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I would not be happy, Madame, and all the citizens of Montreal, whether English or French-speaking, would hold it against me if I did not use French words in welcoming you among us. We know how easily and how charmingly you speak French, and we venture to believe that you make use of it with as much pleasure as ease.

But that is not the main reason why I should make use of it myself. We wish to speak to you tonight of human rights and fundamental liberties for all and there is no better proof of the respect of these rights and liberties under British institutions, than the fact that so many French Canadians have kept their language, their religion, their institutions and their laws since their country passed to the British Crown, a century and three-quarters ago.

The officers in command of the victorious troops did not hesitate for one moment at the time of the capitulation of Quebec, in 1759, and that of Montreal, in 1760, to guarantee to our ancestors the free practise of their religion and the peaceful enjoyment of their homes, personal properties, effects and privileges at a time when in England religious tolerance was not an accepted principle of the Constitution.

It is true that after the treaty of Paris, a Royal proclamation for the establishment of courts of justice tried to substitute English law for the rights and customs which our ancestors had known until then, but, as early as 1774, the Quebec Act guaranteed to the new subjects of the King the free exercise of their religion, abolished for them the Test and re-established their laws and customs without which French Canadians would not have felt certain of the continued enjoyment of them.

And when, after the establishment of Parliamentary institutions under the Constitution of 1791, the Canadians of that period had to proclaim their own attachment to the rights of man and to fundamental liberties, they were not long in doing so in a striking way.

I shall quote only two examples: The Parliament of Lower Canada passed a law in 1831 to declare that, since doubts had arisen in this connection, it was convenient to record in an explicit text that His Majesty's subjects of Jewish faith and residing in our territory were to enjoy, and were to continue to enjoy, the same privileges and rights and equal eligibility to hold public office as the other inhabitants of the country. In 1839, the same Parliament passed another law to ensure the freedom of worship by enacting that any society of Christians, whatever its denomination, could acquire and possess, holding in trust, real estate serving as places of worship. Our historic traditions therefore prepared us to accept eagerly the declarations of the San Francisco Charter on the rights of man and fundamental liberties.

Certain circles may be inclined to consider these declarations as rather empty phrases or as assertions of good intentions but, even if they were merely assertions of good intentions, it would be just as well for the people of the United Nations to reaffirm solemnly their faith in the criterions of the true civilization that we had to defend against our enemies during the last war.

But the declarations on human rights contained in the Charter are not solely assertions of principles. Each nation associated with the United Nations, in signing the Charter which contains these declarations, has contracted by solemn treaty an obligation to develop and encourage respect for the rights of man and fundamental liberties for all, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion. Each national government, in the name of its people, has accepted this obligation knowing the difficulties which its full accomplishment might entail.