

A Post Referendum Exchange

Julian Samuel and Fred A. Reed





This is a discussion between two Montréalers, Julian Samuel and Fred A. Reed, on issues central to Québec nationalism. It concerns political problems — national identity and culture, the diaspora, civic rights, language and notions of home — for which there exist no easy solutions.

The exchange took place during the last few weeks of 1995 via fax, accounting for its sense of immediacy. Like the debate itself, it has neither beginning nor end. But, more than a post-referendum debate, it is a polarized quarrel of a more fundamental nature, a profound, wide-ranging disagreement on issues as diverse as citizenship, public morality and ethics.

14 December, 1995

Dear Fred:

Thanks for taking the time to have that discussion with me.

I would just like to summarize a few points for clarity; also, I'd like to take-up a few points we went through on Saturday.

I agree with you on several issues:

1 I ought to balance my views on the nationalists with what white Québécois have suffered historically. I shall acknowledge the suffering of white francophones in the future. I should clarify that I am not a Canadian nationalist. You know that I've criticized the Canadian nation-state in my books (*Lone Ranger in Pakistan, Passage to Lahore*), as well as in several films. So my record is clean more or less.

2 I agree that there is no *physical* connection between J-M Le Pen and the PQ. I feel that there are shades of Le Penist thinking within the PQ as well generally in Canada — as everywhere in the world, especially Pakistan. Those points of agreement noted, certain points in our discussion seem to me inadequately resolved. And it is concerning these points that I would like to pose a few questions to you if I may:

3 I know that when you say that I am a "guest" in Québec you imply something that is metaphorical, not fixed. This troubles me because I think you may be reducing my status as a Canadian citizen. Are you suggesting that my claim to citizenship is less legitimate than that of a white francophone Quebecer?

4 Would you say that a white or black French-from-France family that immigrated to Québec in say 1966 is a "guest" family in the same sense as you see me a "guest"? My family came to Canada in 1966; I came to Montréal in 1979? In your opinion, does the French-from-France family have more civic rights than I have? If so, why? Please particularize? And does this endowment of rights extend to all of Canada or just Québec? Again, if so then could you please take a few minutes to say why this is the case especially for Québec? Or does your allegorical usage of the term "guest" refer to race-over-language as a final *determinate formulation*? I get the impression that you do not see me a second-class citizen, but that you are trying to get at something. By calling me, as well as yourself, a "guest," you attach second-class citizenship status to us. We are not in South Africa.

I don't want to be seen as a "guest" after thirty years of being here, especially if the French-from-France family has more civic rights than me. Both the French-from-France family and I have been here since 1966. So then what gives the French-from-France family more rights than I have? Your concept of the "guest" seems to me in need of clarification.

5 I have the impression that you are overwhelmingly prepared to see the white francophone Québécois as a people with relatively more rights to this part of the earth than say natives, and new arrivals?

Therefore, according to your thinking, am I correct in assuming that new arrivals (potential no voters) that do not see their future embedded within a separate Québec nation-state, but within Canada, ought not to be endowed with the same rights as the French-from-France family?

Is it the case that if and only if the new arrivals agree with the nationalists you would accord them equal status with white francophone Quebecers?

Can you tell me at what particular point in the history of this country you would start to



draw the line between “guest” and new arrival? Would it be 1759; or 1837; or 1980; etc. . .

I am inclined to view the “Two Founding Peoples” configuration as somewhat suspect; it simplifies “Canadian” history the better to fit into the hands of the power mongers of today — *both tribes* — lest I be seen as a federalist house-boy.

Who is Québécois? (Your question). I think I have an answer: anyone who lives here — no matter when they came, what the colour of their skin is, no matter what language they speak, and no matter what language they choose to speak while they live within Québec which is within Canada.

Furthermore, I have the right to name myself in whatever way I want; and, by the same token, you have the right to name me in whatever way you will to name me. But, I have the right to represent myself against your formulation.

In Québec, I “acquire” the right to call myself Canadian if I so choose. Why does a majority of the population have the right to attach a label to me? Simply because it is a majority? I am not “an immigrant,” (although the PQ positions me in this way). I have been here for thirty years.

Keep in mind that lots of Central American political “refugees” came here because the francophone Québécois arms industry sold weapons of death to “their” rulers. Are these refugees “guests” or world citizens? Quebeckers sell the arms, make the profit and then when Central Americans flee to Québec they become “guests” whose voting rights ought to be curtailed. (An attitude represented by the new MNLQ — are there some ex-PQ members in this party?).

I feel you are wrong to give overwhelming favour to francophone Québécois nationalists on a basis that does not contain a knowledge of the following refugee production process:

In go the white francophone Québec weapons of death: out come the non-French-speaking refugees.

In this arms manufacturer sense, francophone white Quebeckers are no different from Americans — the largest producer of weapons of death in the world. Please don’t forget this point.

6 In our discussion on Québécois nationalism, you have never factored in Native suffering at the hands of both the bourgeois nationalist francophone white Quebeckers and the anglo white Canadian ruling class. Do you see them as lifeless federal pawns? Why have you kept this out of your discourse? Also Irish suffering, etc. etc. . . In all fairness you ought to offer some response here.

7 Do you really think that the PQ would produce a more just society? The PQ is not going in the socialist direction. Nor are the Liberals. So why should I vote for the PQ when it is going to bring about marginal change with tons of marginalization of non-white Canadians who live here?

8 I know that the PQ is more racist than the Liberals — *but the difference is very slight*. I know that some of the “influential” members of the PQ are virulently racist: Richard Le Hir is a straight-forward buffoon; so is Lucien Bouchard; so is Parizeau. I fear these people more than I fear the Liberals.

9 I am not sure you are aware of black culture, or black political self-awareness in Montréal.

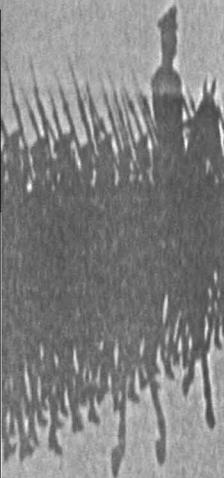
10 What did you think of *Disparaître* — a documentary which was shown on prime-time TV?

Thanks for taking the time to deal with all this.

Best,

Julian

français
Z-VOUS!



ngleterre, rempart de nos
riétés, est menacée.

RON-S-NOUS INDIFFÉRENTS?

référerons-nous le capitalisme
ussien au régime qui nous a
nservé notre foi, notre Langue
s Institutions et nos lois.

Coeur de France saigne.
voix de sang parle.

*Fred Reed replies**December 16, 1995***Julian:**

Thanks for your faxed letter, and for making time to follow up on our rather animated, ever so slightly unidirectional, discussion. Actually, it wasn't so much a discussion as it was me telling you off, something which I doubt escaped you. And I do admit that you displayed remarkable restraint. This I happily acknowledge and even admire.

I wish I could admire your arguments as much. But since talk-talk-talk is better than war-war-war, let's pursue our dialogue (*celui des sourds, peut-être?*) in the question sequence you've outlined.

1 In your brief admission that your views may have been less than perfectly balanced, you promise to acknowledge the suffering of white francophones in the future. I must say that particular formulation strikes me as sarcastic, as if the political question which the referendum raised—the right of Québec to determine democratically its future—can be reduced to some catalogue of “suffering”, although past affronts, grievances, frustrations and blocked ambitions would make for a more comprehensive catalogue. The question, as I saw it and as I see it, is not of your views on “the nationalists”, but of your rather visceral dismissal of “white francophones” and their politically expressed national sentiments without taking into account the historical role of the Canadian state in shaping precisely those sentiments.

My counter-question to your first point is this: why do you maintain, against all best available advice, your appalling ignorance of the history of the entity called Québec (Is it a country, a tribe, a geographical area, a people?) and of its relations with the federal state called Canada (which is, by the way, not a nation state, not in the classic and conventional definition, not unless you consider the British North America Act to be without significance)?

You are not a Canadian nationalist, you plead, as if that would make it so. In fact, by refusing to acknowledge that the Canadian state is the political framework within which the question of Québec's right to self-determination must be exercised, you become (hopefully unwittingly) an accomplice in the attempt to cast a “Canadian” nationality which subsumes French-, English- and other-speaking citizens of the federal state. And in this respect you are in full agreement with Jean Chrétien.

Where indeed is your criticism of the Canadian state on the major political issue of the day, the Québec question? Not only do you not criticize it, you speak and act on its behalf. As for



my own record of activity against that state, I'll spare you a catalogue of the years of political activity, trade union leadership, arrests for selling communist newspapers on the street, firings, police harassment, etc.

2 Not only is there no physical connection between the FN in France and the PQ, there is no demonstrable ideological connection. Some yahoos who broke away to set up the MLNQ were promptly drummed out of the party. So there are shades of Le Penist thinking everywhere, are there? Therefore such thinking is demonstrably nowhere. You have some serious backing up to do on this one. Such public utterances are inflammatory.

3 When I raised the guest question, which seems to have troubled you mightily, I was speaking not in terms of your or my status as a Canadian citizen, nor of that of the Sri Lankan grocer on Jean-Talon Street or the French-speaking Swiss professor at UQAM, just to provide a cross-section. I was speaking of your moral obligation and mine to behave in this society with a certain sensitivity to those who form a majority in it. The history of the English-speaking community in Québec is, alas, tainted with not only racism against people of colour and Jews, but also against francophone Québécois. Within living memory (mine), it was common to say "speak white."

Does this in any way invalidate our civic rights as defined in all applicable charters, laws and the unwritten (though fast fading) code of civil behavior? I think not. I was putting stress — and I will continue to do so — on our responsibilities as citizens. More, on our responsibilities to learn the language of the country in which we have chosen to live, to make every solemn and serious effort to learn its particularities and its history. If we do not do this, then we are uncultured, ill-mannered guests in this metaphorical house. (By the way, none of this even remotely entails any obligation to love our "hosts", to agree with them, or to vote "yes" even though they believe we should.)

You say you think I am reducing your status as a Canadian citizen in relative terms to white francophone Quebecers. At other times, to me, you have described Québec people in general, and their political leadership in particular, as uneducated, provincial and coarse. This, from a person with a sense of the respect owed to him by virtue of his racial identity, is frankly outrageous. How can you not apply the same rigorous standards to your behavior toward others as you would have such others apply to you?

4 For question four, see above. My guest in the house metaphor does not apply to civic rights. I fail to see the pertinence of your argument. When we met did I say that "guests" should enjoy fewer civic rights, merited them less, were somehow second class citizens? I am surprised that you would impute this to me.



5 You have the impression I am overwhelmingly prepared to see white francophone Canadians with more rights to this part of the earth. Wrong impression. I insist that their democratic right, as a majority in the political jurisdiction of the Province of Québec be respected by the Canadian federal state. Are native peoples to form their own independent states within the confines of Québec? I don't see why a sovereign Québec would not rapidly recognize exactly that right. Should there be a Greek republic of Park Extension linked by a ten kilometer corridor, in Bosnia fashion, to Chomedey Laval? Well, what do you think?

Obviously, our political rights include the right of defining ourselves as we will. Where is the disagreement? The problem you have seems to me to lie in your reluctance to accept that the French-speaking majority in the Canadian provincial jurisdiction of Québec insists on viewing itself as a people, a nation if you will, and acting politically on the basis of that insistence. From this would flow the rights of this majority to order as it would the society it dominates, and the concomitant obligation of the minority to respect the majority will. Naturally, to affirm this principal hardly invalidates the obligation of majorities toward minorities, hence the existence of Charters of Rights and other legal dispositions.

As for my alleged overwhelming preference, I say this. Did you not find it strange that on the eve of the referendum some 10,000 new immigrants were granted Canadian citizenship on a fast-track basis, and handed literature instructing them to act on behalf of Canadian unity? No? Well how about the public affirmation by former Liberal government minister Sirros, to a Greek-speaking audience, that the "ethnics" would soon numerically overwhelm the Québécois, thus guaranteeing the failure of future referendums. What about the Greek-Canadian Congress? Is it Canadian when it comes to collecting federal stipends, Québécois when it comes to being outraged by M. Parizeau's post-referendum remarks, or Greek when it comes to celebrating Greece's independence day in a parade on Jean-Talon Street? One might forgive white French-speaking Quebecers for a certain skepticism. Indeed, how many hats do our Canadian-Québécois-Ethnic fellow citizens wear and when and why do they wear such hats? But perhaps I've got it all wrong, they just don't want to get bombed again with the products of the white francophone Québécois arms industry (although last time I looked the monopoly on military repression was held by the Canadian armed forces).

As for the noble savages to whose cause you hasten, where were you during the recent events at Ipperwash, where Ontario police killed a native demonstrator? And more to the point, where was M. Chrétien who heroically rallied to the Mohawk cause at Kanatastake? Seen on a demonstrator's T-shirt at the Gustafson Lake, B.C. land-claim dispute: "Sovereignty is the answer; Canada is the problem." (Do you think this is a reasonable summary of the native issue in the current federal state, or do your "native peoples" stop at the Québec border. And if they do, what is your knowledge of the Montagnais and their dispute with Hydro Québec over the Sainte-Marguerite project?)

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Par le P. Paul le Jeun

Superieur de la



A P

Chez SEBASTIEN
ordinaire du Roy

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M. D.C.

Who are the Quebeckers who make the profits on the arms sold to Central American dictatorships? Who makes the purchases? Are arms manufactured here, and presumably labeled so that guerrilla or village women can tell that death is coming to them courtesy of the separatists, more deadly than those manufactured in, say, Brazil, China or North Korea?

These arms create refugees, including those from Iran? The Islamic authorities use only such arms in driving out their opponents? This is indeed news. Unless, of course, you are speaking metaphorically, in which case the formula should extend to all arms producing countries, in which case it becomes meaningless. Personally, speaking as an ex-Marxist, I always thought capitalism caused refugees.

6 For my response on this, see above. But generally, the discourse of suffering is a hollow, useless one. The issue we should be debating is a political one, not a contest in who can suffer the most exquisite martyrdom.

7 I believe prospects for defending a slightly more just society would improve in an independent Québec state, if for no other reason than the greater proximity of the citizens to those who must answer, politically, to them. (This, of course, begs the question of economic imputability but you don't raise it.) As for who is going in a socialist direction, please find me anyone anywhere in the world who is pursuing such a course.

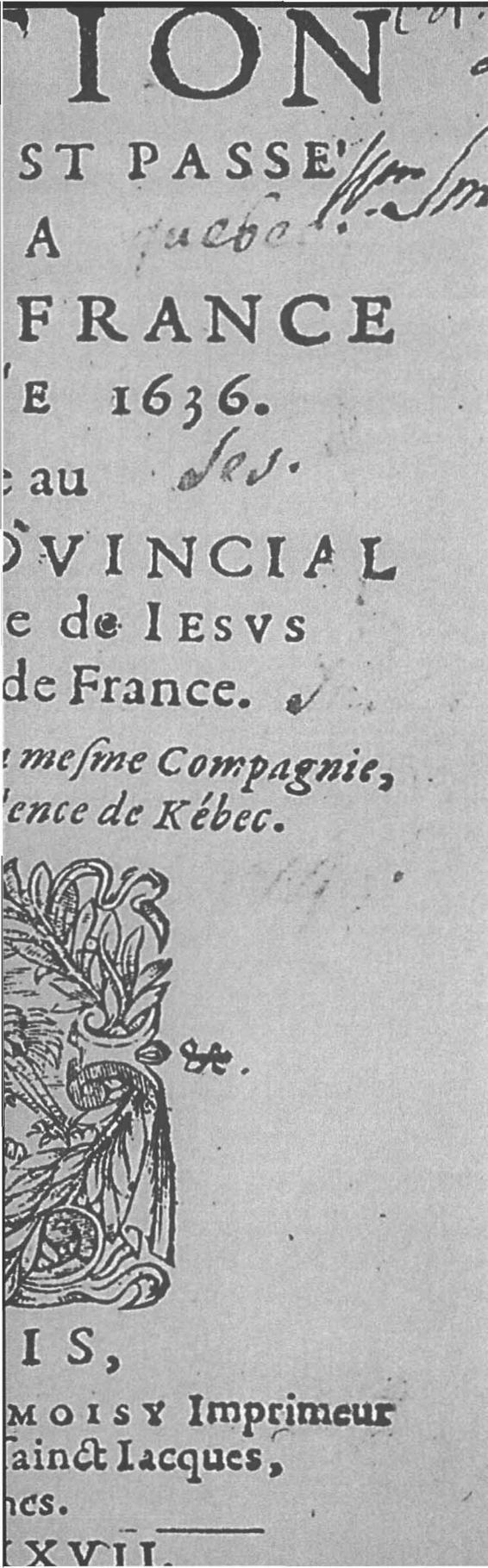
8 I question your use of "knowledge" regarding alleged PQ racism. Who are the virulently racist influential péquistes? What are their names and their offenses? Do you fear the former Canadian Airborn Regiment as much as you fear Bouchard, Parizeau, et al? Mike Harris? Preston Manning?

9 And if I am not aware of black self-awareness in Montréal, what does that have to do with the political argument at hand? (As it happens, I am not unaware of black self-awareness, either here or in North America generally.)

10 Does a majority's right extend to choosing those whom it invites to live among it? I believe it does. This is, precisely, Canada's policy. The problem is that Canada's immigration policy contains the unspoken but obvious dimension of gradually undercutting the demographic weight of francophones in Canada. (On the other hand, if white francophones don't want to bear numerous offspring and populate the great white north, well, too bad for them, right?)

A film which I found to be much superior to *Disparaître* was *Tropique Nord*, for which, as you know, I produced the English version. It is available at the NFB cinema, if you haven't seen it.

All for now. I'll be expecting a sheaf of answers.



19 December, 1995

Dear Fred:

Thanks for your faxed letter of 16 December, 1995.

1 I have problems with the way you look into the Québec situation. I appreciate you taking the time to tell me off. Thanks. However, I think you're morally wrong to threaten to break our friendship because of our differences on the PQ nationalist question. You are dead wrong to let this get in the way of our natural debating tactics.

2 I am not prepared to dissolve our friendship over a political matter.

I proceed:

3 In your response you have created a win-win pattern which favours PQ nationalism, subsequently your opinions appear uncritical and romantic. Whenever I say anything critical about the nationalists you jump to their defense without any pause for self-reflection counterposing with what the idiotic Liberals have been doing. This process does not correct nationalism. PQ nationalism needs correcting. Who am I to say this you might ask? Well just try and win a referendum without "us".

4 I was not at all being sarcastic. You have helped to balance my thinking. Next time I criticize the PQ, I shall comment on the suffering of white francophones at the hands of the "English."

5 I don't have to be an expert on Canadian history to comment on the pitfalls of PQ nationalism. Although, your claim that I ought to be something of a historian *before* I comment on PQ nationalism is a pretty tall one — strange elitism for someone who once wanted a dictatorship of the proletariat.

6 Serious request: I would appreciate it if you would lend me a book to develop my knowledge of Canada.

7 However, I know more Canadian history than the average Jack or Jill in the street. And if you were to uncritically accept the average rank-and-file white francophone's opinion (for "they" are the real oppressed), then please bear with me for a few nanoseconds of pure unadulterated ignorance.

8 You said: "Who are you to ask to have a chat with Louise Harel?"

My response is: "Who is she to refuse me an interview?" Do you think that politicians should be aloof and not responsive to the people?

9 I get the impression that you don't much want to hear about the non-white black presence in these few acres of snow? Why are you so reluctant to hear out the new arrivals?

10 I agree with the Liberals: the next referendum question has to be clear or the Feds should not accept the results. This is a potential partition after all and the question has to be straight, not higgledy-piggledy-mumbo-jumbo: Do you want to separate Yes or No?

11 I don't think most white francophone Quebeckers want separation. From personal

conversations I know that some people don't know what separation means — some even think that the PQ would still send politicians to Ottawa. Give me a break. And I will disagree with you on the percentage of white francophones who want hard-core separation.

12 The past referendum question was a preliterate fog-job written in just-off-the-boat-Paki-syntax. I know a few white francophones who laughed out loud at this “document.” The PQ would not win if they asked a frank question, that is why they want to hoodwink a section of the population. And economically we would be screwed by the Americans. How will you rationalize this I wonder?

13 You want to let the imaginary majority “invent” a nation-state. I refuse to allow a 50+1 vote dominate me, and so do the hordes of “immigrants” that both you and I know.

14 Can you tolerate the ignorance of: a) Pierre Bourgault who said approximately: “it will become dangerous for people who vote against us.” (I know you're going to say he was chucked out of the party — but where do you stand regarding him?) He also said that “immigrants” (I've been here since 1966) should get out of the way and let the real Quebeckers sort it out for themselves?

15 The world is inextricably interconnected so I can't fully understand your Guestism. Why aren't the white francophones my guests — I mean the ones that came *after* I got here?

16 As a guest why did you participate in “their” referendum? Why just not “them,” the REAL Quebeckers sort it out for themselves?

b) Richard Le Hir is hate-ridden. This ox said that the natives have made no contribution to Western society (whose Western history one wonders?).

c) Monique Simard said there could be trouble if the francophones don't win. I do rather find her a bit of a hillbilly, and stupid just like the Liberals.

17 If you are prepared to accept, excuse or rationalize the racist ignorance of white francophones (above) then why are you not prepared to accept my retaliatory fear?

18 My “ignorance” is at least not racist as the cases cited above. So why take it from “them” and why make fun of Haitian cab drivers? The average Haitian driver is more learned than the average “high” profile PQ member. My nuts are on the chopper if I am wrong on this one.

19 Also, many PQ back-benches have been saying that “immigrants” (I've been here since 1966) should not be allowed to vote until “they” get a nation-state. Where do you stand here?

20 I await your list of Liberal-Federalist zeros who have also made foolish utterances on the race question. Don't forget: I see the Liberals as hicks as well, in case I am called a Liberal house boy.

21 Canada is a nation-state if your initial country (the USA) is a nation-state. Canada is not structurally inferior to the US. This holds true for me.

22 I don't consider PQ nationalism “a major issue of the day.” Sorry. And I don't have to break my back on being fair with a culture that hates me because of the colour of my skin and because of my language — they don't like my accent in French either.

23 I will vote no in the next referendum and I will influence others to do likewise. However, if the extreme right comes to power in Ottawa then I will vote for the PQ because it will have become the lesser of the two evils. This is how I deal with our lovely Canadian Liberal democracy.

24 I have proven that members of the PQ are ideologically commensurate with the FN in France. You are intentionally poking out your eyes to compensate for years of anglophone endocolonialism.

25 I owe nothing to Québec. I owe nothing to a culture that hates me. I owe the PQ nothing moral, ethically, “ethnically” et al. I have not been inspired by one Québécois writer, filmmaker, philosopher, painter, or social theoretician. The same holds for white English Canadians, except for the works of Michael Snow. Of course you’re going to say I am ignorant as to the vast list of local intellectuals aren’t you? Well I did take a course on Québec civilization at Université de Montréal—found not much there that my ex-colonial masters did not already whip into me.

I shed no alligator tears for Québec. I can’t cry for a culture that has kicked my face like the bastards in England did. I will only compromise with the PQ if Ottawa goes Reform.

26 Please don’t trivialize my suffering at the hands of white francophone Québécois. The PQ hate me, and are therefore unworthy of my respect. I am not a hypocrite: I will not love or vote yes for anyone who hates me.

27 This majoritarian 50+1 clap trap is not something I am inclined to accept. I don’t recognize any borders, passports, nations countries, religions—all that crap. (I dream in ideals and I apologize for my naiveté.) The PQ is not going to fix me socially, ethically, ethnically, morally. Moreover, the PQ is not going to determine me politically. Unless they put me in prison. You are dreaming if you think that after a yes victory the PQ would roll over and let us “Others” have breathing space. This place would become a Chile of the North.

28 On the question of arms production: see the list of Québec arms factories in *Lone Ranger in Pakistan* (1986). White francophone Quebeckers and rich brats from Westmount profited by making and selling weapons of death.

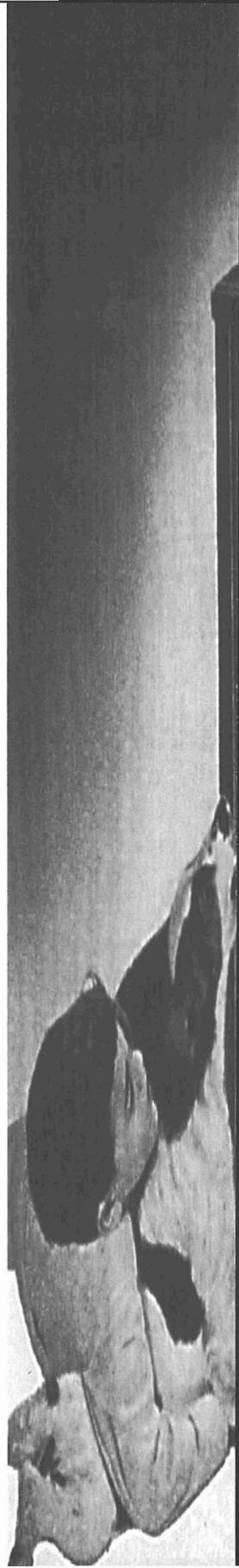
29 On Iran you are wrong: pre ’79, the US arms machine sold arms to Iran—these arms were used to kill people *within* Iran by you know who, and his successor. Arms were used for the wars as well obviously. (cf. a *Race and Class* issue of 1980. Also in the same issue, a brilliant essay by Ali Shari’ati called “Resisting the Pharaohs.” I’m sure you’ve read it.) Why do you intentionally keep this out of the discussion? As well, many weapons producers here in Montréal sold to the Shah. (God rest his poor soul.) Don’t let them off the hook again. And no I don’t have copies of the sales contracts.

30 My identity is based on the quality of my efforts not on the fact that I am a Parizeau ethnic.

31 Why do you call them “noble savages”? Would you do this publicly? Are their demands less important than the demands of white francophones? If so why? I criticize all of Canada for genociding the natives—especially in Québec—this is my backyard. Please don’t tell me that the PQ has a good comparative record on this question—this is out of date propaganda.

Respectfully,

Julian



December 26, 1995

Dear Julian,

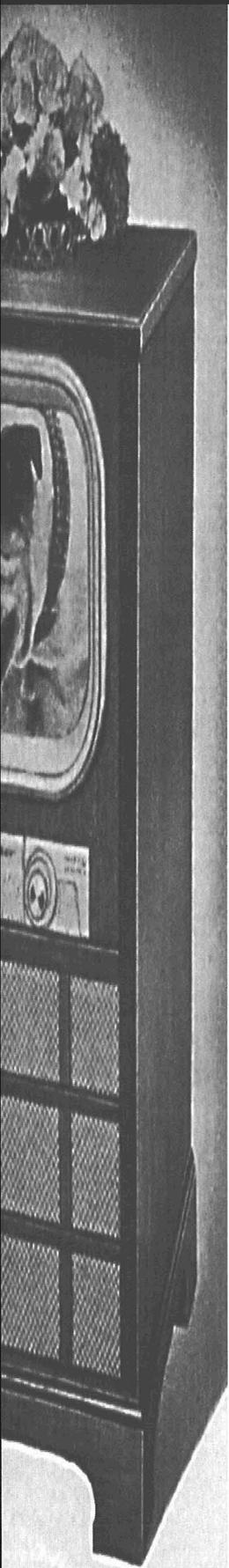
I received and read your faxed epistle of December 19. It made me realize how profoundly futile engaging you in argument really is. Trying to do so is like speaking to a pumping bellows, whispering against the north wind. All a dreadful mistake, an exercise in frustration. Julian, you not only have a chip on your shoulder, you are an enormous chip in search of a shoulder. You don't have a theory. No wonder discussion, fundamentally, doesn't interest you: you are a loudspeaker operating at full volume, against which argument is in vain.

And I, foolishly, was so slow to realize these elementary facts. How else can I explain your continued attempt to conflate my desire to place Québec nationalism in the context of the Canadian state with the Parti Québécois, as if somehow this particular party "owned" the Québec nationalist movement and was its only expression? How can I look aside, pretend not to hear when you lace your paragraphs with hatred, not of individuals, but of what appears to be an entire culture when you have manifestly failed to grasp that within the culture to which you attribute such hatred, there are great worlds of subtlety, difference, contention and nuance? How can I reconcile your extraordinary sensitivity to the slights suffered by immigrants in this society with your even more extraordinary lack of sensitivity to the long, well-documented tradition of racism against this (i.e., francophone Québécois) society? You are a master of the double standard: an innocent victim who nonetheless joins forces with the anti-democrats who now claim that 50% plus one is not good enough. (It seems to have been good enough for a no. Did the job when the Mulroneys liquidated "Canada" with a 43% plurality. Does just fine when Paul Martin winds up the welfare state on the basis of the Liberal party's slightly larger plurality having promised precisely the contrary.)

Well, what is good enough? Your answer: nothing. These people are beyond redemption. This is the clan of Robert LePage, the state-assisted purveyors of high-tech vacuousness, the slickers, the manipulators, the racist arms purveyors and whatever else you care to throw in. I am sure your real catalogue far exceed the contents of your writings. Why bother, Julian?

Your assertion that you have proven PQ members ideologically commensurate with the FN in France is audacious in its fantastic hyperbole. You have proven nothing. You have produced no programmatic statements, no position papers, no proof of any commensurability whatsoever. I say you are ideologically commensurate with Zia ul-Haq. Does that make it so? When did you stop beating your girlfriend?

You want to read an interesting book on Canada/Québec? Try *Unequal Union* by Stanley Ryerson. Ryerson, you know, is an Anglo, a Quebecker and, until recently, a communist. But then, he's probably a crypto-arms merchant too, in complicity



with those killers of Central American babies though I doubt he lives in Westmount. (What are we to make of the Jewish arms merchants, excuse me, the Israeli arms merchants who also arm the Central American dictatorships. Mustn't mention them, for, after all, they are staunch "no" men to a fault. But then, we can't say that because then we'd be anti-semites, wouldn't we?)

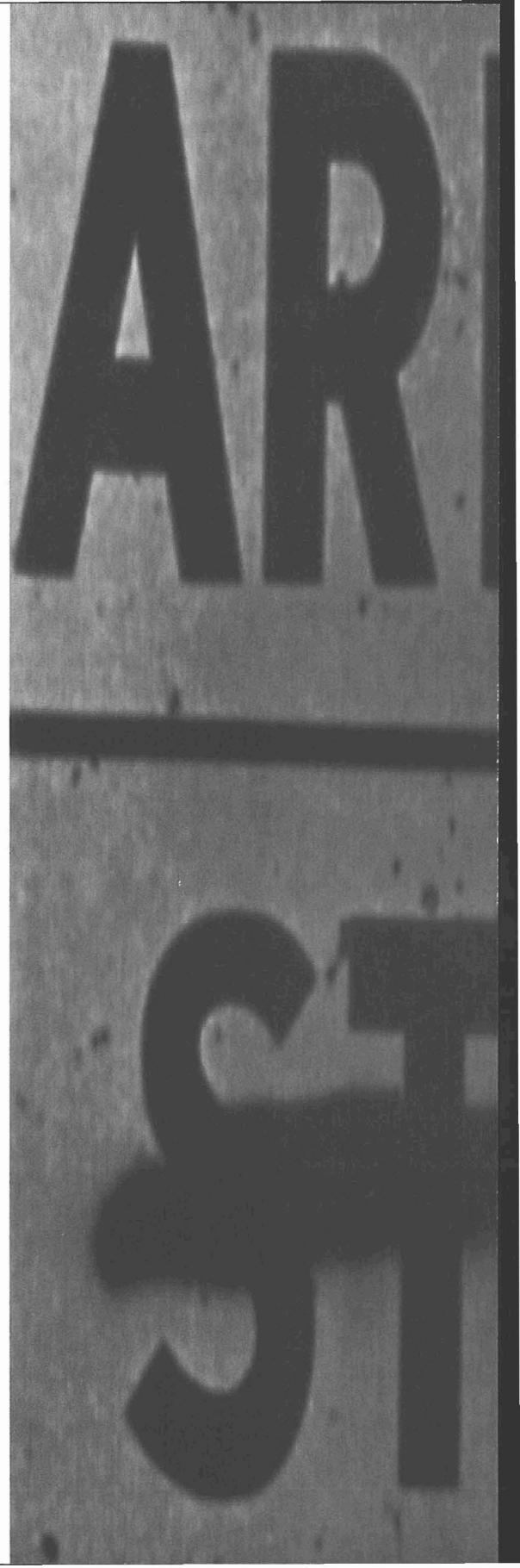
You think that it is sufficient to publish a list of weapons manufacturers to have "fought" the Canadian federal state? Some moxy, some fight!

Try this idea: racism against native peoples and those who now term themselves African Americans (how are we to call persons of African or Carribean descent living in Canada?) is not only a constant of North American society in terms of its impact on social relations, it is also a structural feature of that society, so much a part of life that it cannot be noticed by the dominant white majority. A similar, only slightly less insidious racism against French-speaking whites and *métis* has played the same structural role in the founding and expansion of the Canadian state. Which is, I must remind you, a creation of those British colonialists for whom I think you, deep down, have a certain reverence. If you don't know that, then what the hell do you know? If you don't know about Speak White, then whose hatred are you taking so blithely for fact.

You haven't told me: is the racialism of the "victim" to be preferred over that of the putative racist? Are the Iranians, those erstwhile victims of white francophone bombs and bullets (nice of you to establish that it happened before 1979, but then there were few refugees; now there are many, and they are fleeing "fundamentalism" which is armed mostly by North Korea), justified in their racist dismissal of Arabs? Are the Greeks, those sons of democracy, entirely within their rights by heaping scorn on the Albanians, or (as a prominent member of the Greek community was heard to do during the referendum campaign) comparing the Québec nationalists to the Turks? Actually, I conclude that it's a nasty, imperfect world. I also conclude that our efforts should be directed to making it less nasty. As for perfection, God will no doubt handle that.

Your motto, if I understand it properly, is to think globally, act locally. That's why you're interested only in the natives in your "backyard," right? Funny how your backyard ends right at the border. The Québec border. But in the event of a referendum to establish a sovereign Québec, would you respect that border? Something tells me you wouldn't. What would your backyard be then? (By the way, my "noble savages" was an ironic reference to Rousseau's formulation, a swipe at their hypocrite fair-weather friends, those who buy their contraband cigs and booze and gamble at their super-bingo halls.)

We should have nothing resembling monolithism in public discourse. Your views and your tone in expressing them are outrageous and thus necessary. My sharp criticism of both is predicated on your right and duty to express yourself. You should have learned long ago to do it in French: ten years is plenty of



time to become conversant, if not fluent. It's fine that your book will appear in French. Not only should it stimulate debate, it will find supporters among those you claim hate you.

Still and withall, it is healthy to resist domination. Unhealthy to have one's resistance to domination manipulated by the purveyors of a larger, equally insidious domination.

Where does that leave the friendship you are not prepared to dissolve? I'm not so sure the differences that have arisen are only political, and that's what bothers me. I am ill-prepared to see arguments reduced to some mysterious genetic component, entire cultures treated like pariah dogs, be they those of the native peoples, the Iranians or the white francophone Québécois. In fact, I refuse to countenance it. You would rightly scorn and dismiss me were I to utter racialist remarks against black, Asian or native peoples. And yet you curl your lip in contempt at the people of this place in their collective expression (although surely some of your best friends are Quebeckers). This I am simply not prepared to accept. And, let me assure you, it has nothing to do with the Parti Québécois, the Bloc Québécois or any particular political personality. Like you, I owe the PQ nothing moral, ethical or "ethnic."

Fred Reed