

**"Ready, Aye, Ready" No More?  
Canada, Britain, and the Suez Crisis in the Canadian Press\***

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## Introduction: Pearson in the House of Commons

"The United States would have far more admiration for Canada, Mr. Speaker, if this government stopped being the United States chore boy.... Now this government, by its actions in the Suez crisis, has made this month of November, 1956, the most disgraceful period for Canada in the history of this nation."

Howard C. Green, House of Commons, 27 November 1956

"The hon. Gentleman who has just taken his seat talked about Canada being the chore boy of the United States. Our record over the last years, Mr. Speaker, gives us the right to say we have performed and will perform no such role. It is bad to be a chore boy of the United States. It is equally bad to be a colonial chore boy running around shouting "Ready, aye, ready"."

Lester B. Pearson, House of Commons, a few minutes later

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"Ready, Aye, Ready" no more, Pearson was saying. He had reason not to want to be a "colonial chore boy." Since July 1956, he had grown increasingly disillusioned, discouraged, and even distraught at the United Kingdom government's reaction to Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company. Pearson was a firm believer in collective security through the United Nations, and he wanted the Suez issue resolved in that forum through peaceful international agreement.<sup>1</sup> The St. Laurent government agreed with its Secretary of State for External Affairs.<sup>2</sup> Its position had been communicated to the British government in the summer of 1956. At the same time, Pearson was in touch with other Commonwealth governments, notably that of India, which offered to mediate between Nasser and the United Kingdom, and was hoping to suggest a peaceful resolution of the Suez issue. The British had led the Canadians to believe that they too would rely on the United Nations and seek there a resolution of the issue.

Yet at the end of October 1956, the Eden government, together with that of France, colluded with Israel in creating a reason for military intervention in the Canal zone. Israel invaded Egypt on 29 October. The next day, Britain and France issued an "ultimatum" enjoining Israel and Egypt to stop fighting, or they would take "such military action as may

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<sup>1</sup> See John A. Munro and Alex. I. Inglis, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honorable Lester B. Pearson, PC, CC, OM, OBE, MA, LLD*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973, ch. 10 and 11 for Pearson's account of his role in the Suez crisis.

<sup>2</sup> The Cabinet had its pro-British advocates, according to Dale Thomson: "Opinion among members of the Canadian cabinet was divided concerning the call for a conference of users of the canal [in August 1956]. Several members shared the Progressive Conservative view that they should stand by the mother country, if only to avoid giving the official opposition an opportunity to accuse them of making Canada, in Diefenbaker's words, 'a mere tail on the American kike' [sic]." Walter Harris and Bob Winters both expected that an independent Canadian stand at the UN would cost the Liberals seats at the next election. Dale Thomson, *Louis St. Laurent: Canadian*, Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1967, p. 460, 465.

be necessary to compel the offender to conform,"<sup>3</sup> as Eden wrote St. Laurent. Twenty-four hours later, British and French armed forces began air attacks against Egypt, even while the United Nations Security Council was grasping with the Israeli invasion. Canada had not been apprised of the impending Anglo-French intervention and the Canadian Prime Minister was quite upset at Eden that "the first intimation I had of your government's intention to take certain grave steps in Egypt was from the press reports of your statements in the House of Commons."<sup>4</sup> The Canadian government's policy was to "shape our course in conformity with what we regard as our obligations under the Charter of and our membership in the United Nations," as St. Laurent indicated to Eden.<sup>5</sup> It would not be "a chore boy running around shouting 'Ready, aye, ready!'"

Yet there were Canadians who wanted it to. On the day after Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal Company in late July 1956, Progressive Conservative Opposition MP John G. Diefenbaker rose in the House of Commons to ask whether the Canadian government "ought not to join with Britain in condemnation of what has taken place there in a perversion of international contracts, and also indicate to Britain [sic] and the other nations Canada's agreement with the stand which they are taking to meet this situation?"<sup>6</sup> Diefenbaker never intimated whether Canada's agreement with Britain should involve more than moral support, but he was not alone in believing that Canada should stand firmly with Britain. Perhaps the most forceful expression of this sentiment came when the Suez crisis took a military turn. The day after Canada refrained from voting on the UN resolution condemning the Anglo-French aggression in Egypt, the *Calgary Herald* issued a vociferous condemnation of the Canadian position:

Tuesday, October 30, will go down in Canada's history as a day of shock and shame. On that day the government of Canada chose to run out on Britain at a time when Britain was asserting the kind of leadership the world has missed, and needed, in these ominous times....

What degradation is this?....

The Liberals have been carefully preparing the way for years, discarding the ties of ancestry and Commonwealth one by one, selling out our natural resources and our industry to the highest U.S. bidder.

And now we have the ultimate sell-out.

They have sold out our decency and our honor.<sup>7</sup>

The Suez incident became a litmus test of Canadian's sense of place on the international scene, of Canadian values, and of national unity. It provoked both defenders and opponents of the Canadian position at the United Nations into arguments based on varying conceptions of what Canada was as a country and what it should be. It quickly became the object of partisan debate in the press. Newspaper editors, and their readers, were sharply

<sup>3</sup> ANC MG 26 N5 vol. 40, Memoirs, volume 2, chapters 11 and 12. Suez. External Affairs Documents. Nov-Dec 1956, Eden to St. Laurent, 1/11/1956.

<sup>4</sup> ANC MG 26 N1 VOL. 37, Pre-1958 Series Middle East - General Correspondence Jan-Oct. 1956, St. Laurent to Eden, 31/10/1956; on St. Laurent's reaction, see also *Mike*, p. 238: Pearson "had never before seen him in such a state of controlled anger,"

<sup>5</sup> ANC MG 26 N1 VOL. 37, Pre-1958 Series Middle East - General Correspondence Jan-Oct. 1956, St. Laurent to Eden, 31/10/1956.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Extract from Hansard, Saturday, July 28, 1956, p. 6607.

<sup>7</sup> "The Shameful Day That Canada Ran Out", editorial, *Calgary Herald*, 1 November 1956, p.4.

divided on the issue.<sup>8</sup> And interest in the issue went much beyond the editorial offices of newspapers or the pronouncements of habitual writers of letters to the editor. The Canadian public was generally well aware of the Middle East situation. A Canadian Institute of Public Opinion [Gallup] poll, in September 1956, indicated that 87% of the 1970 respondents had "heard of the Suez canal dispute." Regionally, this awareness ranged from a low of 72% in Newfoundland to a high of 97% in British Columbia. More than two thirds of the survey's French-speaking Quebec respondents had also heard of the issue.<sup>9</sup>

At that time, Canadians did not however feel very exercised by the Suez issue. Gallup asked whether it was better to "risk war or give Egypt control of Suez." Less than a quarter were ready to risk war, a third were explicitly ready to allow Egypt to control the canal, and 40% could not express a clear opinion on the question. The regional variation was pronounced, with only 14% of Quebec respondents willing to wage war (76 respondents out of 543 – the rate for French-speaking respondents was only 9%), and up to 45% in British Columbia, where only 26% were willing to let Egypt control the canal.<sup>10</sup>

The Gallup poll taken the following month showed that Canadians on the whole remained favourably disposed towards Great Britain's foreign policy, more so, in fact, than towards U.S. foreign policy. The October 1956 poll asked whether U.S. foreign policy was losing America friends. Of those who offered an opinion, 42% agreed with the statement, while only 39% agreed to a similar question about U.K. foreign policy. Only in Alberta was there a larger number of respondents agreeing with the statement about U.K. foreign policy than disagreeing with it, though the small number of Alberta respondents makes this a dubious measure. Opinion was even divided among Quebec francophone respondents, but, surprisingly, so was it among British Columbia respondents. Ontarians had a more positive opinion of Great Britain's foreign policy, with two thirds of those expressing an opinion believing that the U.K. was not losing friends because of its foreign policy. Overall, only 150 of the 2040 Gallup respondents specifically alluded to the Middle East crisis as a negative factor of U.K. foreign policy.<sup>11</sup>

The Suez crisis forced Canadians to reassess Canada's role in international affairs. While the Middle East situation did not directly involve Canada, it raised issues of foreign policy that affected the country's relationship with Great Britain, with France, and with the United States, the three most influential countries in Canada's development. Traditionally, these three countries had taken similar positions on international affairs, and Canada had fought alongside all three in two world wars. The Suez crisis disrupted this pattern and forced the Canadian government out of its self-satisfied definition as "bridge" between the two great English-speaking countries, as the shores of the "river" grew farther and farther apart. The

<sup>8</sup> Helen Patricia Adam, "Canada and the Suez Crisis 1956: The Evolution of Policy and Public Debate," M.A. thesis, Acadia University, 1988, takes a careful look at editorial opinion and letters to the editor of 29 Canadian dailies (26 English-language and 3 French-language) during the months of October through December 1956, in an attempt to gauge public opinion. She used the letters to the editor because she did not find any reliable public opinion polls.

<sup>9</sup> Carleton University Library Data Centre, Canadian Institute of Public Opinion [Gallup] poll #251k, September 1956, file cipo251k.por, portable SPSS file.

<sup>10</sup>*Id.*

<sup>11</sup>Carleton University Library Data Centre, Canadian Institute of Public Opinion [Gallup] poll #252, October 1956, file cipo252.por, portable SPSS file. Unfortunately, the data from the November 1956 poll are unreadable, according to the director of the Carleton University Library Data Centre, Wendy Watkins.

Suez crisis constituted a significant juncture in the process I call "the other Quiet Revolution," the dissolution of English-speaking Canada's self-representation as a "British" nation. In reassessing Canadian foreign policy during the Suez crisis, English-speaking Canadians drew on their explicit or on their unspoken definitions of what Canada was and what Canada was about. It is these definitions which I want to draw out in this paper.

## I. The framework of the paper

Like Quebec's Quiet Revolution, the "other Quiet Revolution" in English-speaking Canada did not appear abruptly without warning. It was the culmination of a process that began during the Second World War<sup>12</sup> and continued through the 1950s. It was viewed as an insidious Liberal plot by the *Globe and Mail*, by members of the Progressive Conservative party, and among part of the Canadian intelligentsia.<sup>13</sup> For the *Globe* and other Conservative-leaning newspapers, St. Laurent's administration was bent on dismantling the symbols of Canada's attachment to Great Britain. The creation of a Canadian citizenship in 1946,<sup>14</sup> the promise of a 'distinctive' Canadian flag in the 1948 federal election campaign, the abolition of appeals to the British Privy Council in December 1949, the nomination of a Canadian as Governor General in 1951, the transformation of Victoria Day into a moveable holiday in 1953 were all manifestations of this insidious plot, hatched by what the Ottawa *Citizen* called in 1946 the 'ultra-nationalists,'<sup>15</sup> a phrase left undefined but that obviously pointed to, in the code of the day, the French-speaking members of the Liberal party.<sup>16</sup> On the celebration of Victoria Day in 1956, the *Globe and Mail*, for its part, reiterated caustically: "Disrespect for Canada's past (especially that part of it which related in any way to Britain) is endemic in Ottawa. As the late Herman Goering reached for his pistol whenever he heard the word culture, so Ottawa reaches for the eraser whenever it sees words like Victoria and Royal and Empire and Dominion."<sup>17</sup>

The defenders of a "British" definition of Canada conceived of the country as blessed with the wisdom and greatness of British tradition embodied in its political and judicial system, in its educational and literary traditions, and in its manly<sup>18</sup> defence of democracy and decency on the world stage. British immigration had sustained this noble heritage. This definition of

<sup>12</sup> The Bureau of Public Information, a propaganda agency created during World War II, worked at this with uneven success, according to William R. Young, "Making the Truth Graphic: The Canadian Government's Home Front Information Structure and Programmes during World War II," Ph.D. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1978.

<sup>13</sup> Among the Tories, George Drew was probably the most rabid defender of British tradition in Canada. Among the intellectuals, W.L. Morton and John Farthing, not to mention Donald Creighton.

<sup>14</sup> On the representations of Canadian identity during the debate surrounding the Canadian Citizenship Act of 1946, see José E. Igartua, "L'autre révolution tranquille: l'évolution du nationalisme canadien-anglais, 1945-1971," in Gérard Bouchard and Yvan Lamonde, ed., *La nation dans tous ses États. Le Québec en comparaison*, Montréal: l'Harmattan, 1997, 271-296.

<sup>15</sup> "Young Men in a Hurry," *Ottawa Citizen*, 16 April 1946, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> For a preliminary survey of editorial opinion on these issues between 1946 and 1960, see José E. Igartua, "The Quieter Revolution: Evolving Representations of National Identity in English Canada 1941-1960", paper presented at a joint session of the Canadian Historical Association and the Association of Canadian Studies, St. John's, Newfoundland, 8 June 1997. The paper is available at <http://www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/r12270/textes/cha97/index.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> "Day Off", editorial, *Globe and Mail*, 21 May 1956, p.6.

<sup>18</sup> As we will see below, gender connotations were important in the definition of "British."

Canada as "British" implicitly and very often explicitly considered British political tradition as the greatest in the world: it had brought liberty and democracy to Europe, to the British Empire and beyond. Implicit too in this view was that Canadians of other than British ancestry were less likely to make model "subjects" and had to be "brought up" to the level of British civilisation. This view, common enough in nineteenth-century Canada – witness the Durham report – still held sway among some English-speaking Canadians a century later, in part because of the values the education system had tried to instil in them.<sup>19</sup>

But other views of Canada were current as well. A view closely associated with Liberal supporters defined Canada as made up of two nations, the French and the British, who had developed the land in partnership. The nature of the partnership was seldom elaborated on, but it too rested on an "ethnic" definition of the nation. The "civic" view of Canada, on the other hand, remained a minority view. It was most often expressed by spokespersons of the left, in the CCF but also in progressive circles that promoted a Bill of Rights for Canadians. These circles included the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Trades and Labour Congress, and the Canadian Congress of Labour, as well as the National Council of Women.<sup>20</sup>

This summary sketch of the competing representations of national identity expressed in English-speaking Canada suggests an internal coherence and a national "essence" which would be hard to demonstrate. I am not looking for "the" English-Canadian national identity. I adopt the conceptual approach expressed in the work of Charles Tilly on public identities. Tilly focuses on four attributes of public identities. The first is the *relational* nature of such identities. By this Tilly means that identities are located in "connections among individuals and groups rather than in the minds of particular persons or whole populations." Tilly summarises what he calls the emerging view of public identities as "... not only relational but *cultural* in insisting that social identities rest on shared understandings and their representations. It is *historical* in calling attention to the path-dependent accretion of memories, understandings, and means of action within particular identities. The emerging view, finally, is *contingent* in that it regards each assertion of identity as a strategic interaction liable to failure or misfiring rather than a straightforward expression of an actor's attributes."<sup>21</sup>

Applying Tilly's characterisation of public identities has a number of implications for the analysis of this type of discourse. First, collective identities are not fixed attributes of groups, but are historical constructs liable to evolve as does the nature of the relations within and between groups which give rise to expressions of identity. Secondly, Tilly's model suggests that identities are enunciated for specific reasons at specific times and for specific purposes. From this it follows that expressions of national identity will not necessarily be coherent, either internally or over time. Thus it is important to understand the circumstances of such

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<sup>19</sup> The values embodied in English-Canadian textbooks is part of my research project but will not be examined here.

<sup>20</sup> For expressions of these definitions of the nation, see Igartua, "The Quieter Revolution" and "L'autre révolution tranquille." On the genesis of the Canadian Bill of Rights (1960), see Christopher MacLennan, "Toward the Charter: Canadians and the Demand for a National Bill of Rights, 1929-1960," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Western Ontario, 1996.

<sup>21</sup> Charles Tilly, "Citizenship, Identity and Social History," *International Review of Social History* 40, Supplement 3 (1995), 5-6.

expressions in order to assess their meaning. Finally, collective identities exist only at the cultural level, that is, as shared representations.

Next, it is important to clarify how I understand the concepts of 'nation,' 'national identity,' and 'English Canada.' I follow Benedict Anderson's definition of 'nation' as an 'imagined community,'<sup>22</sup> founded in a belief in shared characteristics, a shared past and the hope of a shared future. There are no tangible characteristics of nationhood that are shared by all members of the nation. Instead, nations exist when communities believe in their existence; they are grounded in the imagination rather than in any objective sociological characteristics of their members. It follows that they have a historical, rather than an essential, existence: they can be born and they can die, when communities no longer believe in them.

Likewise, national identity, or the definitions which a community gives of itself as a national entity, are historically constructed and thus are liable to evolve over time. The historical question therefore is to discover why certain forms of national identity are born and why certain forms fade away. In the present case, I am particularly interested in the processes and circumstances which produced a withering of the definition of Canada as a British nation among English-speaking Canadians.

As for "English Canada," for the purposes of my inquiry, I use the phrase to refer to the communicational community, within the Canadian state, whose shared language was and is English. I would argue, following Benedict Anderson again, that this communicational community has existed since newspapers, the telegraph, and the railway ("print capitalism," in his phrase) have defined this communicational space. The focus is on language, rather than on ethnic or cultural origins, though a language of communication rests on the supposed sharing of cultural referents.

The sources used in this paper consist of editorials, editorial columns, and some letters to the editor of the major English-language dailies in Canada and the debates in the House of Commons during the special session held from November 26 to November 29, 1956.<sup>23</sup> In order to understand the "inside story" which was available to the Canadian government during the crisis – the internal and external political pressures, as well as its knowledge of British and American intentions concerning the Middle East – I have examined the Pearson and St. Laurent papers held by the National Archives of Canada relating to the Suez crisis. Further perspective was obtained by an examination of the data from the extant Gallup polls, available through Carleton University Library Data Centre, as well as by a comparative reading of the editorial positions of four major French-language dailies.

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<sup>22</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London: Verso, 1991.

<sup>23</sup> My examination of newspapers has not been as extensive as that made by Helen Adam, but she has not found anything that differs from my own reading of the newspapers. While she was trying to get at "public opinion" by systematically looking at editorials and letters to the editor, I am more concerned with the style and the rhetoric of the arguments found in the press.

## II. The invasion of Suez and Canada's stand at the United Nations

The events that generated sustained editorial comment in Canada and fostered political debate concerning the Suez crisis began with the invasion of Egypt by Israel on October 29, 1956, and the ultimatum Britain and France issued to Egypt and Israel the next day. On November 1, Britain and France launched air attacks against Egypt. The United Nations Security Council was unable to deal with the crisis, as Britain and France vetoed the American resolution requesting Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai desert, and the matter was referred to an emergency session of the UN General Assembly.<sup>24</sup> The session began in late afternoon, Thursday, November 1, and early the next morning the General Assembly adopted an American resolution calling for a cease-fire. Canada abstained on the resolution rather than vote against it. Pearson flew back from the United Nations emergency session to a Cabinet meeting on Saturday, November 3, where a Canadian position was agreed upon: Canada would propose the creation of a UN international police force to supervise the cease-fire and to ensure peace in the Middle East. Pearson returned to New York Saturday evening with the Canadian proposal. At 2:00 AM on Sunday morning, November 4, the Canadian resolution passed in the UN General Assembly. Canadians could listen to Pearson's speeches of November 3 and 4 at the UN on the CBC network<sup>25</sup>. By Monday, November 5, the UN had agreed to the creation of an emergency force, under the direction of Canadian General E.L.M. Burns. But the British and French had sent troops into Egypt on Sunday and only agreed to a cease-fire on Tuesday, November 6.<sup>26</sup>

The British-French action in Suez and the Canadian reaction to it and its stand at the United Nations provoked numerous comments in the press. These ranged from a steadfast support of Britain to outright condemnation of Britain and support for the Canadian stand at the UN.

### A. *When Tories Roar*<sup>27</sup>

For the proponents of Canada as a "British" nation, there was no doubting the fitness and courage of the Anglo-French action in Suez. The most vehement criticism of the Liberal government's position was expressed by the *Calgary Herald*. Its November 1 editorial has been quoted above. The next day, commenting on St. Laurent's apparent testiness with Press Gallery reporters, the paper rhetorically asked:

Could it be that he does not feel quite right about Canada's running out on Britain at a time of crisis, to hide behind the skirts of the United States?....

<sup>24</sup> See Pearson's account in *Mike*, vol. II, ch. 10-11. See also Geoffrey A.H. Pearson, *Seize the Day: Lester B. Pearson and Crisis Diplomacy*, Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993, p. 146.

<sup>25</sup> The speeches led the CBC Ontario director, Ira Dilworth, and historian A.R.M. Lower to write Pearson to congratulate him. Lower asked Pearson to "give me the least possible assurance that Eden and Company are not the damn fools that they appear to be.... The whole thing is tragic." ANC MG 26 N1 vol 38, Pre-1958 Series Middle East - General Correspl. Nov. -Dec. 1956, Ira Dilworth to Pearson, 5 November 1956, and A.R.M. Lower to Pearson, 6 November 1956.

<sup>26</sup> Pearson, *Seize the Day*, 150-152. See also John English, *The Worldly Years: The Life of Lester Pearson vol. II : 1949-1972*, Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 1992, 133-140. The National Archives of Canada's holdings of CBC audio-visual archives do not contain these speeches.

<sup>27</sup> The phrase is A.R.M. Lower's in a letter to Pearson, 4 December 1956, ANC MG 26 N1 vol 38, Pre-1958 Series Middle East - General Correspl. Nov. -Dec. 1956.



Does he, perhaps, fear that this time he has gone a bit too far and too fast in edging Canada out of its historic place in the Commonwealth? It was all right when he and his crypto-republicans dropped the 'Royal' out of 'Royal Mail.' It was all right when they bulldozed ahead and appointed a Canadian governor-general. It was all right when the word 'Dominion' disappeared from Canada's name...

But is it all right to sell out Canada's honor, to run out on Britain openly in time of danger, to court Washington's smile so brazenly?<sup>28</sup>

The editorial's metaphors called into question St. Laurent's masculinity, virtue, and honour. On November 3, the paper condemned Canada's abstention during the UN vote on the American cease-fire resolution. The paper did not believe the UN could by itself affect a return to peace. Better let Britain and France deal with Nasser: "The British and French forces already carrying the burden of the struggle are as good a U.N. force as anything. All they are lacking is a United Nations flag."<sup>29</sup> A few days later, it again sided clearly with Great Britain and France: "The world owes its thanks to Britain and France for their prompt intervention between Israel and Egypt in the Middle East."<sup>30</sup> On November 21, it even attributed Anthony Eden's ill health in part to "Canada's deplorable behavior as the senior Commonwealth partner in the United Nations, [which] undoubtedly had much to do with the strain on the Prime Minister." The title of the editorial, "Free Men Are In Debt To Sir Anthony," linked Britain's action to the defence of freedom, a virtue implicitly British in its essence.<sup>31</sup> The paper's readers, however, were more divided on the issue. While a majority of writers endorsed the paper's editorial stand, a significant number (10/25) disagreed with it.<sup>32</sup>

The other Alberta Southam chain newspaper, the *Edmonton Journal*, took a similar, though less vociferous, position, and dealt with the topic less often in its editorial columns. It too came to see the Liberal government's stand on Suez as an attempt to destroy the British tradition in Canada. On November 5, it called the conduct of the St. Laurent government a "disappointment to most Canadians, and especially to all those who value the ties to the Commonwealth." It blamed the government for failing to mediate between the United States and Great Britain and for joining "the chorus of misrepresentation and abuse." Canadian governments, it reminded its readers, had always "hastened to declare their full support... when Britain has been confronted with a major crisis threatening her existence as a great power." All in all, it was "A Bad Week's Work," as the editorial was titled.<sup>33</sup> Three weeks later, just before Parliament was convened in special session, the paper condemned the government for creating "deep and bitter resentment in Canada." It had gained the impression that Americans considered "that Mr. Pearson's action constituted a sort of declaration of independence – that Canada has now severed its links with the British Commonwealth, and given its allegiance to Washington. Nothing, of course, could be farther from the truth. Our ancient ties with Britain are not so easily broken, however much Mr. Pearson and Mr. St. Laurent may wish to do so." It called upon the Conservative Opposition to put a motion of non-confidence against the government and personal censure against

<sup>28</sup> "Maybe There's A Good Reason For It," editorial, *Calgary Herald*, 2 November 1956, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> "The Government is Shirking Its Duty," editorial, *Calgary Herald*, 3 November 1956, p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> "The World Will Thank Britain," editorial, *Calgary Herald*, 9 November 1956, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> "Free Men Are In Debt To Sir Anthony," editorial, *Calgary Herald*, 21 November 1956, p. 4.

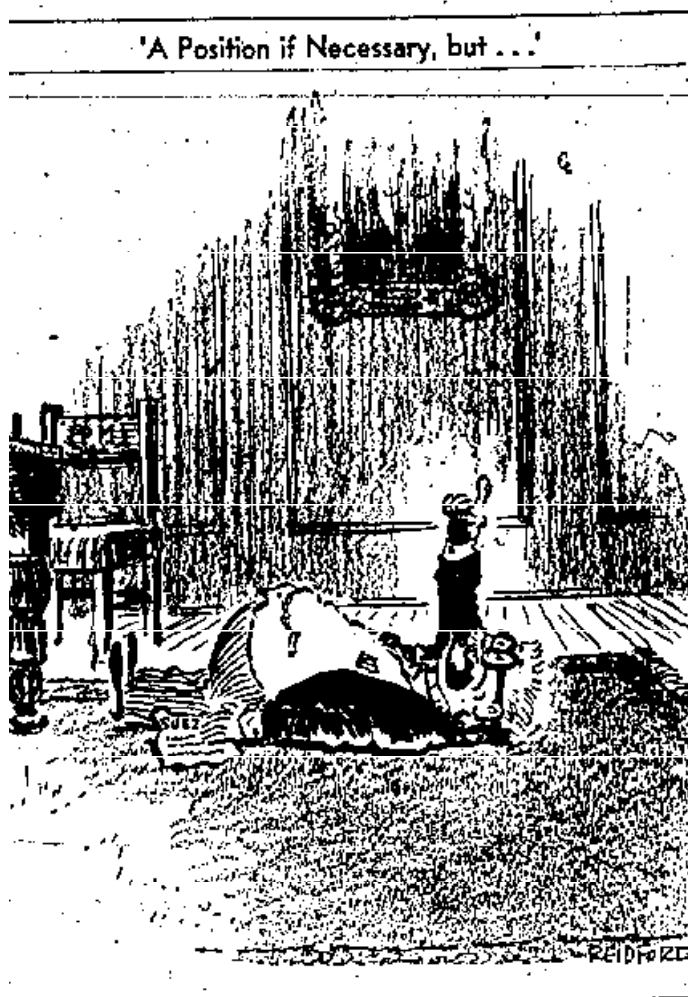
<sup>32</sup> See the letters of 7, 9, 12, 14, and 19 November.

<sup>33</sup> *Edmonton Journal*, 5 November 1956, p. 4.

Pearson.<sup>34</sup> The debates during the special session only confirmed its worst fears: the St. Laurent government was affecting "a deliberate repudiation of the bonds of the Commonwealth."

"[M]any government actions in the past decade fall into perspective. They were minor things in themselves - for example, the appointment of a Canadian governor-general, or the dropping of such words as "dominion" and "royal" - but they all had the effect of weakening the formal and symbolic links of the Commonwealth. The suspicion is now almost a certainty that Mr. St. Laurent and his colleagues saw in the complex and confusing Suez crisis a magnificent opportunity to finish the job and break with the Commonwealth altogether."<sup>35</sup>

The *Globe and Mail* also used the Suez crisis to attack the St. Laurent government. It defended Britain's actions and condemned the Canadian government's kow-towing to the



Americans. On November 2, it portrayed the Anglo-French invasion as a replacement for UN action: "It would seem that the only nations willing and able to keep peace in the Middle

<sup>34</sup> "When Parliament Meets," editorial, *Edmonton Journal*, 24 November 1956, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> "The Lines Are Drawn," editorial, *Edmonton Journal*, 28 November 1956, p. 4.

East are the two who, at the moment, are so vehemently being denounced as "aggressors'."<sup>36</sup> Opposite the editorial was a cartoon casting St. Laurent as a fallen Mackenzie King.

The paper could not oppose Pearson's proposal for a United Nations military force, as it has put the idea forward itself in the past. It condemned the Liberal government for not having pressed the issue harder at the United Nations. "the Canadian government has been disastrously wrong in its timidity –first, turning a blind eye to the Middle East; then, when it did see the need to police the area, failing to press home its views in Washington and all of the time giving tacit approval to United States actions and attitudes which prepared the debacle here.... The chickens of apathy, irresponsibility and me-tooism have come home to roost at Ottawa; and it will take more than UN speeches to drive them away."<sup>37</sup>

In the following days, the newspaper published a series called "Readers' Views on Middle East Crisis" in which readers overwhelmingly expressed support for the British action.<sup>38</sup> The paper cast its support of the British action as an endorsement of the fight for freedom against the tyranny of Nasser or of the Kremlin. Free peoples, it declared, have to choose. "If they are cowards, who want peace at any price, let them say so.... But if they are men, who have broken the bones of tyrants before and will cheerfully break them again, let them say that instead. And let them say it frequently, firmly, in a voice loud enough to reach well into the Kremlin."<sup>39</sup> Here again, national character was defined as masculine virtue.

### **B. Others Roar Too**

The *Vancouver Sun*, ranked among "independent" Liberal newspapers,<sup>40</sup> was cautious in its support of the Anglo-French action in Suez, but grew increasingly critical of the Canadian government's stand at the United Nations as events unfolded. In its first editorial on the issue, on 1 November 1956, it averred that "Canadians agree with External Affairs Minister Pearson in regretting 'that Britain found it necessary' to send troops into Egypt in the face of the Israeli-Arab crisis." But it was ready to grant the benefit of the doubt to Britain: "Yet British governments haven't usually acted in this way without grave reasons. Until recently the British have been regarded as the sobering influence in world affairs." It "prayed" Britain and France "know what they are doing."<sup>41</sup>

The next day, it reflected on the effects among Canadians of the tension between Britain and the United States, "a question that sharply divides their loyalties." It called for a reconsideration of the smug Canadian position between our two allies. "Canada will have to do some straight and sober thinking about her course. This country has toyed for a long time with the notion that we can be both British and American - a bridge between two great nations. The present break in Anglo-American understanding speaks of our failure. The reason may be that we haven't truly tried to consider Britain's point of view."<sup>42</sup> It was critical of Canada's half-hearted participation in the Commonwealth and began to criticise Canada's

<sup>36</sup> "The End – And the Means," editorial, *Globe and Mail*, 2 November 1956, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> "Mr. Pearson Abstains," editorial, *Globe and Mail*, 3 November 1956, p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> See *Globe and Mail*, 3, 6, 8, 10 November 1956.

<sup>39</sup> "The Gains," editorial, *Globe and Mail*, 12 November 1956, p. 6.

<sup>40</sup> According to the *Directory Newspapers and Periodicals 1956*, N.W. Ayer and Son, Philadelphia, n.d., cited by Adam, *op. cit.*, Appendix II, p. 182.

<sup>41</sup> "World Doubts Anglo-French Gamble Worth the Risks," editorial, *Vancouver Sun*, 1 November 1956, p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> "Canada Pulled Two Ways By British-French Alliance", editorial, *Vancouver Sun*, 2 November 1956, p. 4.

lack of support behind Britain at the UN. On 3 November 1956, it expressed support for the idea of a UN peace-keeping force but doubted the UN could set one up "in view of its present inability to make difficult decisions."<sup>43</sup> It disparaged American foreign policy and Canada's tacit endorsement of it. It supported the Canadian proposal of a UN police force but condemned Canada's failure to stand by Britain: "...the anti-British stand we took by the side of Russia and the United States was a sign of unbalanced judgement."<sup>44</sup> "The Liberal government in Ottawa took this attitude [opposing Britain at the UN] apparently in the sincere belief that the United Nations is more important than the Commonwealth and believing also that it had the majority of Canadians behind it. But neither of these things is at present certain."<sup>45</sup> It later refuted Immigration Minister Jack Pickersgill's statement that the Canadian position at the UN had not been against Britain and added that it might have also been "against our own ultimate good."<sup>46</sup>

### C. *The Liberal View: the Independence of Canada*

The two main Liberal newspapers, the *Toronto Daily Star* and the *Winnipeg Free Press*, wholeheartedly supported the St. Laurent government's stand on the Suez issue. The *Star* had few editorials on the subject. On November 5, 1956, it commended the Canadian government for having had "had the courage to put principles ahead of sentiment" by supporting the UN charter "which stands against force as a means of settling international disputes" rather than following "her feeling for Britain." It rejected as sterile and unhelpful in resolving the crisis the position that "right or wrong Canada should have stuck by Britain; indeed, this sentimental cry already is being echoed by some newspapers."<sup>47</sup> It again condemned this attitude when Earle Rowe, the leader of the Opposition, expressed it in the Commons at the opening of the special session of Parliament, calling it "a perfect exhibition of outdated colonial mentality." That editorial, aptly enough, was titled "Colony or Nation?"<sup>48</sup>

The *Winnipeg Free Press* condemned the Anglo-French action on Suez as an attempt on the part of Britain and France to "appoint themselves 'world policemen'" by quoting the British Labour leader as saying that they had no right to do so. It found the situation tragic, for "[t]o censure Britain is eminently distasteful. But for Canadians to turn their backs on the principles of collective security is unthinkable." It approved Pearson's expression of "regret" and hoped "that his implied disapproval will even now have some effect on the Eden and Mollet Governments."<sup>49</sup> Yet the next day, its lead editorial was titled "Be Fair to Britain": it affirmed that "Britain's aim – to preserve stability in the Middle East against the ambitions of Mr. Nasser and everyone else – is the right aim for all the western nations."<sup>50</sup> An adjacent column by its London correspondent tried to throw some light on Eden's decision. Over the next two days, while debate was going on at the UN, the paper endorsed Pearson's position, heading its 2 November editorial with "Mr. Pearson Speaks for Canada" and prodding the federal Cabinet the next day to endorse Pearson's peace-keeping force proposal, grandly

<sup>43</sup> "UN Put On the Spot," editorial, *Vancouver Sun*, 3 November 1956, p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> "Ottawa's Job to Halt U.S. Drift Toward Isolationism," editorial, *Vancouver Sun*, 9 November 1956, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup> "Commonwealth Future Needs Reappraisal After Egypt," editorial, *Vancouver Sun*, 14 November 1956, p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> "Nothing Against Britain?," editorial, *Vancouver Sun*, 21 November 1956, p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> "Canada's Leadership," editorial, *Toronto Daily Star*, 5 November 1956, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> "Colony or Nation?," editorial, *Toronto Daily Star*, 27 November 1956, p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> "Britain and France Alone," editorial, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 31 October 1956, p. 13.

<sup>50</sup> "Be Fair to Britain," editorial, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 1 November 1956, p. 29.

adding: "The Canadian Government can in this way render to the cause of peace a service almost unexampled in our history."<sup>51</sup>

The *Free Press* vigorously condemned the Anglo-French troop landings in Egypt of 4 November as "folly" and praised Pearson for getting the two powers to agree to a UN cease-fire force to replace their troops in Egypt. As a result of Pearson's efforts at the UN, "this country has attained a new stature at the United Nations and throughout the free world." It paid close attention to dissension within Conservative ranks in Britain concerning the Suez crisis as a way of showing Britain's Suez policy was opposed in Britain as well as elsewhere.<sup>52</sup> Grant Dexter, the paper's Ottawa columnist, singled St. Laurent out for special praise as well, noting that he "took a much keener and immediate interest in these events than is commonly supposed."<sup>53</sup> As we shall see, however, the paper's allegiance to the Liberal leader had its limits.

#### ***D. Some Tory supporters of Canadian Independence***

Two Conservative newspapers, the *Ottawa Journal* and the *Montreal Gazette*, gave their support to the Canadian position at the United Nations. The *Journal's* first editorial on the issue, on 1 November 1956, was apprehensive about Britain's action on Suez, being "uneasy" about the precedent it was setting for circumventing the United Nations. At the same time, it warned to be "wary of making common cause with Britain's critics. Downing Street is not without sense, experience and courage."<sup>54</sup> It conceded that "many Canadians are disturbed by what Britain and France are doing in Egypt" and endorsed Pearson's and St. Laurent's "clear and helpful" statements of Canadian policy regarding the Suez question and the Russian invasion of Hungary happening at the same time. The paper was careful to draw the distinction between Britain's and France's willingness to let the UN take over the "task of maintaining order along the Suez" and Russia's rejection of UN intervention in Hungary.<sup>55</sup> It characterised Canada's proposal of a peace-keeping force including Canadian troops as demonstrating "the vigor and self-reliance of an independent, responsible nation."<sup>56</sup>

The *Montreal Gazette* had few editorial words on the Suez question. On 5 November 1956, it endorsed the Pearson plan for the Middle East, while depicting Eden as an anti-appeaser from 1938 who believed British intervention was needed because the UN would be too slow to act.<sup>57</sup> Four days later, commenting on the nomination of General E.L.M. Burns as head of the UN peace-keeping force, it observed that "Canada's stature in world affairs has grown enormously with United Nations efforts to solve the Middle East crisis."<sup>58</sup> Its cartoonist

<sup>51</sup> "Act on the Pearson Proposals," editorial, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 3 November 1956, p. 11.

<sup>52</sup> "Force and the United Nations," editorial, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 5 November 1956, p. 21; "Suez Cease-Fire," *ibid.*, 7 November 1956, p. 35; "Historic Step at United Nations," *ibid.*, 13 November 1956, p. 13; the quote is from this editorial; Grant Dexter, "Regret But No Recrimination," *ibid.*, 14 November 1956, p. 13. On Conservative division in Britain, "The Significant Nutting," editorial, 5 November, and "Suez Cease-Fire."

<sup>53</sup> Grant Dexter, "Regret But No Recrimination," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 14 November 1956, p. 13.

<sup>54</sup> "Britain's Case," editorial, *Ottawa Journal*, 1 November 1956, p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> "Canada Does Her Part," editorial, *Ottawa Journal*, 5 November 1956, p. 6.

<sup>56</sup> "Canada in the Middle East," editorial, *Ottawa Journal*, 8 November 1956, p. 6. Note again the appeal to the masculine virtue of "vigor."

<sup>57</sup> "There's Hope in the Pearson Plan," editorial, *The Gazette*, 5 November 1956, p. 8.

<sup>58</sup> "The Canadian Who Will Command," editorial, *The Gazette*, 9 November 1956, p. 8.

cleverly summed up Pearson's objective for the Middle East.<sup>59</sup> Some of its readers, however, expressed support for the British-French action and condemned Canada's role at the UN while others supported the Canadian stand.<sup>60</sup>



### Egyptian Hieroglyphics

On the East Coast, the independent *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* strongly endorsed the Canadian position on the Suez crisis and condemned the British action: "Great Britain has used the veto for the first time in the Security Council – and that to ignore the very basic principles of

<sup>59</sup> *Gazette*, 16 December 1956, p. 8.

<sup>60</sup> See the "Letters From Our Readers" section of the editorial pages of 19 November 1956, p. 8, 24 November 1956, p. 6, and 27 November 1956, p. 8.

the United Nations itself."<sup>61</sup> It was the strongest condemnation of British action in the English-Canadian press. Nevertheless, it found the growing rift between Britain and the United States "disturbing" and applauded the "cautious moving," the "wise statesmanship" of the Canadian government, which it hoped all Canadians would support.<sup>62</sup>

Yet it agreed with Pearson that there was "No Parallel" between the Anglo-French action in Suez and Russia's "criminal onslaught upon Hungary" which Pearson had condemned at the UN.<sup>63</sup> It considered "Canada's Task" as taking the moral lead of the Commonwealth in showing "a spirit of charity and decency and justice," a task which the *Manchester Guardian* had recognised Canada was undertaking.<sup>64</sup>

### ***E. What about France?***

Editorial opinion in English-language newspapers was thus divided on the Anglo-French action in the Middle East and Canada's failure to support it at the United Nations. Those who supported Britain stressed the failure of the United Nations to act and the need to resist small-time dictators such as Nasser. Canada, they claimed, should have stood with Britain. Those who opposed the Anglo-French action, on the other hand, were disturbed that Canada was forced to disagree with Britain, but believed Canada had acted on moral grounds, an ethics inherited from the Commonwealth itself, as the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* intimated. In both cases, "British" values stood as the foundation on which editorial opinion was expressed.

In light of the fact that the Anglo-French action in the Middle East involved Canada's two "mother countries," it is remarkable that it drew almost no specific comment about the role of France and about its alliance with Britain. The issue was cast solely as one of Canada's relationship with Britain and of the survival of the Commonwealth. The English-language press did not raise the issue of Quebec's opinion on the question.<sup>65</sup> The Quebec press wholeheartedly supported the St. Laurent government on the issue and endorsed the idea of Canadian participation in the peace-keeping mission, a departure from the isolationist stance of some French-language newspapers. But this was of no interest in the English-language press. What was at stake was its own self-definition as a British nation, for some a definition that was being abandoned, for others a definition that was being reaffirmed in spite of the failings of Britain itself.

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<sup>61</sup> "The Sane Course," editorial, *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 1 November 1956, p. 4. The condemnation of the Anglo-French action was repeated in "Realistic Plan," editorial, 15 November 1956, p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> "Canada's Lead," editorial, *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 5 November 1956, p. 4.

<sup>63</sup> "No Parallel," editorial, *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 6 November 1956, p. 4.

<sup>64</sup> "Canada's Task," editorial, *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 13 November 1956, p. 4; "Proud Record," editorial, *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 14 November 1956, p. 4

<sup>65</sup> *Globe and Mail* columnist Robert Duffy summarised in sarcastic tones the editorial position of Quebec newspapers on 4 December 1956, p. 6.

### III. Parliament meets

The second major phase of the Suez debates in Canada occurred during the special session of Parliament, convened to vote the necessary credits for the Canadian contingent in the UN Emergency Force and to vote as well some relief funds for Hungarians refugees fleeing Communist repression. Two statements made by the Government in the House drew sharp editorial comment. The first was St. Laurent's implicit inclusion of Britain and France among the "supermen of Europe" whose time had passed, and the second was Pearson's answer to Howard Green, quoted at the beginning of this paper, in which he rejected the idea that Canada should be a "colonial chore boy." The first provoked near universal condemnation in the English-language press, while the second drew approval in some papers and condemnation in others.

For the *Calgary Herald*, the special session of Parliament was a renewed occasion to condemn Canadian foreign policy in the strongest terms. "The special session now under way has already proven to the country the futility of its government's policies, and the folly of its impulsive and erroneous judgement of Great Britain and France," it wrote on 28 November 1956. As for St. Laurent, he was "displaying that petulance the country has come to expect whenever Mr. St. Laurent finds himself in a tight corner he can't wriggle out of with a well-turned phrase or two. His only contribution has been a meaningless diatribe against the 'big powers.'" The same editorial snickered at the "familiar platitudes" the government "so often uses to cover up its blunders," and "the folly of its impulsive and erroneous judgement of Great Britain and France." The platitudes included the government "following an 'independent' course, free of the shackles of 'colonialism,'" an allusion to Pearson's remarks about chore boys.<sup>66</sup> On the same page, the paper published a letter from a "fourth generation Canadian" who found it "interesting to note that much of the senseless criticism of Britain comes from Canadians of European or Quebec background. They scorn everything British except the freedom they enjoy under a British flag which permits them to employ that freedom in reviling Britain." St. Laurent's ethnic origins undoubtedly explained, for this reader, his "senseless criticism."<sup>67</sup>

The paper returned to its condemnation of St. Laurent when the latter was congratulated by the *Chicago Daily Tribune* on the independence of Canada's foreign policy: The *Tribune*, wrote the *Herald*, "has long been known for its malicious condemnation of anything British in war or in peace" and now regarded Canada as being a "member of that not-too-exclusive band of Britain-haters, thanks to Mr. St. Laurent." "His words about the 'supermen of Europe' will live long in the minds of Canadians as a shocking memorial to the infamous behavior of his government as long as it holds office. Even many of those who have been in agreement with Canada's record in the Middle East found his words too much to stomach."<sup>68</sup> The *Edmonton Journal* was more forthright in attributing Canadian foreign policy to St. Laurent's personal "rancor and bitterness" against Britain. "One gets the impression, reading his speech, of the stored-up hatred of a lifetime suddenly coming to the surface."<sup>69</sup>

<sup>66</sup> "Parliament Hears A Pathetic Story," editorial, *Calgary Herald*, 28 November 1956, p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> "Letters to the Herald," *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> "Revelling in Canada's Day of Shame," editorial, *Calgary Herald*, 10 December 1956, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> "The Lines Are Drawn," editorial, *Edmonton Journal*, 28 November 1956, p. 4.



The *Globe and Mail* was more temperate in its criticism of the government. It did not take St. Laurent personally to task. It simply called St. Laurent's remark "his own, special contribution" to Canada's foreign policy. On 28 November, its editorial "Men and Supermen" chose to believe St. Laurent was not referring to Britain and France, but to Russia.<sup>70</sup> Yet, assessing the special session in its editorial of 1 December, it recalled St. Laurent's "spiteful criticism of Britain and France" but emphasised Conservative External Affairs critic John Diefenbaker's call for an international conference of France, the United States, and Commonwealth members in Quebec City.<sup>71</sup> On 4 December, it reproduced the *Chicago Daily Tribune's* editorial of 29 November which quoted the 'supermen of Europe' remark and it ironically labelled the editorial "a tribute to Canada's Prime Minister."<sup>72</sup>

The *Globe and Mail* agreed with Pearson that Canada should be no one's "chore boy." "Nobody has suggested that we should. What is being suggested is that we ought to follow a positive and courageous course in international affairs. What has been established is that we did not."<sup>73</sup> It condemned Canada's foreign policy as being dictated by the United States: "[w]e are caught seeming to approve and go along with the confusion in Washington; seeming to assist, to cover up and to justify the U.S. retreat into isolationism." Canada's "Only Real Hope" and interest in foreign policy, it argued, "is our membership in the British Commonwealth" and Canadian foreign policy should be refashioned accordingly.<sup>74</sup> In late December 1956, commenting on the forthcoming visit of Nehru to Ottawa, it reiterated its commitment to the Commonwealth. "[T]he British Commonwealth of Nations .... remains the most effective, perhaps the only effective international political organization in the world today." It also alluded to the "chore boy" remark with an appreciation of Canada's colonial links to Britain: "We do not wish to be a British colony today; but we count ourselves fortunate to have been one yesterday."<sup>75</sup>

The *Vancouver Sun* maintained its "independent" Liberal approach in its comments on the special session of Parliament. It labelled Canadian foreign policy "amateurish," the reason for St. Laurent's and Pearson's "pique in the Commons debates. They have betrayed what may be part of the motive – jealousy of Britain, the mother country, and perhaps a trace of the colonial resentment of a bygone age." It labelled Pearson's "chore boy" remark "an astonishing revelation of Mr. Pearson's subconscious mind" and an indication that the government utterly lacked an "understanding of Britain's situation."<sup>76</sup> Like the *Globe and Mail*, it considered that Canada's foreign policy had been "guided by American reaction to Suez" and that it should help "re-establish Commonwealth solidarity."<sup>77</sup> It rose to the defence of British values in an editorial reminding its readers of the "flesh and blood ... English people who have ... been bloodied in the cause of freedom." "They include not only the high-

<sup>70</sup> "Men and Supermen," editorial, *Globe and Mail*, 28 November 1956, p. 6.

<sup>71</sup> "Europe Must Unite," editorial, *Globe and Mail*, 1 December 1956, p. 6.

<sup>72</sup> *Globe and Mail*, 4 December 1956, p. 6.

<sup>73</sup> "The Silent Partner," editorial, *Globe and Mail*, 28 November 1956, p. 6.

<sup>74</sup> "Our Only Real Hope," editorial, *Globe and Mail*, 29 November 1956, p. 6.

<sup>75</sup> "A Matter of Understanding," editorial, *Globe and Mail*, 18 December 1956, p. 6.

<sup>76</sup> "Canada Must Redeem Itself," editorial, *Vancouver Sun*, 29 November 1956, p.4.

<sup>77</sup> "Canada Should Help," editorial, *Vancouver Sun*, 6 December 1956, p.4, The editorial recommended that Canada should waive the payment by Britain of interest on her post-war loans. The payment amounted to \$22 million. By their stand at the UN, the editorial argued, Canada and the United States had contributed to Britain's financial troubles.

saluting freedoms of right to worship, to speak and read freely, to assemble for discussion, to decide political destiny, but the freedom to live a commonplace life in the pursuit of happiness and escape from boredom." Besides these fundamental freedoms were a host of lesser ones which North Americans wished for, including drinking, gambling, and singing and dancing in pubs. "Small points these, it may be said. But remembering them, it is easier to visualize the background to the news. We sometimes wish Mr. Dulles, Mr. Eisenhower, Mr. St. Laurent and Mr. Pearson would remember these things – if they ever saw them."<sup>78</sup> Lumping St. Laurent and Pearson with Dulles and Eisenhower and implying their ignorance of "British freedoms" amounted to calling into question the latter two's commitment to Britain.

The Hamilton *Spectator* angrily called for answers to the questions raised by St. Laurent's and Pearson's statements in the House of Commons. It wanted to know who the Canadian "colonial chore-boys" were and what part of Canada they came from. "Is a 'colonial chore boy' to be taken as identifying those Canadians who did not at once damn Great Britain and France for a step that even now seems to have been a bold precaution that may actually have prevented a major conflict? We are afraid this is the only inference." As for lumping Britain and France together with Russia, as St. Laurent had done, "is that to be taken as a slip of a skilled tongue or does it take us back to 1917 and 1944?"<sup>79</sup> The allusion to the conscription crises of 1917 and 1944 implicitly raised the issue of St. Laurent's French-Canadian origins and, by extension, of the French Canadian people's lack of loyalty to Britain.

In Newfoundland, St. John's *Daily News* was appalled by St. Laurent's "scathing denunciation of Britain by inference." It told St. Laurent that he did not speak for Canada in being scandalised by Britain's conduct. "It does the Prime Minister no credit that he has refused to acknowledge that Britain has a case and it does him less than credit when he wilfully joins the myopic critics who try to throw on Britain and France the blame for the savage Soviet repression of the Hungarian revolt." "He seems to see Britain in the same light as less enlightened nations. And he has done no good to the Commonwealth, no good to Western interests, and no good to the unity of Canada by his unhappy and ill-chosen innuendos at Monday's session of the House of Commons."<sup>80</sup> The next day, the paper's editorial columnist, "Wayfarer," called St. Laurent's statement "unjust and irrational in all the circumstances." St. Laurent's declaration "could very well have the unhappy effect of dividing Canadians at a time when unity within the nation is essential for the good of the world."<sup>81</sup> On 30 November, the paper's editorial drew a distinction between the Prime Minister's "ill-tempered and ill-founded attack upon Britain" and Pearson's "more acceptable interpretation of Canada's policy on the Middle East question." It foresaw a threat to "the unity that is desired among the people of the Dominion of Canada" if Canadian foreign policy did not follow objectives consistent with Britain's goals in the Middle East.<sup>82</sup>

Neither of the flagship Liberal papers came to St. Laurent's defence. In its editorial of 27 November 1956, the *Toronto Daily Star* chose to ignore St. Laurent's remarks of the previous day in the House of Commons and instead focused on the acting Conservative Leader, Earle

<sup>78</sup> "These Freedoms..." editorial, *Vancouver Sun*, 15 December 1956, p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> "Answers, Please!," editorial, *Spectator*, 28 November 1956, p. 6.

<sup>80</sup> "St. Laurent and Britain," editorial, St. John's *Daily News*, 28 November 1956, p. 4.

<sup>81</sup> "Wayfarer," "In The News," St. John's *Daily News*, 29 November 1956, p. 4.

<sup>82</sup> "Canada's Foreign Policy," St. John's *Daily News*, 30 November 1956, p. 4.

Rowe, for his "perfect exhibition of the outdated colonial mentality." But the *Winnipeg Free Press* was not so lenient. Its own editorial, entitled "Anger is Out of Place," understood that St. Laurent might have been provoked by "some foolish Conservative criticisms," but his giving way to anger "makes this country's relations with its friends abroad more difficult. And it unnecessarily sharpens disagreements within Canada; it raises greater obstacles to that degree of national unity, among people of diverse origins and outlooks, which is necessary to a consistent and successful policy for Canada's dealings with the world." St. Laurent was "wrong and unfair to lump together the 'Great Powers' as a group." "The tragedy of Mr. St. Laurent's speech is that it was angry and immoderate when actual Canadian policy has been understanding and moderate."<sup>83</sup>

The *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* was the only paper to resolutely approve of St. Laurent's remark about the "supermen of Europe." "What Mr. St. Laurent said at Ottawa on Tuesday will be applauded by a very large majority of the Canadian people who, like him, have been 'scandalized more than once by the attitude of the big powers' toward the smaller nationalities and the United Nations itself. It is not the Canadian way to find satisfaction in regimentation of the small and weak by the great and powerful, not in defiance of the UN by any of the great powers for their own purposes and to advance their own interests."<sup>84</sup> Its editorial cartoonist drew a distinction between "great" powers and "big" powers.<sup>85</sup>



For the paper, Canada's foreign policy was governed by the moral imperative of duty, "by refusing to go along with the Mother Country of the Commonwealth when it felt that its

<sup>83</sup> "Anger is Out of Place," editorial, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 27 November 1956, p. 15.

<sup>84</sup> "Well Spoken!," editorial, *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 28 November 1956, p. 4.

<sup>85</sup> "Greatness Is Not Always A Matter Of Size," cartoon, *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 28 November 1956, p. 4.

acts were wrong. Canada was hailed again as a peacemaker and to its record was added the title of moral leader."<sup>86</sup>

This moral imperative extended to the sort of special welcome Canadians should give Hungarian refugees arriving in Canada in December 1956. "There must be special vigilance against their drifting into communities and clubs of their own. Canada cannot grow truly as a nation with various races allowed to become pockets within the nation, pockets where jealousy, suspicion and bitterness and anti-democracy breed. It cannot grow truly as a nation if some are to be pointed at with a sort of contempt or scorn as "those foreigners." It is not only for the good of the Hungarians, but for the good of those who already are Canadians that these newcomers be Canadianized as quickly as possible."<sup>87</sup>

#### IV. Conclusion

The Suez crisis gave rise to varying political positions among the editorial writers of English-speaking Canada's daily press. Helen Adam's tally of the 26 English-language dailies revealed an even split between those who, in her words, "supported the Canadian Government's stand" and those who "support the Anglo-French intervention."<sup>88</sup> But in nearly all the newspapers examined here – those of the major metropolitan centres – editorial position took the close links between Britain and Canada and Canada's role in the Commonwealth as granted. The arguments either for or against Canada's stand at the United Nations were very often expressed in the language of the moral values of freedom, justice, and loyalty. These values were invoked as part of the British political heritage of Canada. If this heritage led some to disagree with British action in the Middle East, so be it. Indeed, support for the Canadian refusal to back Britain at the UN was bolstered by reference to opposition to the Eden government's position both by the Labour Opposition and within the Eden government itself. Both among those who opposed Britain's intervention in Suez and those who approved of it, or at least "understood" the need for it, the frame of reference was Canada's self-definition as a "British" nation. There never was any questioning of Canada's participation in the Commonwealth, but occasionally some disparaging remarks about those members of the Commonwealth not part of the "older" (i.e., white) Dominions. The solidarity of culture, political tradition, and of "race" was the foundation of Canada's role in the Commonwealth.

Other values linked with the "British character" were invoked in the debate, especially among those who sided with Britain. The first was independence, a corollary of "British freedom." For newspapers such as the *Vancouver Sun* or Toronto's *Globe and Mail*, independence meant independence from the foreign policy of the United States and the freedom to align Canada's foreign policy with that of Britain. The second value appealed to in editorials was that of virility, a gender trait also deriving from Canada's "British" origins.

Editorial writers in the English-language press almost never bothered to comment on the specific role of France in the Suez crisis. The military intervention in Egypt was always called

<sup>86</sup> "Canada's Duty," editorial, *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 8 December 1956, p. 4.

<sup>87</sup> "Our New Citizens," editorial, *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 18 December 1956, p. 4.

<sup>88</sup> Adam, *op. cit.*, Appendix I, p. 181.

the 'Anglo-French action' but the behaviour of France never elicited any substantial editorial comment and Canada's relationship with France was never broached. It is not surprising, therefore, that French-Canadian opinion on the Canadian stand at the UN was not discussed in the English-language press. French-Canadian ethnicity was only invoked by those newspapers who wanted to suggest explanations for St. Laurent's lack of "loyalty" to Britain.

The Suez crisis was the occasion for English-speaking newspapers to offer representations of Canada as a "British" nation. This was not the exclusive self-representation of Canada extant among editorial writers, as I have shown elsewhere. But at this particular juncture, this was the most important representation to invoke in public debate. As such, it is a powerful indication that it touched an important common cultural trait among English-speaking Canadians. This trait had been highlighted ten years earlier in the parliamentary debate over the Canadian Citizenship Act. It was still persistent in 1956. Yet, less than ten years later, during the Flag Debate of 1964, the "Britishness" of Canada was no longer assumed to be essential to English-speaking Canadians' representations of themselves as a nation. How this came to be is the next chapter in the story of the "Other Quiet Revolution."