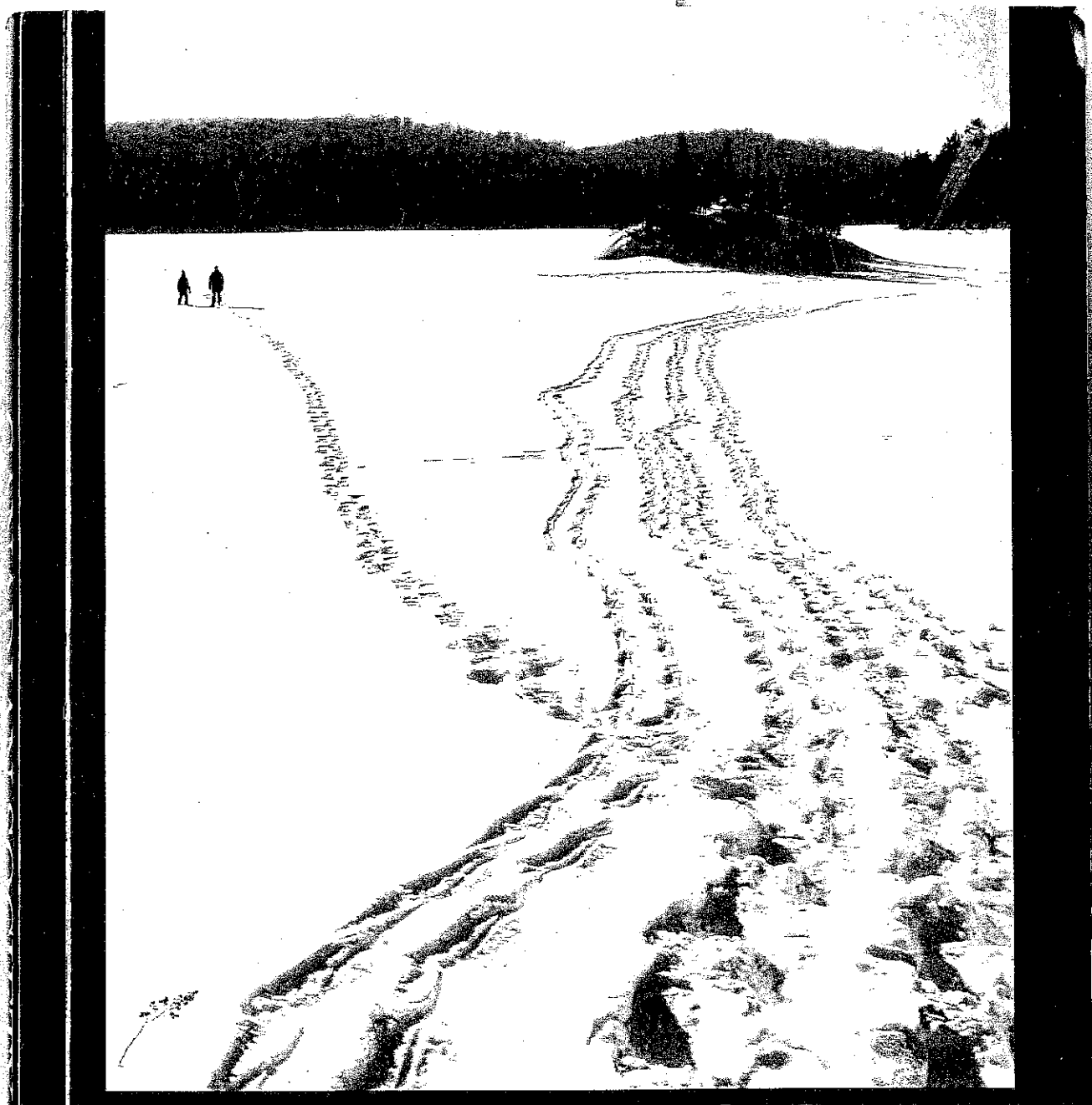
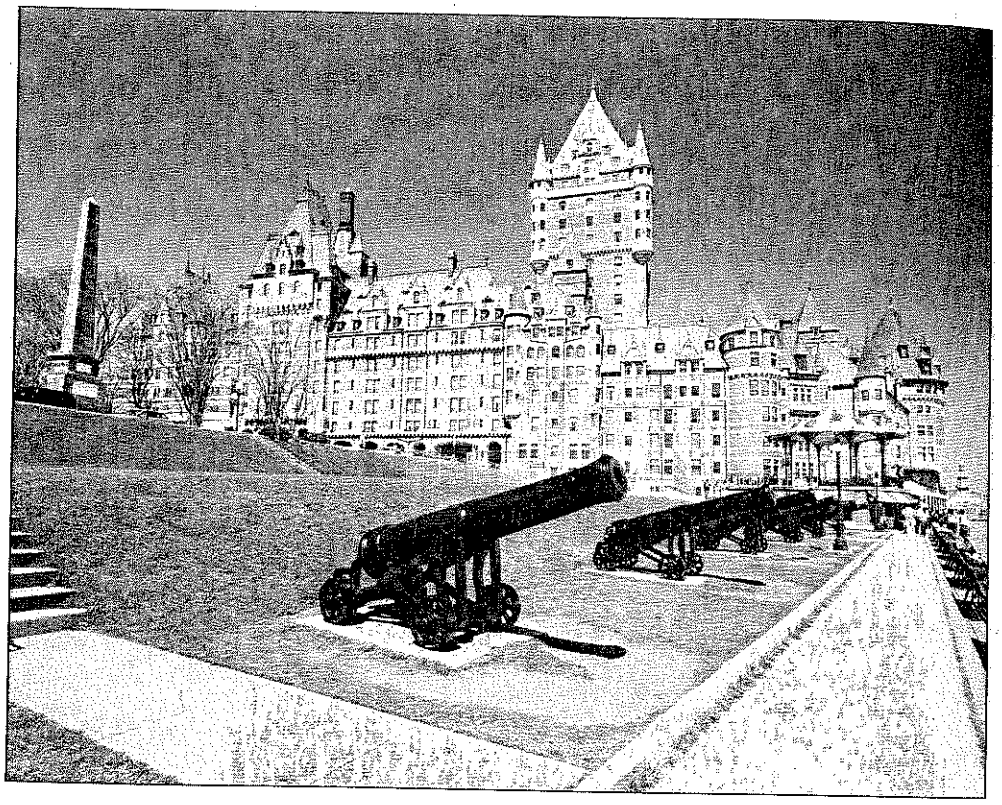


CANADIAN SOCIETY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

An Historical Sociological Approach • 2nd Edition

by Trevor W. Harrison & John W. Friesen



CHAPTER 2

LIVING WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF 1760

Valour gave them a common death / history a common fame / posterity a common monument.

—words engraved on the Wolfe and Montcalm Monument, Quebec City

I expected to find a contest between a government and a people: I found two nations warring in the bosom of a single state.

—Lord Durham's *Report*, 1839

[T]he human tragedy, or the human irony, consists in the necessity of living with the consequences of actions performed under the pressure of compulsions so obscure we do not and cannot understand them.

—Hugh MacLennan, 1957; words later recorded by The Tragically Hip in their 1992 song "Courage"

INTRODUCTION

The Meech Lake Accord's failure in 1990 and the subsequent Quebec referendum on sovereignty in 1995 brought into sharp relief two very different views of Canada. Is Canada a partnership of two founding peoples, the French and English, or even a third, the First Nations peoples, as discussed in Part 3 of this text? Or is Canada a federation of 10 equal provinces, Quebec, and what has been termed "the rest of Canada" or ROC? Most francophone Quebecers believe the former, sometimes referred to as the "two nations theory." They further believe that as a minority nation within Canada, they have a historically distinctive patrimony that must be protected; that they constitute a "distinct society" within Canada.

Thanks to decades of political wrangling, many people in English-speaking Canada know something of the history of Quebec-Canada and French-English relations. But this knowledge is often partial or inexact. In any case, facts do not automatically produce meaning; even less do they constitute truths.

This chapter goes beyond the historic facts to explore the emotional and symbolic meaning of English and French relationships in Canada, and the early evolution of this unique relationship. Embedded in the discussion are important sociological questions regarding dominant-subordinate relationships and the responsibilities and consequences imposed upon conquerors and conquered alike by history.

THE AGE OF MERCANTILISM

Between 1689 and 1763, the French and the English fought a series of wars. The last of these wars (1756–1763) was known in Europe as the Seven Years War, but in British North America as the French and Indian War (Hofstadter et al., 1957: 64). North America was merely one outpost, albeit an important one, in these wars. To understand these wars, it is necessary to reflect briefly on the political economy of European expansion beginning in the 15th century.

Before that time, the basic structures of European society had remained fundamentally unchanged since (roughly) the collapse of the Roman Empire (see Manchester, 1992). In Thomas Hobbes's memorable phrase, life was "poor, nasty, brutish, and short." People lived predictable lives in small rural communities. Families were large, class structures and age and gender roles were fixed, trade was local, and barter was the chief means of exchange.

Slowly, however, European feudal society began to change. Central to the changes were the growth of states in which power was centralized and monarchs became all-powerful, a corresponding decline in the temporal power of churches (though religion itself remained important), and the emergence of a new merchant class. In earlier times, churches had frowned upon trade, especially such practices as the granting of monopolies, usury, and profiteering (Hofstadter et al.,

1957: 4). Between the 16th and 18th centuries, however, there arose a new economic arrangement. Now the new merchant class and the state encouraged commercial trade. Merchants paid the state levies and taxes, and even lent money at favourable rates to support the state's armies. In return, merchants induced states to enact policies, including war, designed to protect their business interests (La Haye, 1993: 534).

The new economic arrangement was called **mercantilism** (Hofstadter et al., 1957; La Haye, 1993; Norrie and Owram, 1996: 17–18). The chief aim of mercantilist policies was to preserve the mother country's supply of precious metals and to make it less vulnerable during times of war. Colonies were fundamental to mercantilist policy. In practice, because mercantilism and colonialism also meant the enrichment of one state and its merchant allies at the expense of other states and their business friends, conflict was a frequent result. In North America, the conflict primarily involved the English on the eastern seaboard and around Hudson Bay and the French in Nova Scotia and along the St. Lawrence, the colony of New France. The Aboriginal peoples of the region soon found themselves caught up in the conflict.

THE RISE AND FALL OF NEW FRANCE

The history of New France begins in 1534. That year, the French explorer Jacques Cartier (1491–1557) first made landfall on the shores of the Gaspé Peninsula (see Miller, 2000). Like the Spanish far to the south, Cartier came in search of gold. He was discredited, however, when the "gold" he brought back from his third voyage in 1541–1542 turned out to be iron pyrite. Diverted by a series of European conflicts, France temporarily forgot about North America (Morton, 1997: 24).

Early in the next century, however, France returned in the person of Samuel de Champlain (1570–1635). A "navigator, soldier, visionary," "a Protestant turned Catholic by conviction," and "a man of Renaissance curiosity and eternal fortitude" (Morton, 1997: 25), Champlain in 1608 founded a trading post at what is now Quebec City. Thus New France began.

From the beginning, the post's survival was perilous. Life was harsh. Champlain's efforts to forge alliances with the Huron Confederacy brought the colonists into conflict with the Huron's chief enemies, the tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy. Despite Champlain's efforts to build a colony, Quebec City in 1627 still had fewer than 100 people. In that year, France's chief minister, Cardinal Richelieu, formed a private company made up of 100 merchants and aristocrats. The *Compagnie des Cent-Associés* was given a monopoly over the fur trade in exchange for promises to colonize the territory (Moore, 2000).

Still the settlement did not thrive. Military threats continued. In 1629, an English trading company seized Quebec City; it was returned to France in 1632 only after diplomatic negotiations (Moore, 2000). The fact is, Quebec City and the surrounding area were far less politically and economically valuable to France than its posts in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland, which protected the valuable cod fishery. Dickinson and Young (2003: 16) note that, until 1760, "France imported far more cod than fur and the fishery employed many more seamen and ships than all other French colonial trade combined" (see also Eccles, 1993a: 163). By contrast, New France's fur trade economy was unstable. European demand fluctuated according to fashion. Supply was equally unpredictable. Weather conditions, the needs and good fortune of Aboriginal suppliers, the actions of middlemen (Norrie and Owram, 1996: 43), conflict between Aboriginal tribes, exacerbated by competition between the French and Dutch trading companies in Port Albany all affected supply. In

Box 2.1
State Terrorism, 1759

Terrorism is *the deliberate use of acts of violence or the threat of violence by individuals, groups, or the state for the purpose of furthering political ends.* We tend to think of terrorism as a recent phenomenon. In fact, terrorism—especially state terrorism—is quite old, as shown in the following excerpt from the written account of the Sergeant Major of the 40th Regiment's Grenadiers (part of the Louisbourg Grenadiers). The passage deals with Wolfe's campaign against New France in the summer of 1759, leading up to the Battle of the Plains of Abraham in September of that year.

> The 15th of Aug. Captain Gorham returned from an Incursion, in which Service were employ'd, under his Command, 150 Rangers, a Detachment from the different Regiments, Highlanders, Marines, &c. amounting in the whole to about 300, an arm'd Vessel, three Transports, with a Lieutenant and Seamen of the Navy to attend him, of which Expedition they gave the following Account:
>
> "That on the 4th of August they proceeded down to St. Paul's Bay, (which is opposite to the North Side of this Island) where was a Parish containing about 200 men, who had been very active in distressing our Boats and Shipping—At 3 o 'Clock in the Morning Capt. Gorham landed and forced two of their Guards; of 20 Men each, who fired smartly for Some Time; but that in two Hours they drove them all from their Covering in the Wood, and clear'd the Village which they burnt, consisting of about 50 fine Houses and Barns; destroy'd most of their Cattle, &c. That in this one Man was kill'd and 6 wounded; but that the Enemy had two kill'd, and several wounded, who were carried off.—That from thence they proceeded to Mal Bay, 10 Leagues to the Eastward on the same Side, where they destroyed a very pretty Parish, drove off the Inhabitants and Stock without any Loss; after which, they made a Descent on the South Shore, opposite the Island of Coudre, destroyed Part of the Parish of St. Ann's and St. Roan, where were very handsome Houses with Farms, and loaded the Vessels with Cattle; after which they returned from their Expedition."
>
> The same Day 1 of our Schooners went from the Fleet below the Fall, and the French fir'd 8 or 9 Shot at her; but miss'd her. This Day a Party of young Highlanders came to the Island of Orleans from Gen. Monckton's Encampment; on Purpose to destroy all the Canada-Side.—The same Day our People set one of the Enemy's Floating-Batteries on Fire;—and in the Night General Monckton set the Town on Fire, (being the 4th Time) and the Flames raged so violently, that 'twas imagin'd the whole City would have been reduc'd to Ashes.
>
> August 18th a Sloop and Schooner went below the Falls; the French hove Shot and Shells at them, but did 'em no Damage. The same Day the Enemy hove a Bomb from the Town, which kill'd one Man and wounded 6 more,—one Man had his Arm cut off by a Piece of the same Shell.
>
> On the 20th the Louisbourg Grenadiers began their March down the main Land of Quebeck, in order to burn and destroy all the Houses on that Side.—On the 24th they were attack'd by a Party of French, who had a Priest for their Commander; but our Party kill'd and scalp'd 31 of

them, and likewise the Priest, their Commander; They did our People no Damage. The three Companies of Louisbourg Grenadiers halted about 4 Miles down the River, at a Church called the Guardian-Angel, where we were order'd to fortify ourselves till further Orders; we had several small Parties in Houses, and the Remainder continued in the Church.—The 25th, began to destroy the Country, burning Houses, cutting down Corn, and the like: At Night the Indians fired several scattering Shot at the Houses, which kill'd one of the Highlanders and wounded another; but they were soon repulsed by the Heat of our Firing.—It was said that the Number of the Enemy consisted of 800 Canadians and Indians. Sept 1st we set Fire to our Houses and Fortifications, and marched to join the Grand Army at Montmorancy; the 3 Companies of Grenadiers ordered to hold themselves in Readiness to march at a Minute's Warning.

Source: Robert Henderson, *A Soldier's Account of the Campaign on Quebec, 1759*, taken from *A Journal of the Expedition up the River St. Lawrence*, originally published in 1759 (Manotick: The Discriminating General, n.d.), services@militaryheritage.com. Reproduced with the permission of The Discriminating General, www.militaryheritage.com.

the 1630s, disease decimated the Huron population, delivering a severe blow to the trade (Dickinson and Young, 2003: 20; Innis, 1962; Morton, 1997).

In 1650, about 1,200 French European colonists lived in New France (Dickinson and Young, 2003: 65). In theory, the Huron Confederacy's destruction opened up new opportunities to attract French immigrants into the fur trade and agriculture. However, war and the *Cent-Associés'* near bankruptcy prevented the colony from taking advantage of the changed circumstances (Moore, 2000: 121–122). In 1663, the colony's population was still only around 3,000 people. That year, Louis XIV dissolved the company and made New France a royal colony. An active immigration policy was pursued. Encouragement and financial inducements were given to disbanded military officers and their men, civilian workers, and—in an effort to redress a long-standing gender imbalance in the colonies—women. By 1681, the population of New France was 10,000. Most of Canada's francophone population today traces its roots to these original 10,000 inhabitants (Moore, 2000: 127–129; also, Dickinson and Young, 2003). New France's population thereafter increased primarily from births rather than immigration.

Growth and development create their own problems and natural contradictions. After 1663, the internal contradictions and conflicts facing New France mounted: the Catholic Church versus the state; rural versus urban; fur trading versus agriculture and industry. In the words of historian Desmond Morton (1997: 27), "Were the people of New France to be habitants cultivating their small colony in the valley of the St. Lawrence, or were they to be voyageurs, carrying the fur trade, Catholicism, and French influence throughout the continent?" Yet the colony also began to develop. Visitors to New France in the mid-18th century regularly commented on its growing prosperity and cultural sophistication (Eccles, 1993b).

In 1756, however, New France faced a growing threat from England and its southern colonies. The 13 British colonies that eventually became the United States had a more developed and diverse economy than New France. Agriculture and commerce were thriving. The English colonists—roughly 1.5 million compared with New France's 75,000 (Eccles, 1993a: 171)—were

eager to expand into the Ohio Valley. There however, they faced a belt of French forts constructed along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, established both to support the fur trade and to hem off British expansion (Innis, 1962: 88–89; Morton, 1997: 30; Eccles, 1993a: 163). In 1754, a series of armed clashes occurred between British and French forces. These events partially set off the Seven Years War in Europe, which began two years later (Dickinson and Young, 2003: 46; Eccles, 1993a: 163).

As the war began, the English in North America possessed several advantages over the French. Besides a larger population in the colonies, the English also had a larger and more powerful navy, with which they could blockade the French colonies, and a larger standing army. In 1756, there were roughly 22,000 English regulars and militia in the colonies, to which were later added another 20,000 regular troops. By contrast, New France had no more than 7,000 regular troops, along with several thousand militiamen and Aboriginal allies (Dickinson and Young, 2003: 47; Moore, 2000: 185; but see also Eccles, 1993a: 171).

Despite these overwhelming odds, the French in the early stages successfully defended their colony, in part because the British had difficulty in marshalling their superior resources. Gradually, however, the British gained the upper hand. In 1758, the British seized the fort of Louisbourg in Nova Scotia. The following summer, a British fleet sailed up the St. Lawrence, while troops on the ground scorched the countryside (see Box 2.1).

Gradually, Quebec City was isolated from the surrounding territory, and the siege began. Throughout the following months, the British, led by General James Wolfe (1727–1759), conducted a constant bombardment of the city in hopes of forcing the French under the Marquis Louis-Joseph de Montcalm (1712–1759) out of their defensive position. Much of lower Quebec City was laid to rubble. The British also torched the surrounding countryside (Dickinson and Young, 2003; Dufour, 1990; Moore, 2000), yet the French did not surrender.

Frustrated, Wolfe tried a final tactic. On the night of September 12, the British forces seized a path up the cliffs to west Quebec City, setting the stage for the historic battle of the next day, as related by Moore (2000: 188):

> On the Plains of Abraham, Wolfe's red-coated army formed one line, facing east towards the city. After some fierce skirmishing, Montcalm's troops in their white coats moved west towards them, drums beating, regimental banners flying. The two armies were roughly equal in numbers. These were precisely the conditions Wolfe had sought all summer, and in a battle that lasted barely fifteen minutes, the close-range volleys of his skilled regulars tore the French army apart.

Wolfe died that day in battle, Montcalm succumbed the next day to his wounds, and part of a national mythology was born (see Francis, 1997: 55–56). In effect, the war was over, although fighting continued for another year. In August 1760, Montreal capitulated, the French humiliation completed by a public surrender of arms (Dufour, 1990). The Treaty of Paris in 1763 formally ended the war. France ceded its former colony along the St. Lawrence to Britain.

THE ROYAL PROCLAMATION AND QUEBEC ACT

In 1760 New France, now known as Quebec, was in a state of ruin. Roughly a tenth of the colony's population had been killed (Moore, 2000: 188). Quebec City and the area around it were in ruins, the colony's economic infrastructure destroyed. Famine and disease were rampant. All in all, the war and its

immediate aftermath were terrifying for the residents of the colony.

Adding to their abject circumstances was the French's fear of their conquerors. The French had good reason to fear the British. The torching of homes and villages along the St. Lawrence gave ample proof of the enemy's barbarity. The forced expulsion of roughly 7,000 Acadian people in 1754 from what is now Nova Scotia, without compensation for their land, was also fresh on French minds (Dickinson and Young, 2003: 47; Conway, 1997: 12). (Many of the Acadians resettled in Louisiana; hence, that region's "Cajun" culture.)

The French were surprised, therefore, by the generally courteous and respectful behaviour of the British. In the years between 1760 and 1764, Quebec was under martial law. Yet the British did little to interfere with French traditions, and indeed they helped in the province's reconstruction. In the words of Dufour (1990: 27), the conqueror's behaviour was "correct. Even exemplary."

The Royal Proclamation of 1763, however, gave the French a taste of the iron fist. Designed to assimilate the French, the Proclamation declared that Quebec henceforth would be governed by British institutions, with an elected assembly and British laws. British immigration would be encouraged. Finally, in an effort to head off further wars with Aboriginal peoples, the interior hinterland of the Ohio Valley was made a vast Native reserve (Innis, 1962; Dickinson and Young, 2003).

In an act of surprising civility, however, the British governor, James Murray (1721–1794), refused to enact many of the Proclamation's provisions. In part, Murray's actions were based on his recognition that the provisions were not enforceable. Eighty-five percent of the colony's inhabitants lived in rural areas beyond administrative control (Dickinson and Young, 2003). There was little likelihood soon of a wave of English immigration that might change the colony's predominantly French and Catholic character. Under existing British law, no Catholic could hold office, making impossible the notion of a representative legislative assembly. Montreal fur traders were already demanding that the Ohio Valley be reopened for business. Moreover, given growing unrest in England's southern colonies on the continent, the last thing the British needed was agitation in the north. But it is also true that Murray himself *actually liked and admired the French* and, setting a tradition followed for a time by his successors, acted, albeit paternalistically, as a protector of French interests (see Conway, 1997). Conqueror and conquered were mutually seduced (Dufour, 1990).

Thus, in 1774, the British passed the Quebec Act, which reversed much of the Royal Proclamation. The law was changed to allow Catholics to hold elected office. Seigneurial land tenure was confirmed. The colony's territorial boundaries were increased to include some of the First Nations territories. Catholics were given the right to practise their religion. The Catholic Church was once more allowed to collect tithes. And while English criminal law was retained, French law was allowed in civil cases (Dickinson and Young, 2003: 55).

In a curious sense, the Conquest seemed to have changed little. Nonetheless, its effects were real. In the most profound sense, the Conquest forged a people, a sociological—but not a political—nation.

BEING *CANADIEN*

A people somewhat distinct from the European French were arising in the colony even before the Conquest. In contrast to the town-dwelling French administrators, the peasant farmers—*habitants*, as they described themselves—were mostly rural. In their everyday lives, they experienced greater independence and social equality, including gender equality, than people living in France (Rioux, 1978: 17–18). This

basic equality, combined with isolation, the harshness of their existence, and the constant fear of attack by Aboriginals, developed a strong sense of solidarity among the *habitants* over time (Dickinson and Young, 2003; Rioux, 1978). By the 1750s, visitors to New France "claimed that a new kind of French people was emerging along the banks of the St. Lawrence" (Morton, 1997: 28), a people distinguished by different beliefs, customs, behaviours, and even dialect (Rioux, 1978: 24–25; see also Eccles, 1993b; Thompson, 1995). They called themselves *Canadiens*, and their country Canada. There was no need to copyright the *Canadien* identity. By definition, *Canadiens* were French-speaking Catholics settled permanently along the St. Lawrence. Moreover, in their own minds at least, the territorial boundaries of their nation extended well beyond their colony's borders into areas traversed and imagined by French voyageurs and missionaries.

But distinctiveness, though necessary, is not a sufficient basis of nationalism. The Conquest transformed—though not all at once—New France's distinctiveness into nationalism (Cook, 1995: 86).

Try to put yourself for the moment in the shoes of a *habitant* after 1763. You have been conquered, not merely defeated, by the English (Dufour, 1990: 31). Equally, you have not been merely orphaned by the mother country, but, as the Treaty of Paris cruelly attests, abandoned. The past cannot be reversed. Finally, to add to your confusion, your enemy is actually magnanimous in victory. As a conquered subject, you welcome the difference; the fact that you are not tortured, raped, and killed is clearly important. Still, as Dufour (1990: 31) remarks, the conqueror's magnanimity changes nothing; indeed, it actually makes your subordinate status more humiliating because now you must also be grateful.

New France in 1760, like the British colonies to the south, was growing apart from France and no doubt one day would have sought independence, but the Conquest truncated this normal development. Quebec's sense of self-identity was not positive in the sense of one chosen by the people; rather, it was an identity thrust upon them, forged in war, trauma, and the torturous severing of the colony's umbilical cord from France. Time and circumstances conspired to make the Quebec's French population a distinct people—*les Canadiens*—before their time. By contrast, the few hundred British who occupied Quebec after 1763 remained, even to themselves, "the British."

The political circumstances were unstable, however. As the British feared, the American colonists in 1775 revolted. In the wake of the conflict, 40,000 United Empire Loyalists fled to the northern British colonies, about 10,000 of them settling in Quebec (Dickinson and Young, 2003). The contest for political, territorial, and economic power and national identity began again.

THE LOYALISTS AND THE CONSTITUTION ACT OF 1791

Imagine now that you are a United Empire Loyalist recently arrived in Canada. Your property in the 13 colonies has been stolen by the revolutionary leaders who have distributed it among themselves, their friends, and small farmers in order to garner their political support for the new republic (Zinn, 1995: 83). Your physical health, and that of your family, is poor. By contrast with the 30,000 Loyalists who arrived in Nova Scotia by ship, you came to Canada by horse cart overland and on foot, bearing little. You are bitter and angry; a historian will later remark that "quarrelsomeness" marked your character and that of your compatriots (Brown, 1993: 246). You were loyal to Britain (you say to yourself and anyone who will listen) and now have lost everything (Morton, 1997: 65; but also see Francis, 1997: 56). The free land, clothing, and farming utensils supplied by the British administration

(Dickinson and Young, 2003) do not assuage your bitterness.

Such, in part, was the view of the Loyalists as they arrived in the northern British colonies. Like the French, the Loyalists were a conquered people. In Canada, however, the roughly 10,000 who arrived found their humiliation increased by the fact that they were a minority surrounded by more than 70,000 French Catholics. For their part, the French were no more thrilled with their new neighbours, viewing them as an advance guard of future anglophone settlement. In an age when ethnic and religious bigotry were rife, the arrival of the Loyalists was like gasoline thrown on a fire.

Elsewhere, the arrival of Loyalists created similar tensions. In Nova Scotia, the Loyalists who arrived quickly swamped the existing population of 4,000 New Englanders and Acadians. The 1,000 Loyalists who arrived on the Island of St. John (renamed Prince Edward Island in 1799) equalled those already living there, while the 400 Loyalists who arrived on Cape Breton doubled that island's existing population (Brown, 1993: 241–242).

Anxious to prevent conflict, the British thus segregated the respective populations. Nova Scotia was divided and a new province, New Brunswick, created, while Cape Breton (temporarily) became a separate colony. The colony of Quebec, formally New France, likewise was divided.

The instrument of this latter division was the Constitution Act of 1791. The Constitution Act amended the Quebec Act, but left intact many of the latter's provisions protecting the French language, the Catholic Church, French civil law, and the seigneurial system. The Constitution Act, however, divided the colony into Upper Canada (where many of the Loyalists had settled) and Lower Canada (French Canada), the term *Canada* having historically been a loose synonym for New France. The Act further maintained strong executive power in the office of the governor, an executive council (made up of the governor's advisers), and a non-elected legislative council (a colonial House of Lords). But it also allowed, for the first time, popularly elected assemblies in both Canadas and extended the franchise. Finally, the Act envisaged the creation of a colonial aristocracy, a state church, and public education. The first idea was soon abandoned, but substantial land holdings were set aside for the Anglican Church and education (Careless, 1970: 119–121; Dickinson and Young, 2003: 59).

Even at the time, the Constitution Act pleased few people. The merchants of Montreal had not wanted Canada divided. The English in Lower Canada did not like being separated from the English in Upper Canada. The agrarians and rising bourgeoisie in both provinces did not like the Act's openly mercantilist bent. Democrats, believing that the elected assemblies did not go far enough, railed against oligarchic rule. But perhaps the major flaw in the Constitution Act was that it institutionalized ethnic conflict (Cook, 1995: 87). Thereafter, as Quebec premier Pierre Chauveau would later remark, the English and French met each other only "on the landing of politics," frequently in conflict.

THE CONQUEST'S IMPACTS

Social stratification is *the system by which a society ranks categories of people (e.g., by occupation, race, ethnicity, or gender) in a hierarchy involving inequalities of various sorts.* At the top of New France's stratification system before the Conquest were royal officials: the governor, the *intendant* (the business manager), and the senior military officers. The clergy were somewhat parallel to the royal officials, but after 1663 clearly subordinate in the final instance to the state. The *seigneurs*, some of whom came from the French nobility, came next in the social order, followed by a sizable middle class (composed

of merchants and small vendors), the urban working class, then the *habitants* (Eccles, 1993a: 42). (Note that this stratification system does not include women or Aboriginal peoples.) The Conquest changed Canada's economic and political order. The degree and type of changes, however, are somewhat disputed.

One dispute involves the actual number of people who left New France. The articles of capitulation in 1760 gave inhabitants the right to return to France. Perhaps only a few hundred took advantage of the opportunity (Dickinson and Young, 2003: 49), perhaps 4,000 (Eccles, 1993a: 173). Most of those who left were French bureaucrats and soldiers (though some decommissioned soldiers remained), quickly replaced by British bureaucrats and soldiers.

A second, more important dispute arose during the 1950s and 1960s over the Conquest's impacts upon New France's economic classes and the colony's future. Early on, scholars of "the Montreal School" (Saul, 1997: 19)—Maurice Seguin, Guy Fregault, and Michel Brunet—developed the **decapitation thesis** (Cook, 1995: 92; Dickinson and Young, 2003). This thesis holds that the Conquest had destroyed New France's "embryonic bourgeoisie" (Brunet, 1993; also Rioux, 1978: 39; Conway, 1997: 15). The English and Scots merchants subsequently stepped into the void left by the French bourgeoisie, while the French who remained retreated to a rural existence. There, dominated by the Catholic Church, they espoused conservative values inimical to capitalist development (Norrie and Owram, 1996: 61; Dickinson and Young, 2003). Thus Lower Canada's economic development was truncated.

In direct refutation of the decapitation thesis, a second argument holds that New France in 1763 had no "viable business community" (Dickinson and Young, 2003: 51), no middle class (Hamelin, 1993) to be destroyed. More recently, a synthesis of both arguments has emerged. This third argument suggests that the Conquest resulted in the departure of agents and merchants directly connected to France's trading companies, but that local merchants, storekeepers, and traders stayed. That is, the transatlantic French bourgeoisie was eliminated, but the local French bourgeoisie, albeit small, remained (Norrie and Owram, 1996: 63; also Dickinson and Young, 2003).

More broadly, these debates point to how historical interpretations can have current sociological and political significance. Reflecting on the political context within Quebec during recent decades, one can see that the decapitation thesis lent itself to support for the Quiet Revolution (Chapter 3) and sovereignty (Cook, 1995; Saul, 1997). By contrast, the second and third arguments provide much less support for the belief that the conquest held back Quebec's early development.

There is no dispute, however, that Canada's economy immediately after 1760 was in crisis. The war's devastation, the permanent disruption of its mercantile (metropolitan-hinterland) arrangements with France, and the outbreak of wars with Aboriginal tribes on the frontier were all contributing factors. Within a short time, however, Lower Canada's economy began to rebound. The colony was rebuilt; the Aboriginal wars ended in 1763 (see Chapter 10), restoring the Ohio Valley fur trade; and trade links were re-established, this time with Britain. Capital also began to enter Lower Canada from Britain and merchants in England's southern colonies.

The direct economic impacts of the Conquest should not be minimized. In the long term, however, the Conquest's social and political consequences were more important. After 1763 the English held the balance of **power**, defined as *someone's ability to impose his or her will upon others even against their resistance* (see Box 2.2). The imposition of English will was a fact of life in Lower Canada, despite the newcomers'

frequent conciliations and sensitivity to the French majority. With the arrival of the Loyalists after 1775 (see Chapter 6), ethnicity came to play an even greater role in Canada's social structure. The effects of ethnicity, however, were mitigated somewhat by the granting of elected assemblies under the Constitution Act of 1791, which opened up opportunities for a nascent *Canadien* political class.

Box 2.2
Means of Exercising Power

Power can be exercised by three means. Each means may be effective depending on a particular situation, but each also has limits and none is effective in all situations. Often one means of power is used in combination with another. The three means of power are:

Force or the threat of force: The English expulsion of the Acadians in 1754, the Canadian government's use of the RCMP against protesters at Regina in 1935 (Chapter 7), the use of the Canadian military to deal with the FLQ Crisis in 1970 (Chapter 3), and the use of the military troops to deal with the Oka Crisis in 1990 (Chapter 12) provide examples of the use of force.

Reward: Whereas force involves use of the stick, reward involves the use of the carrot. Rewards may be material (e.g., money), but not always; status, for example, is also a form of reward. Because systems of social stratification differentially reward individuals and groups on the basis of class, race, ethnicity, gender, etc., such systems are themselves means of power. (Note that withholding instrumental rewards results in economic coercion—the use once more of force.)

Authority: Authority gains its power by being recognized as legitimate. Authority frequently coincides with the means of force and reward, but often includes elements of tradition, law, status, or prestige. The **dominant ideology** (see chapters 3 and 8) of any period tends to legitimize current power relations.

By the early 19th century, ethnicity had become a defining feature of Lower Canada's system of social stratification. The English controlled the executive and judicial branches in the political realm, but the French dominated the legislative branch. The English controlled the upper reaches of the economy: international trade, banking, and finance. The French business class was restricted to local trade. At the lower levels, British labourers, contractors, and producers—often favoured by British administrators—competed with their French counterparts (Dickinson and Young, 2003: 114; Innis, 1962; Norrie and Owram, 1996). Finally, the *habitant* majority occupied the bottom level of Lower Canada's social structure (Rioux, 1978: 35).

The ethnic division of Lower Canada was not merely social, but also demographic. Gradually, the English "captured" the urban portion of the colony, while the French retreated to the colony's villages and rural farms (Rioux, 1978). Early in the 19th century, 40 percent of Quebec City and 33 percent of Montreal were anglophone (Norrie and Owram, 1996: 98). In this context the Catholic Church, especially its parish priests, grew in importance.

By the 1830s, these social, political, and economic divisions, built on a foundation of Conquest, had nurtured among Lower Canada's French population a growing sense of grievance and a rising spirit of nationalism. Finally, the grievances boiled over.

THE REBELLIONS OF 1837–1838

In 1837, after years of political discord, and in the midst of a prolonged recession, rebellions broke out in both Upper and Lower Canada. The causes of the rebellions in the two Canadas were similar. Popular anger focused on the corrupt oligarchies that governed the provinces—the Chateau Clique in Lower Canada, the Family Compact in Upper Canada—and their political masters in London.

In Upper Canada, the rebels demanded "responsible government." They wanted real power to rest with an elected legislative assembly. The Upper Canadian rebels also wanted economic reform, believing—correctly—that current policies were designed to protect mercantilist interests. The rebels wanted instead increased immigration, greater access to capital, and more land opened up for agriculture (Careless, 1970; Norrie and Owram, 1996).

Though the movements in both Upper and Lower Canada were informed by liberal democratic ideals, inspired by the French and American revolutions (Rioux, 1978: 49; Cook, 1995; Conway, 1997; Romney, 1999), a fundamental difference existed between the two rebellions. In contrast with Upper Canada, the rebellion in Lower Canada was not only inspired by demands for representative democracy, but also nationalism (Conway, 1997: 22). In consequence, the conflict in Lower Canada could only be more serious—and bloody.

In Lower Canada, the rebellion's leader was Louis-Joseph Papineau (1786–1871), a member of the new middle class and speaker of the Assembly. The rebellion occurred in several stages. In October 1837, Patriote leaders issued a "Declaration of the Rights of Man," based on the American declaration of 1776 (Ouellet, 1993: 360). At St. Denis on November 23, 800 Patriotes defeated 200 British regulars. This was followed by a British victory two days later at St. Charles, then a massive British attack on the rebels at St. Eustache, north of Montreal, on December 14. Many of the rebels hid in the village church. The British, however, set the church alight and shot the rebels as they fled through the windows. Estimates of the number of Patriotes killed range from 58 to 100. The village of St. Eustache was razed. The fight continued into the countryside, where British irregulars left behind them a trail of scorched *habitant* homes, farms, and villages (Morton, 1997: 37; Dickinson and Young, 2003: 165; Conway, 1997: 29).

In the wake of the Lower Canada rebellion, martial law was declared, the Canadian constitution suspended, and a new governor of British North America, Lord Durham (1792–1840), was named (Dickinson and Young, 2003: 167). By now, Papineau had fled to the United States. The rebellion, however, soon flared anew.

A second uprising occurred in late November 1838, with its leader, a follower of Papineau, declaring Lower Canada a republic and issued a "Proclamation of Independence." The uprising was soon put down, however. While a degree of leniency followed the first wave of rebellions in Lower Canada, no leniency was shown after the second rebellion. Twelve Patriotes were hanged and 58 deported to Australia's penal colonies, while two more were banished (Dickinson and Young, 2003: 167; Conway, 1997: 29; Wynn, 2000: 211–212).

By contrast, the rebellion in Upper Canada was, in the words of historian Jack Granatstein (1996: 29), a "small-bore affair." There, William Lyon Mackenzie (1795–1861)—publisher, editorialist, social critic, *and* grandfather to a later prime minister—led the rebellion. Since the 1820s, he had fought against the Family Compact and for democratic reform, to no avail. Finally, emboldened by events in Lower Canada—Mackenzie was in frequent contact with Papineau—the rebels took up arms in December 1837. On December 7, after a night of heated discussion at Montgomery's Tavern, 800 of Mackenzie's followers (mostly farmers, small-town tradesmen, and some professionals) marched up Yonge Street in Toronto. There, untrained militia recruited by Upper Canada's elite met them. Shots rang out. The rebellion soon ended. Mackenzie fled disguised as a woman to the United States—he would return 12 years later and be elected to the legislature—but two of his lieutenants died on the gallows. Ninety-two more of Mackenzie's followers were sent to the penal colonies, while

hundreds more, disenchanted with the rebellion's outcome, eventually left for the United States. As in Lower Canada, a few cross-border skirmishes occurred in 1838, led by groups trying to liberate Canada from "the British yoke." In 1840, Mackenzie supporters also burned a British steamship at the Thousand Islands and blew up General Brock's monument at Queenston Heights. These events were mere sideshows, however. Upper Canada's rebellion was over (Morton, 1997: 49; Dickinson and Young, 2003; Conway, 1997: 23–25; Wynn, 2000: 217).

Neither rebellion had widespread popular support. The movements were primarily middle class in origin (Morton, 1997; Ouellet, 1993; Trofimenkoff, 1993), no match for the power of the state and its allies. In Upper Canada, the rebels were easily tainted with the labels "American" and "republican" (Granatstein, 1996). In Lower Canada, the movement's avowed anticlericalism evinced even stronger condemnations from the Catholic Church (Trofimenkoff, 1993).

The rebels' final defeat in 1838 was decisive. French nationalism would not rise again with force until the 1960s (Cook, 1995). For Canada as a whole, defeat meant the throttling of liberal democracy (see Laxer, 1989; Trofimenkoff, 1993; Conway, 1997). Thereafter, conservatism, exercised both in the political-economic and religious realms, gained an increased hold on Canadian society.

LORD DURHAM AND THE ACT OF UNION

The new governor, Lord Durham, spent only five months in Canada before resigning in anger. On his return to England, he produced his analysis of the rebellions, based on his short time in Canada, which included a 10-day steamboat trip and conversations with a few close acquaintances (G. Martin, 1993: 444). Durham's *Report on the Affairs of British North America* condemned the ruling oligarchy, the abuses of land granting, and Anglican privileges in the colonies, while also dealing with a host of other issues, from immigration to canal building (see Careless, 1970: 195). It further made some of the most derogatory statements ever directed at the *Canadiens*, including this one, quoted in Colombo (1994: 38):

> There can hardly be conceived a nationality more destitute of all that can invigorate and elevate a people, than that which is exhibited by the descendants of the French in Lower Canada, owing to their peculiar language and manners. They are a people with no history and no literature.

Finally, Durham's report included a particularly memorable paragraph (Colombo, 1994: 38):

> I expected to find a contest between a government and a people: I found two nations warring in the bosom of a single state: I found a struggle, not of principles, but of races; and I perceived that it would be idle to attempt any amelioration of laws or institutions until we could first succeed in terminating the deadly animosity that now separates the inhabitants of Lower Canada into the hostile divisions of French and English.

Durham's analysis reflected European views of the time about the "necessary" relationship between state and nation (see Chapter 1); as such, it is a textbook example of material reality being shaped to fit theory and of the problems of biases in conducting research (see Box 2.3). Theories have consequences, and in this case two significant consequences resulted from Durham's report.

Box 2.3
Observer Bias: A Tale of Two Journeys

Lord Durham travelled through Upper and Lower Canada in 1838. Only a few years earlier (in 1830), Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) journeyed to the United States. Both Lord Durham and Tocqueville were European aristocrats; both travelled in the respective countries for only a few months, yet the latter produced *Democracy in America*, still considered an accurate depiction of the United States' developing political culture, while the former's *Report* is viewed as biased and inaccurate. The result raises the question of why observer bias occurs and how it might be prevented.

Durham arrived with fixed notions of the situation in Lower Canada, and his informants were a relatively small number of the existing elite who supported his beliefs. By contrast, Tocqueville arrived in the United States to study that country's penal system, not U.S. society as a whole. As a result, he was relatively open to experiencing the new environment, and supplemented his observations by reading widely and interviewing a large number of Americans.

The tale of Durham and Tocqueville also raises the question of the proper distance researchers should have from the object of study. On the one hand, group members have an advantage over outsiders in understanding what is observed. On the other hand, insiders are sometimes too close to see what outsiders can observe.

Durham's report contained two major recommendations: first, that the British North American colonies be granted responsible government and, second, that Upper and Lower Canada be united (Careless, 1970: 195). In effect, the sundering of the two colonies by the Constitution Act of 1791 would be reversed. There was now, however, an important difference. In 1791, the French had been in the majority; it was to protect the English minority that the colonies had been split. By 1840, however, the demographics had changed. Lower Canada still had the larger population, between 600,000 and 650,000, compared with Upper Canada's population of 450,000 (Dickinson and Young, 2003: 183; also Conway, 1997). But virtually all of Upper Canada's population was anglophone, while approximately 150,000 people in Lower Canada were also of British heritage. Thus, the English could dominate in a united Canada. Moreover, Durham argued that English immigration should be strengthened to ensure over time the complete assimilation of the French, thereby blunting the nationalism that had fuelled the recent rebellions.

In 1840 the British government implemented much of Durham's report through the Act of Union, but what they did not implement was crucial. First, they denied outright responsible government, with the result that reformers in Upper Canada remained angry. Second, the union was not total. The Quebec Act's major provisions protecting French civil law, the rights of the Catholic Church, and local control of education remained extant. Even more importantly, the Act of Union meant that Canada would be governed by an elected legislative assembly in which Canada East (Lower Canada) and Canada West (Upper Canada) would equally hold 42 seats (see Conway, 1997).

The seeds for further crisis, leading ultimately to Confederation in 1867, were thus sown. The French population would not—could not—be assimilated; indeed, the legislative structure actually gave the French minority power disproportionate to its numbers, power that they sensibly used, voting *en bloc*, to protect their interests. The English in Upper Canada, meanwhile, complained bitterly that they had cast off the oligarchic power of the Family Compact only to find themselves now dominated by Lower Canada and a French-speaking minority that was Catholic to boot (see Romney, 1999).

The rebellions of 1837–1838 had seen French Canada conquered a second time. Both Papineau's dream of an independent French republic and Durham's hope of French assimilation were equally chimerical. Nonetheless, the conflicts remained. It would take the forces of modernity, a major depression, two world wars, and the rise of a new intellectual class before Quebec nationalism would again rise, but rise it would, in unexpected ways, with consequences for conquered and conqueror alike.

CONCLUSION

New France gave Canada its name, its history, and one of its languages; in the wording of Dufour (1990), its "heart." After 1840, however, the English increasingly put their stamp on the rest of Canada. A series of events symbolized the ongoing rejection of the French language and its near isolation to the province of Quebec: the hanging of Riel in 1885; the school acts adopted in several provinces, beginning with Manitoba in 1890; and, of course, the conscription crises of the two world wars.

Why does this matter? From the perspective of historical sociology, five later aspects of Canadian society derive, directly or indirectly, from these events. First, these events (beginning with the Conquest) help explain Canada's system of stratification until recent times, with those of English ethnic origin disproportionately occupying elite positions and people of French (and other) ethnic origins disproportionately occupying lower rungs (see Porter, 1965; Clement, 1975; Nakhaie, 1997). Second, they suggest why francophone Quebecers might feel a sense of grievance toward the rest of Canada (see Conway, 1997). Third, attention to historical and political contexts also sheds light on Quebec's continuing claims to linguistic, cultural, and religious distinctiveness.

A fourth, less obvious consequence of this early history is that no "strong national myth" could cement Canadian federalism, as in the United States (Balthazar, 1997: 45; see Part 2 of this text). In the words of political scientist Reg Whitaker (1987: 23), "Nationalism as legitimation is a weak, derisory ploy in Canada." Any attempt by political demagogues to "fly the flag" has quickly run aground on ethnic divisions and the Canadian tendency, perhaps inborn, toward skepticism.

Finally, a fifth related consequence (which we shall explore further) involves the complex nature of Canadian federalism. Some of the Fathers of Confederation no doubt wanted to create a strong, centralized government, leaving the provinces with only meagre powers. Quebec's presence, however, as well as that of the smaller Maritime provinces, made this impossible. Canada's flexible and significantly decentralized system of powers and responsibilities—sometimes a benefit, sometimes not—is a product of efforts to solve real problems and conflicts among Canada's constituent communities.

To a degree, political institutions and cultural traditions before the 1950s restrained conflict between Canada's English and French communities. Where these might have proved insufficient to reduce conflict, social isolation provided additional restraint. But the world would not let the two communities go on this way. War and the relentless forces of modernity—capitalism, industrialism, and secularism—were about to throw the separate worlds together.

KEY TERMS

decapitation thesis
dominant ideology
mercantilism
power
social stratification
terrorism

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. What are the similarities and differences between mercantilism and modern capitalism?
2. What are the processes by which social conflict between different groups emerges and is transformed over time?
3. Under what conditions are some means of power more effective than others?
4. Is it possible to overcome observer bias?
5. In what sense is nationalism always based on a myth?

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Dickinson, John, and Brian Young. 2003. *A Short History of* Quebec, 3rd ed. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
This book provides an excellent social history of Quebec, from pre-European times up to the present.

Dufour, Christian. 1990. *A Canadian Challenge/ Le défi québécois.* Halifax: Oolichan Books and the Institute for Research on Public Policy.
In a Weberian manner, this book allows anglophones to understand the world from the point of view of francophone Quebecers, while also showing the unrecognized influence that each community has had upon the other.

Manchester, William. 1992. *A World Lit Only by Fire: The Medieval Mind and the Renaissance.* Boston: Little, Brown.
This book brings to life, in a very readable way, Medieval Europe and shows how very different it was from the present day.

Moore, Christopher. 1997. *1867: How the Fathers Made a Deal.* Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.
This book tells the engaging story of how the Fathers of Confederation arrived at making Canada.

Porter, John. 1965. *The Vertical Mosaic.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
Porter's book, *The Vertical Mosaic,* is a classic in sociology. It detailed, at the time, Canada's complex stratification system, paving the way for subsequent studies.

RELATED WEBSITES

Acadian Cultural Society
www.acadiancultural.org
This society is a non-profit, tax-exempt educational organization dedicated to preserving and promoting Acadian heritage among individuals of Acadian descent.

Canada: A People's History
http://history.cbc.ca
This 17-episode, 32-hour documentary television series, which first aired on the CBC, portrays the history of Canada.

Cangenealogy
www.cangenealogy.com/quebec.html
Quebec's demographic history is among the best recorded anywhere. Cangenealogy has a list of sites for those interested in genealogical history.

CANADIAN SOCIETY ON VIDEO

A License to Remember—Special Edition/Un certain souvenir—Édition spéciale. 2007. National Film Board of Canada, 121 minutes, 2 seconds. Examines the meaning of the words on Quebec licence plates, *"Je me souviens,"* at the heart of Quebec history and society.