

in the fall of 1976, when the voters brought to power the Parti Québécois, an avowed separatist party whose leader, René Lévesque, campaigned on a reform platform rather than an outright independence line. This totally unexpected event sent shock-waves across Canada and completely changed the political picture in Ottawa. It also had an important effect on Canada's relations with the United States. Prime Minister Trudeau visited Washington in February 1977 and, in his address to a joint session of Congress, concentrated on the question of Canadian unity and the problem of Quebec. When President Carter was asked at a subsequent news conference whether there was much concern in the United States about Canada, he replied: "There's a great deal of concern in this country about the future of Canada." After describing how closely the two countries were linked, the President said:

My own personal preference would be that the commonwealth stay as it is and that there not be a separate Quebec province. But that's a decision for the Canadians to make and I would certainly make no private or public move to try to determine the outcome of that great debate.

Canada's internal problems thus became front-page news in the United States during 1977, and there is every likelihood that they will continue to attract attention in the American media. René Lévesque's visit to Paris in the fall of 1977 was prominently reported, including the warm reception he received from the President of France. The Quebec government's decision to make French the sole official language of the province was widely reported in the United States, including the protests of Quebec's non-French-speaking minority. Prime Minister Trudeau's New Year's Day interview with Canadian television personality Bruce Phillips was given front-page coverage in the *New York Times*. Trudeau warned that, if Quebec separatists resorted to "illegal" methods to achieve their ends, he would use force to deal with them just as he had done in 1970 when he invoked emergency powers. The idea that serious violence, and even civil war, could break out in Canada is slowly reaching the consciousness of informed Americans.

U.S. interests

The question thus arises: What opinion should Americans have regarding the Quebec issue? What U.S. interests are at stake in Canada and how will they be affected by the unfolding of events in Quebec and other provinces in the next several years? If Premier Lévesque proceeds with a referendum in Quebec in 1979 or 1980 and

violence erupts in its aftermath, how would this affect American thinking about Canada?

Without question, the United States has a huge stake in the "great debate" referred to by President Carter, for four reasons: (1) the defence of the United States is almost indistinguishable from the defence of Canada in the strategic sense; (2) Canada is by far the most important trading partner of the U.S. and accounts for more U.S. private investment than any other country; (3) Canada is an important contributor to the postwar world order established by the Western powers to keep the peace and promote international stability; (4) Canada shares with the United States a deep respect for human rights, democratic government and the dignity of the individual. It is therefore an important ideological partner in the struggle with dictatorships. If Canada were to be torn apart by internal dissension, it would be a severe blow to U.S. interests in North America and in the world.

In view of these interests, what policy should the United States follow if the government in Quebec decides to push its policy of separation from Canada? In my view, the United States could accept an independent Quebec if the separation were achieved through negotiations with Ottawa, either with or without an economic association between them. Prime Minister Trudeau has stated that he would not stand in the way if a large majority of Quebecers voted for independence. Presumably a negotiated separation would include some understanding that Quebec would honour existing treaties regarding the St Lawrence Seaway and would co-operate in the NORAD arrangements with Canada and the United States. In short, if Quebec showed that it would maintain good relations with Canada and the United States, the United States would grant recognition to the new state and welcome it as a neighbour.

But what would happen if only a bare majority of Quebec voters supported separation in a provincial referendum, or if a majority were reached only by counting the votes of French-speaking Quebecers? In this situation, Ottawa might refuse to negotiate with Quebec and Premier Lévesque might then move to a unilateral declaration of independence. In this situation, the U.S. attitude could be quite different. This would be particularly true if violence should break out in Quebec and the Trudeau Government decided to use force again to restore peace. In such a case, it is reasonable to conclude that Washington would give tacit support to Ottawa in dealing with an internal threat to Canadian security. If there should be danger

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