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## THE FACELESS MEN

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At 3:30, just as the afternoon was warming, they brought Daniel Francis Johnson's body to Montreal.

They carried his body in a closed casket, barely visible through the side windows of a black Cadillac limousine. Behind, thirty more limousines followed, in them, friends, enemies, and the men and women who lived in the shadow of his party's power.

Faceless people followed the cortege, faceless people watched as they unloaded the dark brown casket in front of the Criminal Court building on Notre Dame, a few hundred feet from where Charles de Gaulle spoke last summer.

Daniel Johnson, 53, in power for a little over two years, was a leader of faceless men.

The power of the National Union had only one face. Le Chef, the leader. The cabinet ministers were never more than aides, who never spoke with authority, but were messengers of the leader's voice.

They brought Daniel Johnson's body along Route 20 yesterday, along the barren Trans-Canada Highway which passes no villages, no houses, that tells nothing of the people Daniel Johnson represented.

There's another route between Quebec and Montreal, travelled last summer by Charles de Gaulle.

Route 2, along the North Shore, is named "le Chemin du Roy", and it is a microcosm of the Quebec Daniel Johnson, and his predecessor Maurice Duplessis, ruled for over twenty years.

They should have carried his body on this road. It would have been more fitting.

No one travels between Quebec and Montreal on le Chemin du Roy without understanding what makes Quebec run.

The seigneurial and fur-trading past broods on in church-dominated villages, nestled between the St. Lawrence and the tributary rivers from the north.

At every turn the narrow, winding road hugs that river, which for three hundred years had been Quebec's spine and artery.

Huge tankers now plod up and down the waterway, or pause anchored at Lanoraie, feeding steel mills and chemical plants whose blast furnace towers and waste-burning chimneys loom on the opposite shore.

At halfway point stands Trois-Rivieres, a collection of Catholic seminaries and American pulp mills. Here is the home of Maurice Duplessis, the real "Chef", for whom, in the final analysis, Daniel Johnson was just another messenger.

It is on this road, and in the ugly, functional town of Trois-Rivieres, that you find the faces behind Daniel Johnson.

Because, in spirit, this is where Daniel Johnson was born, this is the spiritual home of the French Canada that spawned him.

It was in Trois-Rivieres, in the late nineteenth century, that the tradition he represents, jelled. Here, under the authority of a strongly conservative and reactionary Church, was born the ultramontane tradition that for decades fought any liberal movement that threatened to upset the old authority structure.

Here is the spiritual home of the French Canadian elites that allied with the authority of the Church to keep French Canada a rural, silent and frightened people.

Here, the French Canadian business interests that ratified the Confederation pact because it promised to protect their ascendancy, have their real home.

Here is the birthplace of the nationalism Daniel Johnson represented a nationalism based on "survival," the survival of his people in the sea of Anglo-Saxons.

"Survival" was the basis of Daniel Johnson's politique.

It is true when his defenders say "He spoke for his people" — possibly no other French Canadian leader except Duplessis could attune himself to the nature of his people's fears, and anxieties.

Maurice Duplessis "protected" his people from "les politiciens d'Ottawa," and Daniel Johnson carried forward the same dynamic.

A politique based on survival, some will say, is by its very definition reactionary.

Whatever adjectives historians may attach to

Union Nationale, its power was unique. It was a party of power, whose sole policy was the acquisition of power. As a government, its role was the preservation or exercise of that same power.

Power is essential to la survivance.

To the families who live along le Chemin du Roy, families who have voted for the same party because their grandfathers have, policies mean little, and separatism is just another big word created by the radicals in Montreal.

They voted for Daniel Johnson — they transferred their power to him — so he could defend them. Daniel Johnson's power did not have to be exercised, he did not have to reform the society he ruled over. His power just had to be there as a sentinel, for the time when he would have to defend his people from inundation by the sea of foreign languages that frighten French Canada.

And so, Daniel Johnson defended his people, in the same way Maurice Duplessis protected them.

His people feared being broken up, feared losing the basis of their cohesion. So the National Union



kept the people together.

In the thirties, forties and early fifties, the party held the people together by keeping it in the countryside, by fighting to retain the traditional rural authority.

The Union Nationale government's public philosophy, the historian Ramsey Cook wrote, was "a nineteenth-century capitalist's dream": foreign capital was invited to a province with enormous natural resources, stable government, low taxes, cheap and unorganized labor.

Duplessis fought federal welfare policies as infringement on provincial rights, but rarely did he offer any alternative policies of his own.

Daniel Johnson was born in Danville, a hamlet but a few miles from the mining town of Asbestos, which burned its name onto the pages of French Canada's social history.

Asbestos, like the other bitterly fought strikes of the forties and fifties brought out the Union Nationale's true colors.

In these labor disputes, the Union Nationale openly identified itself with foreign capital against French

Canadian labor.

The enormous under-representation of urban areas in the provincial legislature meant that the Union Nationale had little to fear from the votes of angry trade unionists.

Despite its reactionary policies, Duplessis' machine never failed to win re-election through a combination of electoral corruption, personal charisma, and an ear finely-tuned to the frustrations of French Canada.

Duplessis skilfully used nationalism as a shield to protect his conservative policies in the sham battles he fought against Ottawa.

For over twenty years, silently in the back benches, and silently in the front benches, sat the man they buried in St. Pie de Bagot Monday.

Daniel Johnson didn't seriously alter the politique of his Chef.

Johnson was a more honest man, a man personally liked by all who met him, including cynical legislature press corps. He was a man gifted with more personality and intellectual depth than Jean Lesage.

When he came to power June 5, 1966, the old party hacks came for their share of the pork barrel, revealing in the return of the good old days. But Daniel Johnson did not re-institute the patronage and corruption of his predecessor, he initiated a subtler politique.

Johnson virtually crushed three strikes during his two-year term in office: the hospital workers', bus drivers' and teachers' (Bill 25).

Now his party is in the process of crushing a potentially very dangerous strike — the Liquor Board workers.

And Daniel Johnson took his trips to New York, to attract foreign investment, and to placate fears of separatism, Daniel Johnson gave the tax concessions to foreign industries, promised them the support of his government in any labor disputes. He continued selling the natural resources of this province to outside interests.

That is the basis of National Union economic policy, that is how they create the prosperity essential to the maintenance of their power. That is one of the logical corollaries of the "politique de la survivance". The other is independence.

So they should have carried Daniel Johnson's body over the Chemin du Roy, through the villages and hamlets that read like a litany of a strange biblical past: St. Charles de Grandines, Ste. Anne de la Perade, St. Ignace de Loyola, St. Suplice . . .

Then we would have seen the face of another French Canada. The small town mayors, parish priests and notaries.

Then the cortege would have passed the "Player's Please" billboard just outside Batiscan, Chevrolet ad on the westbound land near Champlain, and the peeling "Buvez Coca Cola" signs over the roadside stands.

Then some of the faces would become clearer — Gilbert Ayers, the lumber magnet who built himself a grotesque Grecian mansion in Lachute, a town which he virtually owns, and where he is in the process of crushing a strike among his factory workers, who earn 65 to 70 cents an hour.

And Jean-Louis Levesque, one of the few French Canadian millionaires, owner of the Dupuis department stores and the man who owns Blue Bonnets.

And in the crowd that stared at his closed coffin was carried up the steps of the Criminal Court building, past the Doric pillars, into the marble-tiled anteroom, some faces would become recognizable. Faces of what the French Canadian workers disdainfully label "le circuit cocktail" — the Outremont cocktail circuit of the middle class lawyers, notaries and businessmen.

They'll take Daniel Johnson's body to St. Pie de Bagot today and carry it through the rural Eastern townships.

But, although the people will pause at the roadside and remove their caps, making the sign of the cross, they won't think too much of what Daniel Johnson represented to them or anyone else.

Nor will they care about Trudeau or Levesque or Bougault.

This is October, the frost is setting in, and French Canada has a harvest to gather.

