

I take great pleasure in being among you again this year, since the Prime Minister of Canada has once more bestowed upon me the honour of choosing me to represent him at the France-Canada Association Conference. I would like to pass on to you Mr. Trudeau's best wishes on behalf of the Canadian government and people. I am also very happy to be in the beautiful city of Dijon, in the shadow of the palace of the Dukes of Burgundy. I could almost picture myself as a second Charles the Bold, in the sense that I venture to speak to you in the birthplace of Bossuet.

I know I am speaking here to friends of Canada, to Frenchmen who take an interest in our country. It was with Frenchmen that our country's history and an essential part of its culture began. The French and the Canadians, already related by race, became brothers in arms in the world wars of the twentieth century; now they are learning together how to become brothers of mankind in the common struggle against underdevelopment and poverty.

With friends, one should be candid! I know that you are interested in and concerned about Canada's current problems, so I would like to speak quite frankly about the national unity crisis besetting my country. Far be it from me to export Canada's constitutional debate or domestic quarrels. I simply want to help you gain a deeper understanding of the problem. Such an understanding is essential to strengthening the bonds of friendship between Canada and France; and of course I include in that friendship the special relationship between France and Quebec.

My talk will revolve around three themes. First there is the idea that Quebec is a colony within the Canadian federation. Some people have taken it into their heads that Quebecers are a colonized people. For them, the "colony of Quebec" is not a thing of the distant past, but of the present. For them, Quebec is in a state of inferiority.

Such a view is unacceptable because it ignores the facts. It is based on a complete distortion of reality, and it is clearly biased - which boils down to the same thing. It is also an insult which is totally unfounded.

In a colony, those who make deals with the colonizers and help them to govern are seen by their compatriots as traitors or turncoats. But whom on earth have I made a deal with? To whom did I sell myself? To the people in Quebec who elected me democratically? To whom