Québécois identity?

2. A Systemic Perspective

This theoretical orientation rests upon the concept of system, that is, a large number of elements being structured and constituting an organic whole. Each of the constituent parts has with all the others a wide range of interrelationships that are more or less stable. One who might wish to study the true nature of cultural identity would have to proceed from that standpoint to identifying its main constituent parts : collective self-image, ways of life, and collective aspirations. To grasp its evolution through time would further require the tracking down of the kinds of interconnections that are at work between the identity dimensions, the dynamisms that transform them (industrialization, urbanization, culture contacts, the mass media, new ideologies, technological transfer, social revolutions), the social changes that they engender, and the impact that the latter have on ethnic identity. Such a theoretical perspective underscores the whole rather than a part, ascribes changes in the system not to a single but to multiple causes, prescribes that conditions which are at the onset of transformations be attributable at times to external factors and at other times to endogenous ones, and confers social actors, who internalize and vivify the system in a process of change, a central spot in the explicatory model. This

theoretical stance is the more justifiable since it is through social actors' perceptions, motivations, emotions, ideal expectations, and ways of living that institutional structures acquire their social properties and their existence.

3. A Longitudinal Study

The contemporary social context can only be properly understood when one refers to the past. This imperative represents a prime constraint since one has to determine, so to speak, the status and function of cultural identity in the birth and maintenance of the culture patterns of a whole ethnic group. The survival of the Quebec francophones on American soil, a glorifying adventure in terms of the nationalist discourse, can be reconstructed by directing our field-glass on its deeply rooted beginnings, on the multiple events and situations that shaped its cultural particularisms, and on the real and symbolic representations that the francophones have developed towards these roots and patterns. More than ever do we know in 1984 that the survival of the ethnic group cannot get its inspiration from past experiences Or follow a predetermined trajectory, Revolutionary changes of the last decade make it mandatory to scrutinize the new forces at work that nourish emerging collective representations and world-view.

The selection of a century, as the time span considered, was imperative. For it is towards the middle of the nineteenth century that the Québécois cultural identity emerged clearly. Beyond their regional identities, the French-speaking in Quebec became then aware that they formed a specific culture, having its own traditions, institutions, and aspirations tied to a providential mandate in America. At the same time they recognized that they were weaker, economically speaking, than the anglophones (the anglophone community was composed of diverse ethnic groups which shared cultural orientations and used the English language as a vehicle of communication) whose dominant political and economic statuses stemmed from their intimate participation in the North American civilization. The Québécois felt besieged. Their survival strategy rested upon two basic manoeuvres : the with-

drawal of the ethnic group from the Anglo-Saxon space in order to minimize the impact of the anglophones' influence, and the quasi-unconditional adherence to the normative principles ensuring the integral maintenance of French cultural traditions.

For a while that conservative ideology developed successfully because the main ethnic institutions remained powerful and traditional culture patterns were operational until the beginning of the Second World War. That conflict, as I have documented in a recent book [2], erased the ethnic frontiers of French Quebec by pushing the francophones into participating in wider economic and social networks and was at the onset of a generalized process, insidious in so many ways, of north-americanization. From that time on, in a few years, French Quebec became an industrial and urban country reproducing American models.

The emergence, at the end of the armed conflict, of a national party (L'Union Nationale) concerned with the restoration of the old order and with the revitalization of French ethnic institutions (the church, the parochial school, the parish, the family) delayed the modernization of Quebec institutions. In return, the Quiet Revolution initiated by the Thunder team of the liberal Jean Lesage, the great confrontations of the late sixties, and the election, in November 1976, of the Parti Québécois aiming at the complete independence of Quebec represent the kinds of pertinent landmarks on which the evolution of the Québécois identity has been reconstructed.

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[2] *L'identité québécoise en* péril (Québec : Les Éditions St-Yves Inc., 1983). [Live disponible, en texte intégral, dans Les Classiques des sciences sociales. JMT.]

4. A Dynamic Reconstruction

A dynamic perspective is complementary to the preceding one. How can that wide historical fresco, related to the evolution of the Québécois identity, be rebuilt without pinpointing the main stages, without revealing the underlying dynamisms at the onset of these transformations, without evaluating the breadth and the tempo of these changes and without foreseeing outcomes? It is the very nature of a dynamic analysis. Even though I do not wish to draw here the Québécois profile, allow me to single out the two types of pressures that act on Québécois culture to modify identity principles, to change structures of social belonginess, to destroy ties of interdependence and solidarity, and to alter future projects, including that of political secession.

The endogenous dynamisms of change have transformed the nationalist ideology and ethnic value systems and have brought about a whole set of alterations in the structure and functions of the most fundamental ethnic institutions. Among the latter is the irreversible evolution of the status of the state towards that of a welfare-state and, eventually, of a nation-state. Behavioural patterns of the francophones reflect accurately these infrastructural changes.

External factors are varied and numerous. Some stem from the diffusion of universal ('occidental' might be a more appropriate term here) culture patterns, whereas others are the result of the overwhelming pressure of the American cultural imperialism. The American culture patterns have acquired a special strength at the very time when ethnic institutions are in the process of disintegration and when patterns of confrontation, heterogeneity, and contradiction cohabit with the value subsystems still operating. This cultural disorganization context favours ambiguity in self-image, confusion in customary ways of living, and incapacity to invent ethnic projects, all of which can be equated with anomie and social alienation.

With the advent of the nation-state, the 'National question' came to the fore and acquired a very special spot within the Québécois cultural universe. Through this process, the state was instrumental and successful in allowing an almost complete transfer of the identity principles from ethnic institutions to the nation-state. However, recent disenchantments against the nation-state, which resulted from the adoption of unpopular legislative and administrative measures in the public and para-public sector by partisan PQ supporters, are building up, beyond a certain identity vacuum, a social climate that allows, much more easily than in the past, the penetration of Anglo-Saxon values and the quasi-unconditional acceptance of their premises. These new structural situations and life experiences imperceptibly frame the texture of new identifications and solidarities.

5. A Phenomenological Discourse on cultural.

The phenomenological viewpoint is essential to grasp a discourse identity. For it is the descriptive and analytical study of phenomena as they manifest themselves and evolve through time and space. As objects of culture, these manifestations relate as much to the institutional structures that have some degree of permanency as to the ways by which they are internalized and acted out by the totality of individuals regulated by these social institutions. These facts are the result of normative patterns that frame individual and collective behaviour. They reflect perceptions, understandings, and expectations that are analogous, if not identical, on the part of members of the ethnic group. They are actions that are invested with affect and emotions in daily life and carry with them symbolic meanings. The phenomenological approach allows one to compare structures and life-styles, on the one hand, and value systems and individual and collective behaviour, on the other. It applies particularly well to the study of the various contexts of cultural identity as a total pattern, inasmuch as it integrates cognitive principles and affective states, normative prescriptions and real behaviour, traditional institutions and emerging new structures.

Moreover, since the continental barriers have broken down, it has become essential to trace back the identification poles of members of an ethnic group quite as much within its ethnic frontier as within a wider cultural universe. However, within such a framework, it is necessary to give relative weight to values and behaviour since they do not carry the same importance for individuals and since individual life paths follow irregular trajectories.

6. A Strategy to Build Ethnic Self-consciousness

The theoretical perspective used is factual and oriented towards building ethnic consciousness. Carrying out an analysis on the Québécois ethnicity and bringing out some new facets of its evolution inevitably leads the Quebec francophones to think about their ethnic life ways and styles and those of their ethnic siblings. In some respect, I supply them with some new cultural orientations capable of building up novel ethnic profiles and understanding some of the underlying processes at work.

In the book to which I referred earlier, I did not write a conclusion nor did I outline guiding principles that could have led to social intervention. If I had done so, the purpose of the book would have been vitiated. Social experiences observed here and elsewhere in applied work indicate that community reactions towards any technocratic action point in the same direction. In general, communities have a tendency to reject external schemes which correspond but little to their habitual ways of thinking and behaving. As social units, they wish to invent solutions and initiate reform.

7. A Preliminary Reading

The analysis of the Québécois crisis is a first approximation. First of all, any global view cannot be obtained through a single observation. Moreover documentation on ethnic identity is scarce and fragmentary. The latter shortcoming applies equally well to indigenous peoples, to the Anglo-Saxon groups, and, especially, to the ethnic

communities living on the Quebec territory, including, of course, those that migrated recently. That is quite dramatic when one realizes that a full ethnic dossier of Quebec, or a partial one on Québécois culture, requires data on all pieces of that cultural mosaic.

As a matter of fact, studies on cultural diversity will require that novel methodologies be built up, that disciplinary frontiers in the human sciences be broken down, that inter-university co-operation and a true symbiosis between universities, other educational and research institutions, and the public at large be established. This concept runs the risk of receiving little, if any, attention when one considers the over-specialization of disciplines, the ivory tower nature of universities, the dominant ethnocentric views on social reality, and, most of all, the budgetary constraints for research in the humanities and the social sciences.

IV. The cultural identity crisis of the Québécois

Since World War II and the first years of the Quiet Revolution the extent and intensity of social mutations in Quebec have been unique on the North American continent. These numerous changes have manifested themselves in the collective self-image, in ways of life and systems of thought that reproduce more and more the American patterns, and in pluralist visions of the future of Québécois culture. Allow me to repeat that the latter are the most significant social dimensions of ethnic identity, as it was defined earlier. It goes without saying that the new identity principles and projections into the future correspond to emerging social adherences and solidarities. They, in turn, while integrating the francophones more fully into modernity and allowing them to become a more integral part of the Great History, are apt to push them towards abandoning their most authentic roots and, unwittingly, towards the irreversible shedding of their cultural specificity.

Recent analyses of Québécois social evolution make it crystal clear that the upcoming generations demonstrate little interest in their history. This general attitude has reached such proportions that it can be labelled a profound disaffection to history. There is a strong discontinuity between old traditions and today's value-orientations. This discontinuity has manifested itself in abandonment of traditional religious practices, in the breaking down of the family system, in the appearance of materialistic values associated with consumer society, and in the lack of interest in ethnic organizations. These dislocations were manifested in the culture elements that had previously ensured the Québécois viability. And to these discontinuities must be added the incorporation of an ideology of confrontation into ways of life which characterizes the social relationships between state and citizens, business owners and employees, parents and children, teachers and students, and women and men. That ideology of confrontation is being reproduced in intimate social universes resulting in confusion in role expectations and behavioural responses. Many other similar ruptures illustrate the ongoing processes of cultural alienation among the Québécois. Moreover the loss of traditional culture patterns is being accompanied by a quasi-unconditional acceptance of values and behaviour that, on the surface only, are substitutes for the traditional ones in that they are quite often heterogeneous and incoherent, indeed, contradictory. To these numerous culture transfers, one must add continuous pressures stemming from the Anglo-Saxon cultural predominance that provoke additional substitutions in the patterns of ethnic identity.

The Québécois crisis is exacerbated by the threat to the welfare state's very existence and by the successive disappointments caused by the nation-state. Concerning the latter, the social strata which have been most affected by the restrictive legislative and administrative measures of the PQ government are the very ones which carried the Québécois party to power, that is, the young, the employees of the public and the para-public services, the new middle class, students and teachers at all levels, and those who benefit from public assistance. It looks as if the Parti Québécois, in exerting strong control on the development and evolution of the Québécois identity and culture, has obtained, at best, controversial results which, in my opinion, are attribu-

table to a restrictive view of the socio-cultural reality. Miscalculation and poor strategy confirm the fact that an inadequate use of a tool of economic development, of social promotion, and of national blossoming out has brought about results opposite to those anticipated. Since the nation-state has become over the years the exclusive symbol of ethnic identity and national enfranchisement, it comes as no surprise that the weakening of its credibility, not only among those who are against political secession but also among the many who had vigorously supported the symbolic concept of independence, produces strong negative consequences for the Québécois identity.

V. The Québécois party and public administration

Being in a polyethnic situation, the nation-state of the Québécois has been unable to promote exclusively the ethnic interests and dominant objectives of its inhabitants of French ancestry. It has had to administer the public affairs of the province in the best interest of all, ensuring that the other ethnic components of Quebec society, especially the traditionally powerful anglophones, get their rightful share. The ideological conjuncture which splits the French-speaking community into two factions of equal importance adds weight to inherent difficulties in political decision-making. Although the dominant interests of the francophones in Quebec have, in general, taken precedence over the interests of other ethnic groups, the structural ambiguity of the electoral mandate of the PQ government - that is, the efficient administration of public affairs on the one hand, and the political process leading to political autonomy on the other - and the actual governing strategies have produced criticism and dissatisfaction among the English-speaking people as well as among the francophones.

The state conjuncture makes the Québécois community yet more vulnerable to the pervasive pressures of Americanism. That acute vul-

nerability is to be found principally among the new generations whose ethnic rootedness reflects great fragility. Unemployment, coupled with difficulties in finding a place on the job market, has created, among the young, a strong disillusion towards the political party in power, towards men invested with decision-making, and, most of all, towards such hot political issues as self-determination. The unemployed, in particular, blame the preceding generations for their social irresponsibility and for their lack of foresight. To have access to a job and to earn one's living are goals of the utmost importance, so much so that they have precedence over any other goal, including that of the survival and flourishing of the Québécois culture in North America.

VI. The future of Québécois culture

The modernization of Quebec institutions, coupled with a greater integration of the Province of Quebec into the American socio-cultural space, has brought about value conflicts in the French-speaking community. The Québécois people will, undoubtedly, as they did in the past under the most adverse circumstances, of which the October crisis of 1970 is but one example, find the most appropriate solutions to their ethnic problems. However, one has to acknowledge the fact that the ethnic status of Quebec francophones is becoming more and more complex. I am referring here to the bureaucratization of government structures (at both federal and provincial levels), the voting of complex ethnic legislation (Bill 101 in Quebec and the multicultural policies of the federal government are examples), to the appearance of a technocratic class among civil servants, and to the greater involvement of the Quebec economy in the cyclical variations of world economy. Yet, there are a number of stable patterns that impose limits to the framework within which ethnic solutions have to be invented or innovated.

Because of its geographical position, Quebec is a North American entity. The French-speaking group in Quebec is a minority in Canada (about 25 per cent) among the multiple ethnic groups that form the

Canadian federation. Its elected representatives at the federal level, like those of other Canadian regions, can exert an influence on the elaboration of policy and decisions. In the last decade, there have been in Ottawa the coexisting contradictions of a 'French Power' and the generalized weakening of French minority groups in all Canadian provinces. In principle, if not in fact, the bilingualism of Ottawa ensures the full participation of the francophones in Canadian institutions. In Quebec, the *PQ* government compares the ethnic status of French minorities in other Canadian provinces to that of the anglophones in Quebec and uses the end result as a measuring stick for its own conduct in matters concerning the anglophones. Of course, Quebec's National Assembly, like other provincial governments, has autonomous prerogatives and shares other powers with the federal government. The Canadian Parliament, however, possesses a large number of exclusive powers that are being used according to its own sets of priorities, which seldom correspond to those of the Quebec Assembly, especially since the *PQ* has been in power.

We are all too familiar with the innumerable Ottawa-Quebec confrontations on almost any issue of importance to examine them here. Suffice to say that they are to the detriment of all concerned. Within Quebec itself, French-English relationships do not necessarily conform to the ideological image of the party in power. Many unpredictable factors give extension and weight to economic and social situations in which the francophones continue to hold inferior status. More than ever before, however, the political will and the efforts of a whole spectrum of leaders are conjugated to establish a dynamic equilibrium in the power relationships of the anglophones and the francophones in Quebec. The end result is yet uncertain because of intervening circumstances and experiences. Foremost among the latter is the cultural identity crisis of the francophones. Matching it in gravity is the spoiling of the 'National question' by the PQ government. Finally, the unknown real strength of the English community in Quebec, through its multifarious ramifications, is yet another element that weighs in the balance.

If one accepts the postulate that the maintenance of the French culture is a collective ideal to be sought after in a vigorous way, the national orientation of the Quebec francophones is a social reality that

may have to be redefined continuously. The 'National Question' is, of course, at the very heart of these cultural guide-lines. More than ever before, the Québécois have to take away from political ideologies and quarrels the crucial matter of ethnic consciousness and cultural expressions. From that viewpoint, the francophone community in Quebec is currently in a cultural vacuum, or at a dead-end. The National Question has become a partisan question and the nation-state, as now embodied by the *PQ* government, has pitifully failed in its innovative venture. That innovation, mind you, was a natural outcome of a long historical process, and its failure cannot be solely explained by institutional dysfunctions and personal deficiencies.

What, then, would offer a plausible explanation for this tragic misadventure? In anthropological theory, it is generally accepted that an innovation cannot be successful unless a number of prerequisites are met. One of them relates to the structure that is being built to support the innovative process : it must have a content. That may sound like a self-evident truth. None the less, I do advance the hypothesis that Quebec's National Question was ill-defined from two different viewpoints. First, the concept of political autonomy and independence has been vaguely defined and many of its consequences were overlooked. Second, the Québécois cultural orientations were paid only lip-service. They served as a political device to attract supporters. Since most political and sociological analyses bear on the former, I shall devote some time to the latter. Before I do, however, let me quote at length the political scientist Denis Monière who, in a recent article on "La Question nationale", drew this overview :

In the last twenty years, the debate on the political future of Quebec has been practically monopolized by political parties which have defined the main axes of the national project. The emerging neonationalism has furthermore supported the partisan politically-oriented national question since it defined the new Quebec identity in connection with political parameters, The specific powers of Quebec were at the very heart of the debate and the things at stake were the development and control of government structures ...

Monière continues :

> The partisan appropriation of the national question has collectively driven us to a dead-end because it has neutralized citizen participation. In order to take Quebec out of the constitutional impasse and political powerlessness, one has to launch again the national debate on new foundations that will allow us to determine the common denominator capable of creating a wide consensus. Truly, political parties are an essential element of the democratic process, but they must not create a vacuum around them, nor must they be alone to define our collective future. When the objectives at stake are of such a fundamental nature, one must allow for the free participation of all society's components and the free expression of all existing opinions. The government carries on the responsibility to defend the political interests of the francophones in Quebec. It must, therefore, institute a popular forum that would revive the national consciousness and would revive the debate on our political future. [3]

Monière further suggests that the PQ government establish a commission of inquiry on the question of Quebec's political future. Personally, I disagree with such a proposal on two counts. First, it limits the Quebec National Question to a political one and does not give due consideration to the cultural system as a whole. Second, a state commission of inquiry is an inappropriate instrument and is untimely. Both theoretical and practical aspects of this whole matter have to be viewed on a long-term basis since the advent of a large consensual cultural orientation will require a large number of open discussions in the widest variety of situations, especially at a time of cultural anomie. The concluding paragraph of my recently published book, *The Emperilled Quebecois Identity,* expressed that requirement quite clearly :

> The context in which we live today does appear to me to be quite different from the one of the previous crises. Under these circumstances, are we not compelled to analyze, with the greatest care, the kinds of experiences we are going through, with our similarities and our differences, so as better to grasp the on-going processes and the whole range of factors which are at the onset of these dynamisms and consequences? In undertaking that comprehensive examination of what we have become (as a collectivity) and of what we wish to achieve, would it not be mandatory to reduce the speaking time of those who up to now have been the main conceptors of our collective self-image in order to give it back to those who are the most in-

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[3] *Le Devoir*, 5 January 1984, p. 6.

timately concerned and who vibrate most intensively to popular represen-tations, the very ones who until now have been deprived of the

opportunity to express themselves? Discussions on the agora have too often led the way to expressing emotions. In future, I cannot conceive them as being likely avenues for exchanging and debating ideas. These discussions have also the tendency to create uniformity and block dissenting view. (Pp. 286-287)

VII. The new cultural goals

Before commenting on some essential conditions for a cultural re-vival in Quebec, I wish to single out three of the ongoing processes that create some consensus among social analysts. (a) A greater politi-cal autonomy for Quebec is an irreversible trend. It is likely to be achieved within the wider political context of other Canadian provin-ces gaining greater regional power. In many ways, the lone-wolf fight of Quebec has been counter-productive. (b) The welfare-state has rea-ched a point of no return. Its basic principles and philosophy of redis-tribution of wealth have to be revised and reformulated within the broad economic context of limited growth. (c) The bureaucratic and technocratic structures of the modem state will have to be redesigned so as to eliminate the distance between administrators and clients and become more sensitive to collective needs.

Prior to establishing national goals for the future, the Québécois have to develop better ethnic self-awareness. That means the unders-tanding of their ethnic situation in 1994, of the kind of evolution of their national consciousness and cultural practices as well as the gras-ping of the wider cultural configurations of which their culture pat-terns are but one part. From that viewpoint, in particular, it is amazing to note that we are far from having at hand what I have labelled earlier 'an ethnic dossier' for the province as a whole. This cultural mosaic is

a fundamental element in the understanding of our socio-cultural profile within the wider social system.

Once the Québécois knows himself more thoroughly and sees with greater precision where he fits within the wider social system, he will be better equipped to decide whether it is appropriate or not, feasible or not, to maintain the basic tenets of the Québécois culture within the Anglo-Saxon environment of the North American continent. Once a positive answer has been given to that question by a wide fraction of the francophones, then a cultural content could be defined, out of which cultural orientations for the future can be designed. The cultural process ahead is a long and arduous one, for it will have to develop within adverse contextual parameters. In the first place, disenchantment with the nation-state has provoked what some social scientists have labelled *une déprive collective.* Moreover, rapid technological and institutional changes have brought about a state of generalized social disorganization which leaves the Québécois in a state of cultural confusion. Finally, the ethnic specificity of the Quebec francophones, with the exception of linguistic patterns, is in the process of becoming a folkloric imagery.

Some among you may be tempted to observe that my reconstruction of the situation is ideological and pessimistic in regard to the future of the Québécois culture. That could very well be. Wherever the truth lies, one observation stands out. It is the relevance of the phenomenological perspective. Matched with a systemic approach in a historical context, it is intended to provide a valuable over-view of the ethnic situation of the francophones in Quebec. That has been one of the objectives pursued.

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