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HIST 4990

### Decolonizing the Uncolonized:

France, French Canadian Identity, and the Quebecois Nationalist Movement, 1945-1967

On the Plains of Abraham, high above the waters of the Saint Lawrence in what is today Quebec City, the Marquis de Montcalm's French troops were defeated by the British forces of General James Wolfe and surrendered on September 18, 1759.<sup>1</sup> By 1763, the two European powers concluded the Treaty of Paris, whereby Britain officially absorbed the Canadian territories into its already vast empire.<sup>2</sup> Though the 60,000 French-speaking inhabitants became subjects of the British Empire, they would not forget their *mère patrie* nor their newfound status under a foreign crown. For the Quebecois,<sup>3</sup> the association with France would resonate into the twentieth century, despite nearly two hundred years of British rule.

Due to the stark differences between the francophone inhabitants of Quebec and their anglophone counterparts, nationalist sentiment among the Quebecois ran high—forever bubbling, though rarely boiling over. The 1837 rebellion in Lower Canada was a rare precursor for the radicalism which would be prominent in Quebec over a century later. In 1837, a small group of French Canadian nationalists challenged the British government's division of the Canadian territory into Upper and Lower Canada—the former primarily anglophone and the latter francophone—and what they perceived to be the unjust power dichotomy between the two

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<sup>1</sup> *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Battle of the Plains of Abraham", accessed October 27, 2015.  
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/battle-of-the-plains-of-abraham/>.

<sup>2</sup> *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, s.v. "The Conquest", accessed October 27, 2015.  
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/conquest/>.

<sup>3</sup> There are limitations to the use of the term Quebecois in referring to the francophone citizens of Canada. Though most of the francophone Canadian population resides in Quebec, there are smaller populations in New Brunswick, Ontario, and Newfoundland and Labrador. However for the purposes of this paper Quebecois is sufficient as it refers to the population of the only majority francophone province Quebec and to the province in which the sovereignty movement originated and which it aimed to liberate.

linguistic groups.<sup>4</sup> However, these revolts were put down by the British military and, rather than creating an independent francophone country, led to the Durham Report which openly advocated unifying Canada under a federal government—what would become the 1840 Act of Union—in order to establish and secure Anglophone power in the province.<sup>5</sup> Despite this prominent failure, the Quebecois found a new source of inspiration for their independence movement after World War II: decolonization.<sup>6</sup> The use of decolonization as a form of inspiration, however, was challenged by the fact that after the establishment of a relatively autonomous Canadian federal government, Quebecois nationalists were hard pressed to prove their position as subordinated or colonized peoples. After all, by 1945 the Quebecois were officially represented in a democratic federal government and the Canadian territory had not been called a colony for nearly a century.<sup>7</sup>

Despite Britain's conquest of French territory,<sup>8</sup> the Quebecois maintained informal associations with France and identified strongly with the francophone world. The Quebecois

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<sup>4</sup> *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Rebellions of 1837", accessed November 1, 2015.

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/rebellions-of-1837/>

<sup>5</sup> "Durham's solution was drastic. The (French-) Canadians, he said, were a 'stagnant people'. If Lower Canada, with its French majority, were merged in a union with more dynamic British Upper Canada, the effects of immigration from Britain would soon act as a solvent on its backward society. The ambitious would anglicize: a distinct *Canadien* identity would gradually vanish." John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2012), 244.

<sup>6</sup> Only a few works have been undertaken which discuss the colonial identity of the Quebecois in the 1950s and 1960s, though much has been written about Quebec's nationalist movement, among the most comprehensive is William D. Coleman's *The Independence Movement in Quebec, 194-1980*. Many of the works on Quebec independence acknowledge the influence of colonial theorists for early Quebecois nationalism, but do not discuss them broadly. Alexis Lachaine's 2007 dissertation "Black and Blue: French Canadian Writers, Decolonization and Revolutionary Nationalism in Quebec, 1960-1969" addresses the influence of intellectuals—both Quebecois and colonial—for the nationalist movement in Quebec. Though limited to Montreal, Sean Mills' *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* is perhaps the closest to this work. It appears that few historical tracts, however, have been undertaken which connect the colonial identity of Quebec to its association with France.

<sup>7</sup> The British North America Act, also known as the Constitution Act, was enacted by the British Parliament on March 29, 1867. This established the Dominion of Canada as a self-governing entity. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Constitution Act, 1867", accessed November 22, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> The term "Conquest" has come to be synonymous with British military victory over French forces in 1759 for the Quebecois. It is unclear exactly when this term became widespread as a designator, but as early as 1768 there is evidence of this term being used in British periodicals. An article in the February edition of the *Evening Post* lists the subject of a literary competition for English verses to be "The Conquest of Quebec". In the remainder of this work, the term "The Conquest" should be understood to mean the British victory in 1759. "The Conquest of

began to see in the decolonization movements of the post-WWII world as inspiration for their own movement, relying heavily on examples from francophone colonies in Africa and the Caribbean in order to legitimize their work. Utilizing the terminology, theories, and examples of Third World decolonization movements, the Quebecois pressed for sovereignty by labeling themselves as victims of anglophone colonization. Simultaneously, Quebecois nationalists moved closer to France, a natural ally considering their shared identity, in order to support their movement. Quebec's tacit partnership with de Gaulle's France throughout this period demonstrates the importance of the colonial label, as these associations would have been impossible had the Quebecois accepted agency in the Canadian federation. The dichotomous association of Quebec with both the Third World and a great European power between 1945 and 1967<sup>9</sup> eventually delegitimized British rule in French Canada by reshaping Quebecois history into a colonial history, which spurred the nationalist movement by providing not only an international ally, but a legitimized pro-sovereignty framework in which the Quebecois could situate themselves.<sup>10</sup>

Though certainly not identical to the decolonization movements taking hold around the world, Quebec's self-ascribed colonial identity was based on some historical facts which could be reconciled in traditional notions of colonial rule, including economic and political power

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Quebec" *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post* (London, England), February 18, 1768-February 20, 1768. Issue 1088. British Library, accessed November 22, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> These dates are carefully selected. France began to lose its empire during WWII, but decolonization movements in French colonies did not begin in earnest until after the end of the war. As these movements were vital for the Quebecois identity, it is a natural starting point. The end date was chosen as this was the year Charles de Gaulle cried "Vive le Quebec Libre" from the balcony of City Hall in Montreal. This began a new period of clear, earnest agitation for sovereignty in Quebec which surpasses the scope of this paper.

<sup>10</sup> The association between France and Quebec in the 1960s is well-known. Edouard Baraton's 2009 MA thesis for the University of Quebec at Chicoutimi, subsequently published, entitled "De Gaulle ou l'Hypothèque Française sur le Canada" explores the origins of this association as it pertains to de Gaulle's international intentions and French-Quebec identity. The most comprehensive work on foreign affairs between France, Canada, and Quebec in this period, however, is David Meren's 2012 work *With Friends Like These: Entangled Nationalism and the Canada-Quebec-France Triangle, 1944-1970*.

differentials. British rule in Canada rendered its francophone subjects “a conquered group, politically and economically dominated...they clung to the soil, to their language, to their religion, to their way of life.”<sup>11</sup> As the Quebecois utilized historical realities of anglophone domination in Quebec to argue that they were a colony subordinated by the British, it is important to take a moment to understand the facts they utilized as these informed the identity they would develop.

Albert Memmi’s foundational work *The Colonizer and the Colonized* presents a useful framework for understanding Quebec as a British or Anglo-Canadian colony and the Quebecois as colonized peoples. While not the only aspect of colonialism he defines, Memmi places economic domination as the primary motivator for colonization. Memmi argues that the profit of the colonizer is necessarily bred from the colonized, “...if [the colonizer’s] living standards are high, it is because those of the colonized are low...it is because the colonized can be exploited at will...”<sup>12</sup> Fittingly, the economic aspect of Quebecois colonization is perhaps the most clear. For the first several decades of British rule, French Canadian populations had little contact with their new rulers: “Of the 70,000 French Canadians, 85 percent were rural inhabitants isolated from contact with the British.”<sup>13</sup> Whether by intention on the part of the anglophones, as nationalists would later argue, or by happenstance, the Quebecois were far-removed from cities—sources of economic power—and thus rarely capable of establishing large businesses,<sup>14</sup> instead often relegated to agricultural work from which little profit could be wrested. Without sympathetic

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<sup>11</sup> 1978 Quebec government statement of policy on Quebec’s cultural development, quoted in Ramsay Cook, *Watching Quebec: Selected Essays* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 58.

<sup>12</sup> Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, trans. Howard Greenfield (New York: Orion Press, 1965), 8.

<sup>13</sup> John Dickinson and Brian Young, *A Short History of Quebec*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008), 53.

<sup>14</sup> D’Allemagne claims that 85 percent of francophone enterprises had less than 50 employees, while “...la grande entreprise...est notoirement entre les mains de la haute finance canadienne-anglaise...” Andre d’Allemagne, *Le Colonialism au Quebec* (Montreal: Edition R-B, 1966), 44.

government institutions or profitable industry, the Quebecois remained at the mercy of anglophones and in a state of poverty “which they resented, and which stayed with them throughout their history.”<sup>15</sup>

Economic factors of anglophone domination were extremely influential for Quebecois leftists. In Andre d’Allemagne’s 1968 book *Le Colonialism au Quebec*, d’Allemagne emphasized the economic aspect of Quebec’s colonization heavily, saying: “After the Conquest, the conquerors organized the exploitation of the conquered along precise lines....From their subjects, the conqueror demanded permanent ransoms: taxes of diverse forms, economic monopoly, and, occasionally, a blood ransom.”<sup>16</sup> His language leaves little to the imagination. The economic exploitation of the Quebecois by anglophones provides a clear comparison between Quebec and other colonies, made more sensitive to intellectuals in the twentieth century due to the fact that this economic domination, perhaps somewhat astonishingly, continued unabated after the Second World War. Indeed, in the 1950s and 60s, “the positions occupied by French Canadians in North American economy were as minor as they had been in 1810” as francophones controlled only fractional amounts of nearly every major industry.<sup>17</sup> The increased prosperity which had spread across the developed world throughout the nineteenth century, including in much of Canada, never reached the impoverished Quebecois. Instead, francophones

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<sup>15</sup> William D. Coleman, *The Independence Movement in Quebec 1945-1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 25-26.

<sup>16</sup> “Après la conquête, le peuple vainqueur organisait l’exploitation du peuple vaincu selon des règles bien précises... De ses sujets le vainqueur exigeait des rançons permanents: les impôts de diverses formes, le monopole économiques, et, à l’occasion, la rançon du sang.” d’Allemagne, *Le Colonialism au Quebec*, 12.

<sup>17</sup> An analysis undertaken in 1961 provides almost startling evidence of this inequality and further demonstrates the disproportionate amount of agricultural work undertaken by Francophones. In the agricultural industry, 88.3 percent of the national profit was owned by francophone Quebecois and only 11.7 percent was owned by Anglophones from Quebec. In every other industry in Canada, however, the Anglophones dominated. Only 2.2 percent of the mining industry was owned by Quebecois Francophones, as compared to 46 percent by Anglophones in Quebec; 43 percent of manufacturing was owned by Anglophones compared to 10 percent by Francophones. Coleman, *The Independence Movement in Quebec*, 26, 39.

relied heavily on the Catholic Church to supply education, healthcare, and a variety of other social services.<sup>18</sup> The economic power of the anglophones was the most identifiable historical reality underscored by nationalist intellectuals as they constructed a colonial Quebecois identity.

Though they were the easiest comparisons to draw, the economic domination of the Quebecois was not the only aspect of their history which permitted comparison to other colonial situations: differences in political power were also vital to the colonial identity. Again, Memmi emphasizes this point as he describes the attempt of some colonized peoples to “escape from their political and social condition”,<sup>19</sup> thus implying their necessarily lesser status. This was certainly true in Quebec throughout its history. “In the 1950s and 1960s, “nearly two thirds of [Montreal’s] population spoke primarily French, yet in the city’s [most powerful] neighborhoods...English prevailed.”<sup>20</sup> Though francophones were the majority population in Canada until 1867,<sup>21</sup> Anglophones remained the dominant source of political power in the federation even before this point. In the Act of Union, for example, Upper and Lower Canada were granted equal representation in Parliament and the federal government’s cabinet was divided evenly between the two despite the differences in population between the more populous French Lower Canada and the less populous English Upper Canada. From the Conquest onward, therefore, the Quebecois lived in a land controlled primarily by a population who spoke a different language, practiced a different religion, and remained loyal to what francophones continued to view as a foreign Crown. This historical power imbalance provided some concrete evidence leftists would use to reconstruct the Quebecois as a colonial people.

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<sup>18</sup> Coleman, *The Independence Movement in Quebec*, 46.

<sup>19</sup> Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 16.

<sup>20</sup> Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 4.

<sup>21</sup> In 1841 Lower Canada, primarily francophone, had a significantly larger population than Upper Canada, primarily anglophone: 650,000 against 450,000. Upper Canada would only surpass Lower Canada in population in 1867. Raymond Barbeau, *Le Quebec est-il une colonie?* (Montreal: Editions de l’homme 1962), 13.

Other than in the economic and political aspects of colonial theory, however, the comparison between the Quebecois and other colonies was less clear. Certainly, the Quebecois were a minority in terms of language, religion, and overall culture, but many of the aspects of colonialism described by Memmi and others—racial differences, intentional repression of minorities, and other facets—remained unrepresented in Quebec. However, the fact that the Quebecois *saw* themselves as a colonized people matters much more than whether they actually were.

Regardless of the lack of an official “colonial” title, Quebecois intellectuals strove to create a colonial identity by re-appropriating theories of decolonization put forth by famed intellectuals of the Third World. Seeing themselves as subjects under first the British and then the Anglo-Canadians, the idea of self-determination had long been important for the Quebecois; decolonization movements, therefore, provided an opportunity to reimagine the Quebec as a colony and thus legitimize their desire for autonomy, reformed as a decolonization movement of their own, assuming the Quebecois could convince others of their colonial status.

After WWII, radical leftist Quebecois began to appeal to theories of decolonization to legitimize their nationalism. Raymond Barbeau, a Quebecois leftist who began the magazine *Laurentie*, wrote: “Regardless of what the destiny may be of the Arabs, Blacks, Irish, or others, decolonization represents a positive event, it is an example to follow for the Quebecois.”<sup>22</sup> Yet the re-association of Quebec history with a colonial past began in earnest only with the beginning of the Franco-Algerian War in 1954. Francophone newspapers in the province reported heavily on the conflict: an estimated 7.7 percent of the news coverage in francophone magazines focused on Algeria, significant considering this conflict had few ramifications for

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<sup>22</sup> “Qu’elle soit finalement le fait d’Arabes, de Noirs, d’Irlandais ou d’autres, la décolonisation représente un évènement positif, c’est un exemple à suivre pour les Québécois.” Deleuze, *L’une et l’autre indépendance*, 85.

Canada.<sup>23</sup> While interest in this event was generally high among the Quebecois, it was radical leftists, such as Barbeau, who were the first to take up the mantle of colonial identity through the Algerian example. Barbeau clearly and repeatedly took the Algerian conflict to represent a national ideal for his own people. Indeed, when asked towards the end of the Algerian War whether the Quebecois wanted their independence, Barbeau responded: “Laurentiens, like Algerians, want emancipation...”<sup>24</sup> Radical leftists took to this example early and emphatically. As early as 1959, the popular magazine *La Revue Socialiste*, stated explicitly in a manifesto: “The French Canadians represented an oppressed, colonial people.”<sup>25</sup>

By the 1960s, the idea of Quebec as a colony had spread to less radical intellectual circles and would eventually become common among the general population. *Cite Libre*, an influential, and admittedly still leftist, magazine to which many Quebecois politicians and intellectuals contributed, adopted this ideology as early as 1960. In an article entitled “Not more backwards than the Arabs”, future Prime Minister René Levesque explicitly compared the Algerians to the Quebecois. “The Arabs of today are poor. Like us. They are, at the ends of the Mediterranean, poor people with burnouses and turbans, and we are poor people with coats and felt hats on the shores of the Saint Lawrence.”<sup>26</sup> While less eager to promote the violence they saw in Algeria, nationalists in Quebec certainly believed there to be strong similarities between themselves and this colonial movement. Moreover, the Quebecois, while not necessarily condoning French

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<sup>23</sup> Magali Deleuze, *L'une et l'autre indépendance, 1954-1964: les médias au Québec et la guerre d'Algérie*. (Quebec: Point de Fuite, 2001), 43.

<sup>24</sup> Barbeau habitually called the Quebecois “laurentiens” in an effort to remove their association with the Anglophones in Canada. “Les laurentiens, comme les Algériens, veulent l’émancipation... ils veulent la fin de l’aliénation du peuple Québécois.” Deleuze, *L'une et l'autre indépendance*, 163.

<sup>25</sup> “Les Canadiens (français) forment un peuple colonial opprime.” Raoul Roy, “Manifeste de la Revue Socialiste” (1959) accessed November 2, 2015. [http://bilan.usherbrooke.ca/voutes/callisto/dhsp3/lois/Manifeste\\_Revue\\_socialiste.html](http://bilan.usherbrooke.ca/voutes/callisto/dhsp3/lois/Manifeste_Revue_socialiste.html).

<sup>26</sup> “Donc, les Arabes d’aujourd’hui sont des pauvres. Comme nous. Ils sont, au fond de la Méditerranée, des pauvres a burnous et turban, et nous des pauvres a veston et feutre mou au bord du Saint-Laurent.” René Levesque, “Pas Plus Bêtes que les Arabes” *Cite Libre*, May 1960, 17.



actions in Algeria, viewed them as no different than those of other colonial powers. Many were even relatively sympathetic towards the French: “We should not be surprised that the concerted attack against the French be precisely meant to make us forget the crimes of other powerful states today.”<sup>27</sup> The Algerian war, therefore, not only helped forge a Quebecois colonial identity, but also “permitted some to rediscover France”<sup>28</sup> as an ally.

As the conception of colonial Quebec became more widespread, intellectuals began to embrace broader theories of decolonization and not just specific examples. They attempted to justify, renegotiate, and tailor the theories meant for African and Caribbean colonies to their own needs. The Quebecois versions of these narratives, however, relied heavily on economic and political oppression in order to align themselves with decolonization movements, often ignoring or minimizing the racial and cultural dynamics present in many theories.

As it had become vital for many decolonization movements, race, in particular, was among the more problematic differences between colonial theory and reality in Quebec. “By the 1960s race had become a central issue in the decolonization struggle around the world,”<sup>29</sup> inspired by conceptions of *negritude* created by African and Caribbean colonials. Originally created by Leopold Sedar Senghor and Aime Cesaire,<sup>30</sup> the *negritude* movement encouraged indigenous peoples from French colonies to decry colonial racial hierarchies, understanding these to be essential to assimilatory practices, and instead take pride in their own traditional ideals and in their race.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> “Nous ne saurions pas autrement étonnés que l’attaque concertée contre la France soit précisément destinée à nous faire oublier les crimes des puissants de l’heure.” R.B. “Haro sur la France” *Cite Libre*, December 1955, 38.

<sup>28</sup> Deleuze, *L’une et l’autre indépendance* 141.

<sup>29</sup> Alexis Lachaine, “Black and Blue: French Canadian Writers, Decolonization and Revolutionary Nationalism in Quebec, 1960-1969” (PhD diss., York University, 2007), 8.

<sup>30</sup> The word itself was first utilized in Cesaire’s poem “Cahier d’un retour au pays natal”. Aime Cesaire and Abiola Irele, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (Nigeria: New Horn Press, 1994).

<sup>31</sup> Britannica Academic, s.v. “Negritude,” accessed November 1, 2015.

<http://academic.eb.com/EBchecked/topic/408139/Negritude>.

How, then, could the Quebecois argue for their status as a colony despite the fact that they and their conquerors were of the same race? Pierre Valliers' controversial work *White Niggers of America*<sup>32</sup> dealt with this challenge explicitly by attempting to erase the importance of race in colonial systems. Instead, Valliers argued that tensions between the colonizer and the colonized were solely due to social and economic systems of subordination and that racial tensions were only a form of this subordination. Valliers' use of the word "nigger" completely negates the historical and racial implications. He suggested instead that the word implied only economic domination. Valliers' redefinition permitted him to argue that under the English, the Quebecois "were...beasts of burden, despised in a hostile country,"<sup>33</sup> just as, he states, African slaves had been in European colonies. Though he admitted the lack of racial differentiation in Canada, Vallier again emphasized that the word "nigger" meant only to subordinate and thus stated that the Quebecois were "aware of their condition as niggers, exploited men...Have they not been...the servants of the imperialists, the white niggers of America?"<sup>34</sup> Again, he utilizes the term as a descriptor of exploitation, not a racial epithet. While not all Quebecois went so far as Valliers in effacing race's place in colonialism, other intellectuals attempted to at least minimize its importance for their own decolonization movement.

Though Vallier's work was popular amongst Quebecois intellectuals,<sup>35</sup> for those unwilling to make that leap, the Algerian example once again became useful in demonstrating the applicability of Third World decolonization theories for their clearly non-racially based movement. For example, a 1957 article in the publication *Saturday Night* emphasized the

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<sup>32</sup> Pierre Vallieres, *White Niggers of America: The Precocious Autobiography of a Quebec 'Terrorist'*, trans. By Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>35</sup> Valliers' "writings [had extended] beyond the small coterie of fellow writers and intellectuals to gain important recognition within the broader cultural and political spheres of the province." Lachaine, "Black and Blue", 12.

presence of non-black peoples in Algeria: “The Franco-Algerian situation is quite particular, notably due to the presence of a strong white minority...settled in Algeria for more than a century.”<sup>36</sup> The Quebecois, an economic minority in Canada, but by no means a racial one, found a source of identity in these white minority revolutionaries as it appeared to minimize the importance of race in decolonization. Other intellectuals worked to minimize race’s importance in their own situation as well. D’Allemagne argued that “the absence of racial conflict made colonialism in Quebec a ‘colonialism of gentlemen,’”<sup>37</sup> Still colonization, certainly, but simply a unique form of this process. Race challenged Quebecois colonial identity, but was a surmountable obstacle for nationalists aiming to reconcile their perceptions of subordination with historical realities.

The frequent interactions between Quebec and Third World theorists, including Frantz Fanon, Aime Cesaire, Jacques Berque, and Albert Memmi, all whom visited Quebec at some point, led to the Quebecois’ embracal of the terminology of colonial theory, not just its broad descriptors. The opening lines of Vallier’s books reflect much of the rhetoric of decolonization, stating:

I claim to do no more than bear witness to the determination of the workers of Quebec to put an end to three centuries of exploitation, of injustices borne in silence, of sacrifices accepted in vain... to transform into a more just and fraternal society this country, Quebec, which is theirs... where they have always been the overwhelming majority of citizens and producers of the ‘national’ wealth, yet where they have never enjoyed the economic power and the political and social freedom to which their numbers and labor entitle them.<sup>38</sup>

In nearly all aspects of colonialism—economic, political, or racial—nationalists were determined to find in Quebec a colonial identity. As the years passed, this reshaping of Quebecois identity

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<sup>36</sup> Deleuze, *L’une et l’autre indépendance*, 62.

<sup>37</sup> “...l’absence de conflit racial font du colonialisme au Québec un ‘colonialisme de gentlemen’.” D’Allemagne, *Le Colonialisme au Québec*, 27.

<sup>38</sup> Valliers, *White Niggers of America*, 17.

became increasingly clear to the Quebecois as well as to the international community; Memmi explicitly acknowledged that Quebecois were “the most recent to find a similarity to their own form of alienation”<sup>39</sup> in his 1965 discussion of colonialism. While these narratives held more sway with the Quebecois leftists, certainly, “decolonization had an impact across Quebec’s ideological spectrum,”<sup>40</sup> permitting Quebec’s government to utilize the rhetoric of decolonization to promote their autonomy.<sup>41</sup>

Though independence had long been on the minds of more radical Quebecois, the support of an international power for a nationalist movement could only be gained once the Quebecois had legitimized their end-goal by portraying themselves as a colony subject to Anglo-domination. Not only did this colonial *prise de conscience* spur the nationalist movement in general, but it was vital for Quebec’s ability to move away from the Canadian federal government and towards another source of international legitimacy to support their autonomy. The necessity of international support was not lost on Quebecois intellectuals; Barbeau wrote that “proclaiming national sovereignty... [would be done in order to] obtain international recognition” for the newly founded state.<sup>42</sup> The presence of a powerful linguistic and cultural connection between Quebec and France, therefore, led the Quebecois to find in them a strong ally. In turn, France’s expansionist and exhibitionist politics under Charles de Gaulle made the French particularly sympathetic to the Quebecois, encouraging the province’s active participation in the newly free francophone world.

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<sup>39</sup> Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, xi.

<sup>40</sup> David Meren, *With Friends Like These: Entangled Nationalisms and the Canada-Quebec-France Triangle, 1944-1970* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2012), 109.

<sup>41</sup> “...the very terms linked to the Lesage government’s reforms—‘Quiet Revolution,’ ‘Maîtres chez Nous’—evoked decolonization, and Quebec officials did not shy from applying the phenomenon to explain their actions.” Meren, *With Friends Like These*, 109.

<sup>42</sup> “...Le gouvernement Québécois devra: Proclamer la souveraineté nationale, constitutionnel, et politique de l’État du Québec en vue d’obtenir la reconnaissance international...” Barbeau, *Le Québec est-il une colonie?*, 154.

Despite Britain's military conquest in the eighteenth century, the Quebecois remained strongly associated with their *mère patrie* both intellectually and culturally, which embraced them wholeheartedly. In the years following the Conquest, francophones in Canada were often treated on par with francophones in France.<sup>43</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville noted in a nineteenth century work, "We cannot contest [the Quebecois'] origin, they are just as French as you and I."<sup>44</sup> Indeed, even as the French re-expanded their empire in the 1850s, many became enthralled with this perception of "the quality of ...the *francogenes*"<sup>45</sup> in Quebec. The perpetuated association between the two francophone populations meant that, after World War II, as France worked to increase its international power, it turned to Quebec as an ally.<sup>46</sup> For France, supporting Quebec's nationalist movement would, at worst, expand the list of countries which comprised the francophone world and could support France's foreign policy, or, at best, prove France's ability to "act without asking other countries' opinion, act...independently."<sup>47</sup>

The Quebecois were receptive to this strengthened association, as they too perceived themselves to be tied to France. Since the British Conquest, ties between the people remained prevalent among the Quebecois population. Only thirty years after the Conquest, in a letter to Napoleon Bonaparte, a citizen wrote that French Canada had sent several representatives to the French court to pursue "the intentions of the Canadian peoples to return under the French Empire

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<sup>43</sup> Historian Claude de Bonnault stated that in regards to Canadians after 1763, "A Canadian—even born in Canada after the Conquest—proved that he was 'of the honest family' and the French didn't ask of him any more than others; he was instead accepted whole-heartedly," Quoted in Edouard Baraton, "De Gaulle ou l'Hypothèque Française sur le Canada" (MA thesis, University of Quebec at Chicoutimi, 2009), 75.

<sup>44</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville quoted in Baraton, "De Gaulle ou L'Hypothèque Française", 79.

<sup>45</sup> Baraton, "De Gaulle ou L'Hypothèque Française", 79.

<sup>46</sup> De Gaulle's policies emphasized France's need to return to power on the world stage, challenging the hegemony of the United States. His staunch support of Quebecois independence has been said to demonstrate not a direct national interest, but rather for the broader ideal of francophone independence. Edouard Baraton, *De Gaulle ou L'Hypothèque Française sur le Canada* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013), 87.

<sup>47</sup> Garret Joseph Martin, *General de Gaulle's Cold War: challenging American hegemony, 1963-1968* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 151.

and once more retain the glorious name of France.”<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the Quebecois revolts of 1837-38 were undertaken under the auspices of “restoring [to Quebec] the French name in North America where [the Quebecois] had been debased since the odious treaty of 1763.”<sup>49</sup> Quebecois identity had been intertwined with France for nearly two centuries after the British Conquest; yet, still inspired by decolonization, the Quebecois nationalists in the 1950s and 60s strove for independence supported by the French rather than subordination under a new, non-British ruler.

The French nature of the Quebecois was not in question. Yet how could France justify its support without establishing a neocolonial possession in the British Empire? The colonial identity of Quebec was key. France, after WWII, had reformed its colonial policies, shifting from the nineteenth century conception of imperialism as a *mission civilisatrice*, to “a *mission libératrice*,” embraced by Gaullist France, which presented “itself as a champion of self-determination, decolonization, and the developing world,”<sup>50</sup> certainly in part as a challenge to American hegemony. France could only support Quebec’s independence, however, if Quebec was not perceived to be a legitimate territory of Canada, but rather subjugated as a colony. Conveniently, while the reality of Quebec as a colony was disputed, Quebecois self-determination under the guise of decolonization presented a political opportunity for France. De Gaulle could treat Quebec just like any other ex-French colony,<sup>51</sup> despite the long caesura since official French rule.

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<sup>48</sup> Though colonial rule under France seemed a popular alternative for Quebecois nationalists in the nineteenth century, later nationalists wanted to position themselves as another of France’s ex-colonies: nominally independent with some measure of support from France rather than explicitly subordinated under a European power. By the mid-twentieth century, any form of subordination was unappealing to the Quebecois. Robert Larin, *Canadiens en Guyane, 1754-1805*, (Paris: Septentrion/Presses Paris Sorbonne, 2006), 261.

<sup>49</sup> Louis Joseph Papineau, *Histoire de la résistance du Canada au gouvernement anglais* (Montreal: Comeau and Nadeau, 2001), 25.

<sup>50</sup> Meren, *With Friends Like These*, 110.

<sup>51</sup> De Gaulle was notorious for his cries of independence, even in places where he had no intention of maintaining this commitment. Near the end of the Algerian conflict, de Gaulle claimed to support the establishment of “the government of Algeria by Algerians, supported by the help of France and in a tight union with her for the economy,

Meanwhile, events in Canada demonstrated the continued tensions between francophones and anglophones in Quebec. In 1963, the Pearson government established what would become known as the Laurendeau-Dunton Commission to explore bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada to assuage many of the economic and political complaints presented by nationalists. Though English Canadians remained doubtful of the Quebec's colonial status, Pearson understood the potential threat of Quebec's growing nationalist movement. The Commission, therefore, was intended "to discover ways and means in which this liberation could take place, without breaking the union..."<sup>52</sup> The colonized Quebecois, however, viewed any proposed compromise as illegitimate, haunted as they were by the long-term effect of the last bilingual accord in Canada—the Durham Report. In accordance with other international examples, it was clear to the decolonizing Quebecois that colonization could not be reformed.

Nationalism and anti-anglophone sentiment in Quebec led to "a growing appreciation of France as an indispensable ally in preserving the province's majority francophone society in the face of... [global] changes..."<sup>53</sup> France, in turn, held a vested interest in proving its power internationally by supporting independent francophone nations—especially ones which might form so near to the United States. Despite France's interests, however, their association with the Quebecois independence movement could only be made once Quebec had established itself as a colony subject to anglophone domination. Without this identity, France would simply be meddling in international affairs and the alliance between the two would not have been perceived as legitimate either by the Quebecois or amongst global civil society.

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education, defense, and foreign relations..." No doubt he envisioned a similar association should colonial Quebec achieve its independence. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et Messages: Tome III: Avec le renouveau 1958-1962* (Paris: Plon, 1991), 117-123.

<sup>52</sup> John T. Saywell, "Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism" *International Journal* 20, no. 3 (Summer 1965), 379.

<sup>53</sup> Meren, *With Friends Like These*, 6.

After Quebecois intellectuals laid claim to their colonial identity and unofficial diplomatic affairs had been conducted between France and Quebec for several years, Charles de Gaulle delivered the *coup de resistance* in support of Quebec's 'decolonization'. On July 24, 1967, de Gaulle stood on a balcony overlooking a crowd in Montreal and declared:

Great emotion fills my heart when I see before me the French city of Montreal... I have noticed what immense efforts of progress, of development and consequently of empowerment you have accomplished here, and that it is in Montreal which I must say this, because if there is a city paradigmatic of modern success, it is yours! I say it is yours and I permit myself to say, it is ours! ... And, of course, the aid that France brings here... she knows well that you will reciprocate... Long live Quebec, long live free Quebec, long live French Canada, and long live France!<sup>54</sup>

France and Quebec's association was made official when de Gaulle declared France's unequivocal support for the Quebecois nationalist movement. This would not have been possible without the reshaping of Quebec as a colony; indeed, it was only after the Quebecois had firmly established their colonial identity that they could solidify their ties with the *mère patrie* and challenge the Canadian federal status quo. Without such an ideology, France's interactions with Quebec would have been wholly inappropriate—even so, Canada's federal Department of External Affairs "feared the nascent [association] as 'a barely disguised mechanism for...intrusion in our internal affairs.'"<sup>55</sup>

Quebec's colonial identity remained strong in the province even beyond de Gaulle's speech. Intellectuals developed this identity fully throughout the 1950s and 60s and their push for Quebecois sovereignty gained traction, though not all of this support can be ascribed to their

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<sup>54</sup> "C'est une immense émotion qui remplit mon cœur en voyant devant moi la ville française de Montréal... j'ai constaté quel immense effort de progrès, de développement, et par conséquent d'affranchissement vous accomplissez ici et c'est à Montréal qu'il faut que je le dise, parce que, s'il y a au monde une ville exemplaire par ses réussites modernes, c'est la vôtre. Je dis c'est la vôtre et je permets d'ajouter c'est la nôtre... et, d'ailleurs, le concours que la France va...prêter ici, elle sait bien que vous le lui rendrez...Vive le Québec! Vive le Québec libre! Vive le Canada français! Et vive la France!" Charles de Gaulle "Voyage a Montreal" July 24, 1967 (3:58) Montreal, Canada. Accessed November 1, 2015. <http://fresques.ina.fr/de-gaulle/liste/recherche/Theme.id/31/e#sort/DateAffichage/direction/DESC/page/1/size/10/filters/Theme.id/2/e>

<sup>55</sup> DEA file quoted in Meren, *With Friends Like These*, 176.



colonial identity. In keeping with the Algerian example, a militant nationalist group known as the Front de liberation du Quebec, kidnapped and killed a British and a Canadian government official in 1970.<sup>56</sup> Though the nationalism movement continued well after this incident—the first referendum for sovereignty was put to a popular vote in 1980—narratives of colonial identity fell into disfavor after the FLQ’s actions. The Quebecois were not so in favor of decolonization that they would tolerate terrorism.

Between 1945 and 1967, the heyday of the Quebecois colonial narrative, Quebec’s colonial identity not only spurred popular support for nationalism but also permitted France to promote self-determination in Quebec—despite the province’s status under the Canadian federal government—as it did many other French colonies. Indeed, despite the movement’s failure, Quebecois nationalists’ re-shaping of Quebec into a colonized territory, though likely done with little intention of fostering international cooperation, not only provided access to a source of international support, but began what would become a dramatic “decolonization” movement in an area which had not been a colony for nearly two hundred years.

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<sup>56</sup> *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Front de liberation du Quebec”, accessed November 22, 2015. <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/front-de-liberation-du-quebec/>.

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