

We all know, and the papers constantly remind us, as they echo the statements of politicians in Quebec and Ottawa, that it is essential for the survival of the French language and culture in Canada that Quebec play a part in the world's French-speaking community, that it strengthen its ties with the French-speaking nations of the world, and with France in particular. I am struck by the fact that, not only does everyone agree on this but both the Federal Government and the provincial governments are taking positive and effective steps to carry out this purpose. To some commentators it even seems as if the governments are attempting to outdo one another. Even if we accept this interpretation, which I do not, what does it prove? Simply that the Canadian Government considers it as much its duty as Quebec's to maintain the closest possible ties with the French-speaking world. In short, there is no difference in this area between the goals of Quebec and Ottawa, both of which are seeking closer contacts with the French-speaking community in order to assist in the development of French culture at home and to make our version of this culture known abroad. But it makes a difference whether this policy is conducted by Quebec or Ottawa. If conducted by Quebec, it will to some extent serve the interests of Quebecers, but only their interests. If it is undertaken on a broader base by the Canadian Government, it can serve the interests not only of Quebecers but also of the French-speaking people of Ontario, Manitoba and New Brunswick, not to mention those English Canadians who are willing to accept the "French fact". But there is an even more serious consideration; if that part of Canada's foreign policy which is concerned with our relations with the French-speaking world became the monopoly of the Province of Quebec, the tendency people have to identify Quebec with French Canada would become that much stronger, at the very time (and this is the supreme paradox) when the "French fact" has finally acquired its rights in the other provinces. In other words, at the very moment when the rest of Canada is discovering that it has a real interest in French culture, and when the French minorities in the other provinces can hope to breathe more easily and, so to speak, in French, Quebec, by insisting that it is the sole genuine representative of French Canada on the international level, risks undoing what is now finally, after 100 years, being accomplished in our country to realize an objective which has always been uppermost for Quebecers. Instead of working for the diffusion of the French language, Quebec may succeed, perhaps unintentionally, in helping to restrict it. It is, in fact, obvious that, if we accept the idea that French Canada is Quebec, by the same token we must accept the idea that the rest of Canada is English. In short, I see a danger that, if we accept the premise that only Quebec is logically entitled to represent French Canada in the world French-speaking community, then we must accept the conclusion that what is not part of Quebec may be excluded from this French-speaking community. By doing this we should isolate Quebec from the rest of the country, deprive French-Canadians outside Quebec of the right to be French, and discourage those English-speaking Canadians who are willing to accept French culture.

If, on the contrary, we accept the fact that in foreign countries it is the voice of Canada that is to be heard, if we accept the idea that it is the Government of Canada which is to make formal commitments on behalf of the whole country, then, if this voice is to be heard in a French-speaking environment, we automatically accept the idea that it will be a French voice. In view of the demographic and political situation in Canada, this voice, if it is to ring true, must have an accent that English-speaking Canadians can recognize without difficulty. There is no reason why a Canadian delegation to a meeting of the French-speaking community could not include, besides Quebecers, French-Canadians from other provinces, and perhaps even a few English Canadians. Obviously, such a