CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

THE FRENCH CANADIAN PRESS AND THE WAR

NUMBER 2
The French-Canadian Press and the War

by

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An information paper of the C.I.I.A. on the attitude of the French-Canadian Press towards the war, arranged and classified without criticism.

The Ryerson Press

Toronto - Halifax
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FOREWORD

NEWSPAPERS are one channel through which opinions may be approached. The Canadian Institute of International Affairs asked a competent research student to prepare this digest of French-Canadian opinion as expressed through its press. The digest does not attempt to assess the relative importance of various views; it merely sets them forth as factual statements. The political leanings of the various journals, and their circulation can be found in the appendix.
The French-Canadian Press and the War

I

THE AUGUST CRISIS

The Russo-German Pact

In the final crisis which led to the war, the French-Canadian press definitely took the side of England and France. It was only in the last days of August, or, more exactly, after the pact concluded between the U.S.S.R. and the Reich, that the French-Canadian journalists allowed free rein to their feelings. Those who had for some time advocated Canadian neutrality in the event of a European war took up their isolationist doctrine with added vigour; the others, who had until then limited their activity to paraphrasing the articles of their French colleagues, or who were still seeking their bearings in the international situation, abandoned the reticence which they had previously assumed. There was a general outburst of violent anger against the duplicity of M. Stalin and Herr Hitler, which is surprising from one point of view, considering that the news of the Russo-German rapprochement had freed these writers of a serious worry. For La Presse the Non-Aggression Pact was not, perhaps, regrettable after all, as an alliance of the democracies with the U.S.S.R. would have presented an element of uncertainty with which they would have had to reckon. La Patrie, Le Soleil, Le Canada, L'Événement-Journal, and Le Droit saw in this
alliance the proof that the totalitarian régimes were destined to be as thick as thieves, having the same conceptions of life, politics and power, the same contempt for religion, the same tyranny, and the same cynical disloyalty to promises and pledges. *Le Canada* pointed out that it had never approved of the idea of even a defensive alliance between the democracies and the U.S.S.R. In the opinion of *Le Soleil*, Herr Hitler had become the dupe of M. Stalin. "From the moral point of view," it said, "both before the German people and before the Christian world, Hitler has now admitted the evidence of his baseness, his crime and his flagrant deceit." In *L'Action Catholique*, Eugène L'Heureux exclaimed, "Let them get together," and Louis-Philippe Roy found in this stroke of diplomacy an opportunity for Premier Mussolini to abandon to his fate the presumptuous Fuehrer whose friendship had brought him nothing but harm.¹

**ATTITUDE TOWARDS ITALY**

This brings us to an examination of the feelings of the French-Canadian journalists towards Italy. They tried to show that in recent years Italy had constantly been pulling chestnuts out of the fire for Germany. *Le Soleil* did not spare the Duce, and its tone gave a glimpse of the epithets which it had saved for the day when Italy might line up with the U.S.S.R. and the Reich. *L'Événement-Journal* mocked at the "heroism" and "valour" of the Italian soldiers and favourably commented upon the campaign carried on by *Le Droit* against certain anti-French articles of the *Italia Nuova*, the Italian weekly of Montreal. While *La Presse* and *L'Action Catholique* seemed to call for mediation by Premier Mussolini, *La Tribune*, on the other hand, said that his recent declarations by no means indicated that he would prove to

be an ideal mediator. However, *L'Illustration Nouvelle* considered a Four-Power Pact between the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Germany the best guarantee of peace.¹

**The Polish Crisis**


Now we reach the heart of our subject. In the most popular paper, *La Presse*, there were some quite cautious leading articles which can be easily summed up by the statement that, while this paper doubtless wanted peace, it believed—at least in so far as any line of thought can be traced in its editorials—that it was hardly wise to give way to Herr Hitler's demands. It committed itself so far as to state that the Reich was responsible before the whole world for the state of things existing at the end of August. *La Patrie* went distinctly further than *La Presse*, and, for that matter further than any of the French-Canadian papers. In fact, Léon Gray, the editor, in long articles on the crisis, freely abused Hitler—"this villain," "this mass-assassin." He was certain that the Fuehrer desired another Munich rather than war; therefore, he urged the need "to convince Germany that it would be a war with three powers, and eventually with five or six, if she did not cease her diabolic policy of extortion by threats; to convince the weak-minded powers that there was no time left for hesitation, for it was a question of their very existence; to convince all champions of order concerned with the conflict that they must speak immediately, make their choice that very day." On August 30, *La Patrie* said: "If Hitler wants war, he shall have it; if he wants peace, he shall have it too, if he negotiates in earnest—for instance, by limiting his claims on Danzig and Pomorze to a decent revision of the international status—and this in

an atmosphere of cordiality, rather than in that of gunpowder.” There is nothing of this mood to be found in other French-Canadian papers, even in those of the Liberal Party.¹


The papers supporting the Liberal Government at Ottawa, particularly *Le Soleil,* were uncompromising on the attitude to be taken by the European democracies in the German-Polish crisis. As early as August 1, *Le Soleil* recalled the humiliation of Munich, and on August 12 it declared that no genuine peace was possible, unless the dictators were disarmed. This paper visualized but one reasonable outcome, a compromise which would this time involve the disarming of the favoured party, and added: “And even then, a peace thus imposed would offer but a feeble promise of security.” In these circumstances, it went on, Mr. Chamberlain had struck the correct note by proclaiming that he could only see a bloody clash as the issue of the armament race deliberately caused by the Rome-Berlin Axis. Danzig would have to be satisfied with the *status quo* as long as Herr Hitler’s demands took no account of justice, of prudence, or of the higher interest of peace; the stake of the game was European peace rather than Danzig or the Polish Corridor. And *Le Soleil* set the terms of peace: the end of the Hitler régime, the restoration of the Czech Republic, the liberation of the nations petrified by the new German peril, and disarmament.

In the first half of August *Le Canada* analyzed the international policy of the Reich and concluded that probably Herr Hitler’s demands would not stop with Danzig, if the democracies were to give way, but that eventually he would be a menace to German Switzerland and Alsace-Lorraine, and would also demand the former German colonies. Towards the end l’Heureux, editor-in-chief of the same paper, was certain that of August *Le Canada* stated that war depended upon the will

¹*La Presse,* August 15, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31; *La Patrie,* August 20, 25, 28, 30, 31.
of one man whose name it was unnecessary to mention. Strangely enough, *La Tribune* showed more interest in the position of Italy than in German policy. The Liberal weeklies, both metropolitan and provincial, expressed themselves in the same way as the dailies.¹


With the exception of *Le Droit*, the nationalist papers spent much less time on the impending crisis than on the decision which Canada should make in the event of a European war. *Le Devoir*, apparently anxious to be consistent with its isolationist views, did not go beyond saying, and then not in its editorials, that discerning minds gave credit to Mr. Chamberlain for having so far avoided war; for having constantly worked to render it impossible; and then, if by mischance it should break out, for attempting to limit it and to secure the victory of the countries which Berlin and Rome were trying to intimidate.

Early in August *L'Événement-Journal* mentioned the excessive patience and diplomatic weakness of Mr. Chamberlain, and the sluggishness of the democracies; it declared that Herr Hitler had become a real danger to European peace and described the heads of the British and French governments as preparing to defend a proven ideal, a heritage laboriously accumulated by generations of civilized men. A few days later, this paper threw the entire responsibility for the impending war, as well as for the ideological war which had been disturbing the entire world since 1934, on the shoulders of the Fuehrer and the thousands of Germans who had abandoned to him the reins of government. Finally, on August 31, *L'Événement-Journal* announced its conviction that the Allies, even though they might insist on guarantees, would facilitate Hitler's task, if a compromise were made.

¹*Le Soleil*, August 1, 12, 14, 18, 19, 25, 28, 29, 30; *Le Canada*, August 5, 11, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30, 31,
Louis-Philippe Roy, editor of *L'Action Catholique*, claimed that, in analysing the conflict, his paper was trying to follow the attitude of the Sovereign Pontiff. This attitude he expressed as follows: the wealth of the world is unjustly distributed, for there are powers which are gorged with possessions, while others have not a sufficient amount. Therefore, Germany and Italy were not wrong in complaining of their needs and necessities. But M. Roy blamed the dictators for their attempts to deal with this state of things by violating treaties and plundering smaller and poorer countries. Eugène Herr Hitler demanded a complete settlement with Poland, and no longer simply Danzig and the Polish Corridor.

*Le Droit* devoted a number of articles to the German-Polish crisis, and apparently had its entire editorial staff contribute on the subject. Charles Gauthier, the editor, shared the opinion of *La Patrie* that the Danzig question had been entirely created by Hitler’s propaganda. He was of the opinion that Danzig must remain a free city under the influence of Warsaw, if Poland were to continue to exist. Camille L’Heureux, staff writer of *Le Droit*, laid the blame on shortsighted British diplomacy in the past, “which would be one of the causes of the conflict, if a conflict should take place,” and compared this weak diplomacy with the foresight of the French Foreign Office. Albert Mousset wrote that France was not struggling for continental domination or for an egocentric conception of its interests and its rights, but that she would fight for the preservation of an equilibrium which, together with the maintenance of peace, influenced both the right of existence of other nations and their inclination for freedom. Victor Barrette worried about “the clumsy and not too honest diplomatic dealings” which might take place with regard to Danzig and the Corridor. In a bitter invective against the Free Masons, whom he accused of all the misdeeds of history, he affirmed that Poland, being a Catholic Power, appeared to the great anti-Nazi powers as less and less deserv-
of pity and help. MM. Gauthier and L’Heureux showed lack of confidence in a compromise or a truce which would last—how long? M. Gauthier thought it would be unwise for Britain and France to yield again.¹

4. The Fascist Paper.

It has been said at the beginning of this digest that the French-Canadian press unanimously charged Hitlerism and Germany for the very unnerving international situation which existed last August. This is absolutely true except in the case of the attitude taken by *L’Illustration Nouvelle*. There is no difficulty in understanding the opinions expressed by this paper, considering that its editor is none other than Adrien Arcand, the leader of the National Unity Party, and usually designated as a fascist. According to *L’Illustration Nouvelle*, Danzig was a German city which should determine its own fate, and Poland had no more right than had England and France to defend the city against itself. In each so-called democratic country there was a war-party supported by the financial magnates and the international news agencies. On the other hand, according to this journal, the masters of the Reich repeated that war was the greatest of plagues and that Danzig was not worth fighting for. “The heads of the Polish State repeated in unison that Danzig was worth fighting for. Thus we see whence came the will and the desire to fight.” *L’Illustration Nouvelle* spoke elsewhere of the encirclement of Germany, of the Polish persecution of the Ukrainians, etc. Moreover, it was amusing to see, as in *Le Droit*, reference to the Free Masons—though this time to explain the resistance of the democracies to Herr Hitler’s policy. As to Britain and France, they were supposedly not menaced, directly or indirectly. Such was the theory spread by *L’Illustration*

¹*Le Devoir*: Bloc-Notes, August 16; *L’Action Catholique*, August 24, 30; *Le Droit*, August 3, 4, 9, 10, 17, 21, 22, 28, 29; *L’Evénement-Journal*, August 1, 2, 5, 9, 16, 22, 26, 28, 31.
Nouvelle, which was, it claimed, being realistic.\textsuperscript{1} It would be disloyal both to the truth and to the French Canadians to attach more importance than it deserves to the anomaly presented by \textit{L'Illustration Nouvelle} among the general opinion of the French-Canadian papers.

During the crisis, then, the French-Canadian journalists pronounced themselves absolutely in favour of the democracies against the dictatorships, whether German, Russian, or even, to a lesser extent, Italian. Moreover, the conviction was expressed, by some in explicit terms and by others in a rather obscure manner, that an end must be put once and for all to the war of blackmail. But it is surprising that some of them did not push their reasoning, in view of their non-participationist views, to the point of preaching peace at any price, since they scarcely doubted that Canada would intervene in any conflict between the Commonwealth and the Reich.

\textsuperscript{1}\textit{L'Illustration Nouvelle}, August 24, 28, 29, 30, 31; September 1, 2.
II

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

URING the hours of anguish which preceded the outbreak of hostilities, most of the French-Canadian papers expressed a strange optimism. As long as war was not declared there was always the hope that, if after all a conflict was to take place, it was not as near as general opinion would have it. But Herr Hitler decided the issue.

HITLER'S GUILT: THE DAILIES

To every journalist it was a righteous war. *La Presse* said that the Fuehrer had willed and prepared the war, while the Allies were above reproach as they had been forced into the necessity of taking up arms. To *La Presse* Germany's guilt was even more apparent than in 1914, completely and perfectly manifest from the beginning of the struggle. *La Presse* was convinced that capitulation by the democracies would have merely prepared the way for more aggression. Finally, it asserted that Canadians entirely endorsed the judgment expressed at the outbreak of hostilities by both the Sovereign and the Premier of Great Britain, and, almost at the same time, by the President of the French Republic. The headlines of *Le Soleil* and especially of *La Patrie*, and the editorials of *L'Action Catholique* used the word "Boche" at every turn. In the eyes of *La Patrie* Germany was the only guilty party; Herr Hitler had raised the problem of the general balance of power, of civilization, of stable peace, of human liberty—a problem of conscience. The Nazi aggression had no sound cause. A special writer of this paper, Louis Francoeur, stated that he would have been delighted to hear that the English planes flying to Germany to distribute the propaganda leaflets had dropped bombs instead.¹

¹*La Presse*, September 1, 2, 5, 21, 25, October 30; *La Patrie*, September 1, 2, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 27, October 2.
The Liberal papers, which during the crisis were particularly absorbed by what was going on in Europe, almost immediately left the international for the national front. However, they continued to condemn the German aggression in no less forcible terms. Saying that Herr Hitler was the first party to use force—the fact which must always be kept in mind—*Le Canada* stated that it was undeniable and quite conceivable that personal concern had influenced British and French policies, in addition to principles. But it so happened, it added, that interest coincided with the international moral code. *La Tribune* affirmed that Hitler would bear before God, the world and history, all the hateful consequence of what was to come, and the fullest responsibility for nameless cruelties which were going to be inflicted.

**Hitler's Guilt: The Weeklies**

The tone of the Liberal weeklies did not differ from that of the dailies. Jean-Charles Harvey, editor of *Le Jour*, said that the civilized countries could not permit Hitler to go on his bloody way, and he added, "As for us, on this side of the Atlantic, though we are well protected from the direct attacks of the troops of fanatical assassins, we do not wish that the two great nations whose names we bear and whose honour and courage are our heritage, should abandon the whole of Europe to the mercy of the Nazi hordes whose very appearance in this world represents a sign of decadence and decay." *L'Avenir du Nord*, a provincial paper, alluding to Hitler's sixteen points, was of the opinion that their acceptance would have given rise to more disastrous consequences than the dreadful event which had just cast the world into dismay.¹

¹*Le Canada*, September 1, 2, 5, 11, 14, 20, 25; *Le Soleil*, September 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 20, 28, 29; October 6, 13; *La Tribune*, September 1, 4, 7, 19, 20, 22, 23, 26, 27, 30; October 3, 11; *Le Jour*, September 9; *L'Avenir du Nord*, September 8.
The Nationalist Papers

The journalists of the nationalist papers took an astonishing interest in events in Europe; to quote a happy remark of one of them, they even had mouvements d'impatience for which they begged to be excused by their readers the following day. However, all that Le Devoir printed about the significance of the war during the first two months of hostilities, boils down to three or four editorials and to a daily, uncoloured summary of the dispatches of the day. For George Pelletier, editor of Le Devoir, the pursuit of the balance of power and the struggle of the democracies against recourse to force in international relations, were the war aims of the Allies. But, to quote: "Hitler is the sworn enemy of democratic Europe, and of liberty as it is conceived by all democratic nations. Nevertheless, we have seen Lenin and Stalin in Moscow since 1918 behave in the same way as Hitler in Berlin; we have seen in recent years Negrin with his savage gangs of communists and anarchists terrorize, persecute and torture traditionally civilized and orderly Spain. Paris and London have never interfered with these men and their gangs. Paris and London have never declared war upon them. And yet, there was definitely in these cases a menace to civilization, crushed liberties, a savage dictatorship of red-handed slaughterers and butchers. What is more, in many circumstances the dictators and red gangs had thinly veiled help from the countries where the greatest freedom is supposed to flourish. Have London and Paris acted today under a more acute sense of the responsibilities of liberty, of the interests of civilization and of democracy? Is it this that turns them against Hitler today, this Hitler who has played on them the trick of allying himself with Moscow which they too had wooed for many months? Let us hope it is so." Continuing to "reason without sentiment" M. Pelletier wondered if the desire to prevent the removal of thousands of Jews, well established in Poland
and not wanted by any European or American nations, had not been one of the reasons for the Allied resistance to the Fuehrer.

*L'Action Catholique* was unrestrained in its regular articles and in the daily column in which it discussed the war news. Louis-Philippe Roy even rejoiced that Chamberlain had not lost a single moment looking for a loophole and that he said proudly and categorically to the Reich Chancellor, "Evacuate Poland, or we shall declare war." For Eugène L'Heureux, the editor-in-chief of *L'Action Catholique*, Hitlerism had become the most outstanding danger in Europe, particularly since its partnership with Soviet Russia. He wrote that the great European nations which were capable of so doing, really served the cause of liberty and civilization by bringing down the megalomaniacs who used the German people as a stepping-stone to satisfy their own ambitions. M. Roy declared that whatever the remote causes of war and the ultimate intentions of the Allies were, the fact remained that Hitlerism was responsible for the conflict. *Le Droit* laid blame especially on the U.S.S.R. and Communism. One of its staff writers proclaimed that France possessed the hopes and confidence of all the nations which desired to preserve their independence.

*L'Evénement-Journal*, too, could hardly find strong enough expressions with which to lash "Bocherie," as it called it. The democracies had revealed themselves more than patient towards Herr Hitler and his associates, until the final provocation came. "Before history and mankind Hitler shall bear the responsibility for an inhuman, unnecessary war; before his country he shall be responsible for all the hate which will fall upon it. . . . And for the great majority of well-meaning people the action committed on September 1, 1939, is not an act of Nazi banditry, but simply a new German crime. . . . Poland, France and Britain are, of course, in a state of legitimate defence. Yet we hardly understand why, twenty-five
years after 1914, the same countries are again facing the same danger, namely, German Imperialism. If Hitler must alone bear the responsibility for the war, we think that, on the other hand, certain men and certain countries are responsible for the easy triumph of Hitlerism in the Third Reich: for instance, The Times of London, which stated on June 30, 1934, 'Hitler meets extremism with violence and strives to establish moderation with force.' Five years of the Nazi dictatorship and the first few hours of this inhuman war prove better than anything else what this notorious moderation consisted of.” About forty weeklies of Quebec, Ontario and New Brunswick struck the same note in their articles on the war. Meanwhile, L' Illustration Nouvelle spoke of anything rather than of the war.

The Religious Element

Thus the French-Canadian newspapermen had not the slightest doubt that right was on the side of the Allies. But did they believe that it was a true crusade, as it has been declared by statesmen and representatives of the Churches? Although Le Canada, in opposition to an English-Canadian newspaper, believed it was a little far-fetched to think we were facing a sort of Holy War waged by the democracies for the defence of religion, the majority of the other papers came near to attributing a religious character to the conflict. In any case, Herr Hitler, in their opinion, was a rebel against all divine and human laws (Le Soleil); an Apostate, a new Attila, an Anti-christ (Le Patrie); the Nazis were the enemies of the Church (La Tribune), the enemies of Christianity (L'Action Catholique). Jules Léger, a writer of Le Droit, spoke of “the truly Catholic character assumed by the Allies in this crusade against an alliance of Hitlerism and Com-

1Le Devoir, September 16, 23; L’Action Catholique, September 1, 4, 7, 16, 23; October 7; L’Evénement-Journal, September 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 13, 23; October 2, 4, 12, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31; Le Droit, September 4, 7, 12, 13, 14, 16, 19, 21, 25; October 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 17, 20, 23.
munism. . . . The Allies rightly appeared as defenders of liberty and Christianity.” Léon Gray of *La Patrie* asserted that a mania for persecution must have turned Hitler against Catholic Poland, so that it was to a great extent a religious war in Europe. And most papers worried about the future of the Catholics in Poland and in the Reich.¹

**Dislike of the U.S.S.R.**

Exalted phrases were inspired by the resistance of Poland, and by hopes that it might once more rise from its ashes. *Le Soleil* said, “Poland must live and it shall live, for otherwise it would mean the triumph of wickedness in this world.” However, the same paper in the same leading article recalled the criminal extortion committed by Poland on Czechoslovakia. Incidentally, these papers maintained their original attitude towards Italy. However, *L’Action Catholique* thought it was urgent for the Allies to come to an understanding with Italy, Spain, and other neutral countries, in order to form a Christian front against Bolshevism, for “The Allies should by no means forget that the greatest peril of the hour is Bolshevism, rather than Hitlerism.” With regard to the U.S.S.R. and Stalin, the French-Canadian journalists were, of course, most uncompromising. Some of them were shocked that the government was not adopting severe measures against the Canadian Communists.

**The United States**

In conclusion, it is to be noticed that some of them made no secret of their hope of seeing the United States maintain its neutrality. *Le Soleil*, among other papers, thought that American neutrality was desirable for as long, at least, as American intervention was not absolutely necessary to save

the world from a catastrophe, and that it was in the interest of internal peace in Canada. *L'Événement-Journal* said approximately the same thing, though in more obscure terms. *Le Devoir*, strangely enough, showed even more reticence than the other two.¹

**Hitler's Peace Offers**

What was the reaction of the journalists to the peace proposals offered by the German Chancellor? Without any possible doubt, their answer was a contemptuous and categorical refusal. They expressed genuine indignation at the thought, at the very idea that, after so many successive and unnecessary humiliations, the sincerity of the Führer might still be trusted. *La Presse* likened the various declarations made by Herr Hitler to a tissue of insolent lies, of palpable distortions of the truth. Léon Gray of *La Patrie* thought that "to acquit this criminal by a foolish consent to his one-sided and suspicious proposals of peace, would border on public infamy. ... It is impossible to trample upon one's conscience, to agree to a murder, to wipe out a joint signature, to approve of the theft of a nation."

*Le Canada* spoke of the humbug, of the unforgettable perjury of Munich, and of blackmail. *Le Soleil* declared that once a leader has violated his word, his signature, his solemn promises, and even all his theories, every one of his speeches represents an additional lie. In reply to Herr Hitler, *La Tribune* proclaimed that post-war history proved the Versailles Treaty to have been too lenient and not at all proportionate to Germany's guilt. Emile-Charles Hamel of *Le Jour* wanted no peace "à la Hitler," and *L'Avenir du Nord* insisted

¹*Le Soleil*, September 2, 8, 9, 18, 19, 27, 28, 29; October 4, 12; *La Presse*, September 7, 9; October 12, 31; *La Patrie*, October 3, 5, 13, 22, 29; *Le Canada*, September 18, 22; October 30; *Le Devoir*, September 21, 23; *Le Droit*, September 14, 18, 19, 21, October 4, 12; *L'Événement Journal*, September 2, 5, 8, 11, 18, 20, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28; October 7, 25, 30; *L'Action Catholique*, September 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 28, 29, 30; October 3, 5, 12; *La Tribune*, September 19, 27.
on the necessity for the Western democracies not to stop at Berlin, but to proceed to Moscow. He went on, "Therein lies the only means of restoring Poland and of destroying the influence of the two remaining dictators, Mussolini and Franco."

Of the nationalist papers, *Le Droit* did not go beyond saying that it would be very difficult to come to an understanding with the enemy and to stop hostilities, but, in order to understand the ideas of this paper, it would be worth while recalling that, almost simultaneously, one of its editors discovered the "Catholic" character of the struggle undertaken by the Allies. *L'Action Catholique* turned out to be the greatest opponent of Herr Hitler's proposals; in its opinion they were but falsehoods and blasphemies: "According to the dispatches, ... and common sense, the Allies will strenuously and indigantly reject those gruesome proposals." For *L'Événement-Journal* Hitler's terms were equally unacceptable.¹

This digest should not lead the reader to an exaggerated and therefore quite erroneous estimate of the sympathies of the French-Canadian newspapermen for the Allies. While all blamed Nazi Germany, the fact is that reservations regarding Canada's part were continually expressed in editorials, and often at the moment when one would have least expected them. Before the outbreak of hostilities these journalists did not wish to "confuse the issues," as *L'Action Catholique"* put it. That is to say, they did not wish that their judgments on the negotiations in progress between Germany on one hand, and Poland, Britain and France on the other, should be confused with their opinions on the course to be pursued by the Dominion in the event of a European war. And, since Canada's entry

¹ *La Presse*, September 20; October 4, 7, 11, 13; *La Patrie*, September 20; October 3, 4, 6, 11, 13; *Le Canada*, September 19, 21; October 2, 7; *Le Soleil*, September 20; October 7; *La Tribune*, September 30; *Le Droit*, October 4; *L'Action Catholique*, September 19, 20, 29; October 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14; *L'Événement-Journal*, October 7, 9; *Le Jour*, October 14.

² August 30.
into the war, they have vied with one another in constantly repeating that the Dominion must never forget its own essential interests to the point of believing that it is obliged to do more than is absolutely necessary. It is their fervent desire that, whatever party be in power, the government, as well as the Anglo-Saxon element of the nation, should not demand any more from them than compromise.
III
CANADIAN PARTICIPATION
(To September 10th)

The French-Canadian journalists either argued against our participation in the war, or faced by majority opinion, urged limited participation. Their views were based, not on any sympathy for Germany, but on their conceptions of Canadian interest, Canadian unity, and Canadian freedom of action in foreign policy.

The Non-Party Dailies

It is true that certain papers did not even mention the word neutrality. But since a daily like La Patrie—not to mention La Presse—had only two or three indefinite editorials on the policy which Canada should adopt in the circumstances, waited till the last moment to express an opinion, and even then, evaded the fundamental issue, one can only say that it showed no zeal for Canadian participation. Such would appear to be the significance of the regret which the editor seemed to show that, upon the declaration of war by Canada, the United States would, through the Neutrality Act, cease to supply Canada, with results that would be "very much felt by every friendly belligerent." Another article by a contributor was to the same effect. Louis Francoeur would have had the Imperial Government undertake the cost of the war because "though it is the duty of every free, responsible man to do his part in the defence of civilization against the aggressor nations and the powers of brute force, Canada as such was not directly interested in the present crisis in Central Europe." In any case La Patrie of September 10th declared its official attitude, stating that "It is fortunate that we have as the Government of Canada men who can reconcile their duty to the British Empire with their duty to their country." It said that
our participation would consist of defending our national territory and supplying the mother country, and that our co-operation should be in keeping with our resources. It continued: "We may then hope that members of Parliament, putting the interests of Canada above all, will support the national policy formulated by the King-Lapointe Government."

La Presse took an equally passive attitude. On September 6th it gave its opinion that Canada’s aid should be what the country considered fair and reasonable, first taking into account its own special interests—which the paper carefully refrained from defining. On the same day it gave an analysis of the feelings of the French Canadians: "Everyone realizes that we face an enemy that must be beaten if world peace is to have a chance to be reborn and to endure. To this task the Province of Quebec is ready to lend its most generous aid within the limits set by the speeches of Messrs. King and Lapointe, i.e., putting our national interests first, and adhering to the voluntary principle. Quebec will not associate itself with a policy that would compromise national interests by leading Canada to economic ruin and causing a division of ideas across the country." Two days later La Presse advised the country to proceed with all the caution possible in the circumstances. That was, it said, the idea which seemed to govern Mr. King. According to La Presse of September 8th, the Speech from the Throne showed the desire of the Government not to go beyond this role and to leave Parliament to decide on the best programme for the moment—in short, to proceed in an orderly and constitutional course.¹

The Liberal Papers

One would hardly look for opposition to participation in the papers that support the Liberal Government in Ottawa, but in the main their position demonstrated that they were

¹La Patrie, August 7, 9, 27; September 7, 8, 10; La Presse, August 9, 31; September 1, 2, 6, 7, 8.
not anxious to have Canada participate, certainly not on any large scale. They literally believed in Canada’s right to neutrality, although, in order to avoid upsetting the English-speaking majority, they did not demand the exercise of that right. *Le Canada* of September 6 asserted that we could declare our neutrality to which we had the right, even at the risk of separating from the Commonwealth; on the other hand, Canada’s complete neutrality in the war that Great Britain had just begun was an impossibility, considering the feelings of the majority of the country which was English-speaking. It took to task certain speakers who were making themselves heard at the time of the so-called anti-participationist meetings, and likened them to agitators. It held that it was a disservice “to the French Canadians to present the question of participation to them as a racial issue.” If Canada draws certain advantages from the Commonwealth in time of peace, is it not logical to give Great Britain effective co-operation when it is in difficulties? According to *Le Canada*, M. Lapointe had a dual role to play in the Cabinet as defender of Canadian interests, and protector of the link uniting French Canada to England.

On September 9, the day after Mr. King’s declaration on the Government’s policy, *Le Canada* wrote that the Province of Quebec should support the King Government *en bloc* for it offered the best guarantees of “intelligent, reasoned participation,” based on the principle outlined by M. Lapointe. “The first task and the responsibility of the Canadian people,” it said, “is the defence and security of Canada.” The same editorial set in relief the moderation of the Government’s policy: there would be no conscription for overseas service, no contingent of infantry was being prepared for Europe, Canada’s support would be mainly economic, and the Government had no intention of breaking itself with expenditures. On the last point it said, “If Canada’s effective co-operation should
mean economic and financial ruin, it would be a disservice to
the Commonwealth and disastrous for the Canadian people.”

Superficially, it would be hard to draw any conclusions
from La Tribune of Sherbrooke. It could not decide what line
members of Parliament should take in the war session. It
asserted that ninety per cent. of the French-speaking electors
of Sherbrooke stood openly and stubbornly against conscrip-
tion, adding: “So let no government in this country ever com-
mit the error of passing a law so pregnant with troubles, and
which in the past produced nothing but evil.” As to the form
and extent of participation, the opinions of the electors,
according to La Tribune, were various and contradictory.
Therefore, let the Members of Parliament proceed cautiously
and wisely, doing full justice to their constituents.

Of all the papers supporting the Government, Le Soleil
expressed itself most freely, and surprisingly so, considering
party discipline. In the middle of August it put such ques-
tions as: “It would be naïve to think that Anglo-Canadians
would fail to respond to England’s call to arms. Would it be
wise and right to expect French Canadians to follow their
example?” A few days later it pointed out that, in the elec-
tions of 1935, there had been discussion of the question of the
next European war between the dictatorships and democra-
cies. It continued: “All provinces, save one, returned a
majority of Mr. King’s candidates. The national character of
the verdict was the more clearly demonstrated by the majori-
ties won in the more important centres. There is no reason to
think popular opinion has changed since 1935.” Le Soleil also
demanded that London and Paris put a damper on their
propaganda.

On September 6 it explained its attitude unequivocally:
“For some years the conflict of ideas and interests enabled
one to foresee the outbreak of a catastrophic European war.
Le Soleil has strongly urged the Canadian authorities to base
their foreign policy on the national interest in its relation to
the solidarity of the countries of the American continent. It is not our fault if this advice, widely supported by French-Canadian opinion, has not prevailed. But as the majority think otherwise we would not have the temerity to doubt their patriotism or encourage every kind of sedition. War is a great calamity, but anarchy is worse.” On September 7 it asserted that Canada could stay neutral, “which is proved by the position of Ireland where the Government declares neutrality in spite of the obligation it undertook for the maintenance of naval bases for the English fleet and planes. Though the decision of Eire does not seem absolutely honest, it is noteworthy that it provoked no loud protests in the House of Commons. The Mother Country accepts it as a necessity.” On September 9 it noted with satisfaction that the Prime Minister had taken into account the divergences of opinion on the question of Canada’s entry into the war and concluded its article by saying, “Short of a crisis or a coup d’état, the internal peace of Canada will not be disturbed, as in 1917, by a new attempt to raise a levy of Canadian blood for the profit of an imperialist power.”

Quebec Liberal Weeklies

The weeklies of the province, like L’Avenir du Nord, La Voix du Nord and La Voix des Mille-Isles defined the opinion of the country as follows: while the Anglo-Saxon majority wants Canadian participation in the war against Hitlerism, the French Canadians, a quarter of our population, would prefer that the Dominion keep out; but what can they do against the opinions of the majority? Conscription was another matter. Like all other papers they were absolutely opposed to obligatory military service outside Canada. The attitude of Jean-Charles Harvey, director of Le Jour, somewhat traversed that of his contemporaries. He readily agreed to compromise. One might say he was an interventionist up to a certain point, for in his eyes neutrality was impossible, because it would be
against the wishes of the majority of Canadians and would also have immediate, and seemingly dangerous, effects on our economic life. M. Harvey was probably the only French-Canadian publicist "to find it logical, natural and right that Canada, a democratic country united to the British Commonwealth by a sort of unwritten treaty, more binding even than the treaties binding France and England to Poland and to all the little nations of Europe that wanted to keep their liberty, should join the democratic bloc participating wisely for the defence and triumph of an ideal which should be that of every man of heart." But though M. Harvey differed in principle, he only favoured, for the time being, assistance "within the measure of our means, for our two nationalities of different origin should remember that the war is not the end of the world and that afterwards we shall, still have to live side by side, as sons of the same land."

The Nationalist Papers

The nationalist papers demanded "a foreign policy that would take account of geographical realities and our over-riding interests." Such a realistic policy, they believed, would amount to abstention. Canada, as a North-American country, should confine its worries to this continent. Further, since our country had had no influence whatever on the foreign policy of the United Kingdom, it was in no way bound to endorse commitments made by any government but its own. The international status of Canada, as defined by the Statute of Westminster and the declarations of certain British statesmen, makes the Dominion a completely sovereign entity from the political and juridical point of view. Neutrality being an essential attribute of sovereignty, Canada had the right to

1Le Canada, August 8, 10, 19, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31; September 2, 5, 6, 7; La Tribune, August 25; September 1, 2, 4, 6, 8; Le Soleil, August 17, 19, 25, 26, 30; September 6, 7, 9; L'Avenir du Nord, September 6; Voix des Mille-Isles, September 8; Voix du Nord, September 7; Le Jour, September 2, 9.
declare that it would not intervene. The nationalists would unhesitatingly have taken the further step to the position that it was Canada's bounden duty to exercise its right to neutrality. They felt that if Canada intervened in what did not concern it directly, it would do so against its own interests and would thus be reverting to its old colonial status. The smaller European powers and the United States had only one idea, to keep out of the European conflict, though they were nearer the battle-ground or were otherwise more interested than ourselves.

The abstentionists' point of view is fully represented by Le Devoir as a thorough-going propagandist of French-Canadian nationalism. With much quoting of the Statute of Westminster, it carried a daily editorial by Omer Héroux or, less often, by Georges Pelletier, a daily letter by its parliamentary correspondent, Léopold Richer, notes by various other people, and the Grincheux column, a series of epigrams of mixed quality. M. Richer maintained that the theory that Parliament would decide contradicted Laurier's thesis that "when England is at war, Canada is at war and exposed to attack." He added that if Liberal leaders stuck to Laurier's doctrine, admitting that Canada was a belligerent simply because Britain was at war, it only remained for Parliament to decide the manner and extent of intervention. He had no doubt that intervention was admitted in principle. If the Liberals rejected the idea of Canada's neutrality it did not mean that Canada had no right to it, but rather that the Liberal Government had doubt about it, or that it had decided under certain pretexts not to exercise the right.

Omer Héroux minimized the stakes at issue between Germany and the Allies: "What is it all about? A boundary dispute between Germany and Poland. France and England may be drawn in. Why? Because, for reasons they consider sufficient they promised in given circumstances to stand by Poland. The promise was made by them alone. They did not and could not
claim to commit Canada.” Omer Héroux did not see the least reason for Canada to intervene. Were we to fight for the survival of Britain? This was an understandable idea, but why should it govern the action of people who, whatever their origin, are Canadians first, and think first of Canada and its future? Were we to fight for France and Poland? If those two were the only ones concerned, how many ardent interventionists would suggest risking a single Canadian soldier? To restore the balance of power in Europe? Should Canada compromise its future for a policy which was now working against Germany, but which might later work against France? Should we defend democracy, the dignity of the human individual and Christianity? For months an alliance had been sought with perhaps the most autocratic country in the world, Soviet Russia. Official indifference was the attitude to the massacres of Russia, Spain and Mexico, to the worst blows dealt at Christian influence in the world. Were we to fight for the sanctity of treaties? Georges Pelletier asserted that Canada was not a party to the treaty invoked by Warsaw. There was, he said, one treaty to which all Canadians had agreed, the Confederation pact “in which it was agreed among other things that Canadians should defend their common country. Their country is in America. Its frontiers are not in the Rhineland, nor on the shores of the Baltic or banks of the Vistula. They are only on the American continent, between the Atlantic and Pacific and the Arctic. What has become of the sanctity of that treaty, for it is a treaty bearing the most authoritative signatures? It was violated from 1914 to 1918. They are ready to violate it again in September, 1939. And supposedly it is in Europe that treaties are endangered. . . . Let us think of our own.”

Le Devoir found many other reasons for non-intervention. It put the question of principle: should Canada simply be Britain’s reservoir of men and money or should it have its own policy? Omer Héroux wrote: “We believe that Canada should
think first of its future, that it has no right to commit suicidal acts, even for the presumed interest of England. Such would certainly be the wisest policy for Canada. Even from the point of view of England would it not be best? If Canada were bled white by another war, would it not be forced either to declare formal independence, which would involve no greater risks than naturally arise from our own situation and interests, or, in despair, to ally with our powerful neighbour which would give us the feeling of considerable weight, and the right to participate effectively in forming policy? We do not want annexation. The people who want to ruin Canada for the sake of the Empire are really the most dangerous promoters of annexation.” In another article he stated: “Projects for Imperial Federations that aroused so much protest, at least involve the sharing of authority, as well as of responsibility. But now there is none. We are servants, pure and simple.” Intervention in the new war, like those of 1899 and 1914, would probably constitute a precedent for new interventions in Europe, Asia and the Antipodes. There should be no illusion about participation. If the war went on, he asserted, it would probably bring conscription. “In any case, whether they fall as conscripts or volunteers, the fallen soldiers are an equal loss to the country, and the costs of war are the same.”

To those who saw no alternatives but participation or independence, Léopold Richer replied on August 3: “If we are faced with the alternatives of participation or independence we have no hesitation in choosing the latter. Every Canadian who sincerely wants to save his country the enormous losses of men and money which war inevitably requires, could make no other choice. What if there are risks? They could be reduced to a minimum if the initiative for such a movement came from the Canadian Government. In any case, neither at the moment nor in the future would the risks be as great as those that war involves. No one is simple enough to think that the Canadians will indefinitely pay the toll of blood and
money imposed on us by the British connection. The time will come when the link breaks by itself or will be broken. It would be better for the internal peace of the country and for its future to adopt a modus vivendi with the nations of the Commonwealth, which would allow us full liberty of action in case of armed conflict in Europe or Asia.”

*Le Devoir*, followed by most nationalist papers, saw only two circumstances in which Canada could join the Allies, or would have to do so: if a plebiscite showed that the nation willed it, or if the United States went to the aid of the Allies. True, the nationalists were sure that a plebiscite would prove adverse to all intervention.

*L’Illustration Nouvelle* in its partisan style, *Le Droit*, *L’Événement-Journal* and *L’Action Catholique* expressed almost the same ideas in the same terms as *Le Devoir*. It is enough here to report what else they said. In view of the equivocal attitude of *L’Illustration Nouvelle*, one might well think that it insisted on neutrality because it believed that England and France, in taking up arms against Hitler’s aggression, “were waging an aggressive war of intervention.” Surely the editor’s strange benevolence towards the Third Reich, and his systematic slander of the democracies, influenced his opinion on Canada’s foreign policy. It can hardly be denied that he found it good tactics to strengthen the case for non-intervention. But there remains a decided impression that here is a matter of North American feeling of questionable quality, reinforced, perhaps, by foreign inspiration, to credit the rumour circulating in editorial offices last August.

However, it would certainly be unfair to suspect the nationalist organs. They might err in the eyes of many, but their opinions were based entirely on what they considered true Canadianism, to use a term they repeated constantly. In *Le Droit* Camille L’Heureux wrote that our foreign policy was in the hands of London, and Charles Gauthier asserted that Canada had become a suburb of England. L’Heureux said, on
September 6, that the Prime Minister was sabotaging Canadian unity by his decision to participate in the European struggle. "If, supported by the parliamentary majority it counts on, the Federal Government is ready to impose on a part of the Canadian people, by force of numbers, a policy they do not want, then we have oppression of minorities such as is condemned in Europe by those practising it here." However, he admitted, on September 8, that "the Government would take the attitude which would be least likely to endanger Canadian unity." L'Heureux reminded the French-Canadian members of Parliament that they were the delegates of their electors first, and members of their political party, second: "They should not put forward their personal opinions in the Commons, but those of the majority of the electors. The probable decision of the parliamentary majority matters little, they must vote in conformity with the attitude of their electors." He seemed to hope for the creation of a French-Canadian Nationalist party, for he wrote that "French Canada has no chance of getting a strictly Canadian foreign policy, to say nothing of respect for the Canadian constitution. In each party our representation is subjected to the dictatorship of an Anglo-Canadian majority which unites every time it suits it, to oppose with a united front the legitimate aspiration of the French Canadians. . . . In the light of recent events one sees more clearly that there will be no safety for us save outside the present political parties. The present attitude of the Federal Government emphasizes this conviction among the French Canadians, and strengthens their determination to break the chains binding them to the present parties and turn to a strictly Canadian party."

_L'Événement-Journal_, on September 7, gave notice to representatives who had been elected in 1935. It said, on the question of Canada's relation to the Empire in time of war, that they would have to account for any conduct contrary to the engagements they had undertaken. The next day it said that
it hoped the Prime Minister would not develop the habit of facing the country with accomplished facts. *L'Action Catholique* gave some interesting glimpses of the French-Canadian nationalist attitude. In August it urged that, before we rushed headlong into a participation more generous than wise, we should consider that “we are an American nation,” that “our military assistance could only be relatively diminutive,” that “the warring nations should count on the production of friendly countries almost exclusively,” that “as far as we participate with military forces, we take the role of belligerent and attract reprisals,” that “prudence compels us to organize some defence for our immense territory,” that “our people crushed by the burden of debt contracted in the last war is unable to pay the costs of a new war infinitely more disastrous than the last,” that “civilization needs some corners for refuge during the coming carnage,” etc. The article concluded with the certainty that the war would be followed by civil war and the propagation of Communism in the countries on both sides.

On September 2, *L'Action Catholique* set forth some principles of foreign policy which seemed to it worthy as guides for Canadians. “Before all, we still wish the maintenance of peace as far as possible. In principle we refuse to accept the doctrine that Canada is at war just because England is, and in practice we strongly oppose any military participation caused merely by that doctrine. However, if a situation should arise that might really jeopardize one or other of the great interests of humanity, above all the interests of Christianity, the Canadian people would then decide that there was a case for joining with other nations to deal with the peril. Even in that case our participation should be voluntary, and should by no means exceed the rigid limits imposed by our resources. These principles should suit all Canadians, of whatever origin, because they arise from the purest Canadianism and take account of our affection for pacific peoples, and our pre-occupation with world welfare.”
The nationalist weeklies repeated the same arguments as the dailies. It is enough to cite *Le Guide* in which, on September 13, Jean-Pierre Desprès wrote under the date of September 10, that Mr. King was repudiating his political past, although during all his career he had striven to free Canada gradually. The French-Canadian weeklies published outside Quebec avoided taking sides on what attitude Canada should take towards the European conflict. Nothing in them showed enthusiasm for intervention; here, as in the Quebec papers not openly invoking neutrality, there was a systematic reticence. For example, the only allusion to the war occurred when the editor of *La Voix d'Evangeline*, Moncton, N.B., asked why, if we must go to war, should we not pay as we went. Again, *La Liberté* of Manitoba wrote: “Participation in the war, kept within reasonable limits, has nothing in it to disturb the internal peace of the country.”—which is little to say, but gives a fair idea of policy.¹

¹*Le Devoir*, August 2, 3, 10, 14, 15, 22, 25, 26, 28, 30, 31; September 1, 2, 4, 6, 7; *L'Action Catholique*, August 5, 21, 24, 28, 29, 30; September 2, 4, 5, 6, 8; *L'Illustration Nouvelle*, August 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 19, 21, 22, 24, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31; *Le Droit*, August 4, 7, 8, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25; September 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9; *L'Événement-Journal*, August 24, 30, 31; September 3, 4, 7, 8; *La Liberté*, August 30; September 6; *La Voix d'Evangeline*, August 31; September 7.
IV
CANADIAN PARTICIPATION
(AFTER SEPTEMBER 10)

To a nation actually at war, the French-Canadian editors preached moderation. Those who, as patriots or opportunists readily and willingly accepted the national decision, continually stated, or at least suggested, that nothing should be rushed.

The Non-Party Dailies

The attitude of La Presse is characteristic, and especially significant, because it usually avoids taking sides. It said more than once that our intervention in Europe should never be allowed to injure our agricultural, industrial or economic life. Obviously it thought, like other French-Canadian papers, that the Dominion could fulfil its obligations to the Empire, to the Allies and to the cause itself by merely acting as a principal base of supplies. The idea was even naively expressed. La Presse was almost lyrical: "Who knows? Perhaps in the kind of war anticipated the dispatch of the marginal supplies may make the difference between decisive victory and defeat." So, when the war budget was presented, it hoped that the necessary amount would be voted, but no more, and it was opposed to any sort of pressure being put on the unemployed to make them enlist. La Patrie struck almost the same note, although, for one reason or another, it gave much space every day to stories and photographs of recruiting, and to life in the barracks at Montreal.¹

The Liberal Papers

The Liberal party papers took the same line as the commercial papers, referring to the "reasonable" limits of participa-

¹La Presse, September 11, 12 14, 15, 19, 30; October 5, 6, 17; La Patrie, September 11, 12, 13, 22, 25.
tion. In fact, *Le Canada* likened the sending of a contingent to Europe “to complete participation which would ruin our country.” It was perhaps a slip of the pen, but it delighted *Le Devoir*. The importance of such a slip might easily be exaggerated, but it may be worth noting. *Le Soleil* carried articles which were so skilfully composed that they defy analysis even on a third reading. As a general rule the Liberal dailies and weeklies harped on the gratitude French Canadians owed to the King-Lapointe Government for persuading the country to accept a policy based on compromise, and for preserving the bond of Confederation. They urged their compatriots to maintain support of their “courageous” representatives in the Federal Cabinet, who were, it said, the most effective, if not the only safeguards against conscription, which it called “a damnable law, an infamous tyranny.” Many Liberal editors followed the lead given by *Le Canada*. “What can French Canadians do but submit, while we try, in a conciliatory fashion, to make our point of view appreciated?” They put their readers on guard against possible agitations, in the name of common sense and of duty to the country. To convince any recalcitrants, they pointed out the dangers of arousing antagonism against the French Canadians.¹

**THE NATIONALIST PAPERS**

With one exception the nationalist papers, with some bitterness, accepted Canada’s participation in the European war, both because, as *L’Action Catholique* put it, “governments must govern,” and perhaps because they could not alter the facts. Even *L’Illustration Nouvelle* which in August would almost have urged Canadians to revolt, began within ten days to speak of the duty of defending our sacred soil. It felt that social problems demanded immediate solution. After the declaration of war it gave all its thoughts to the establishment

¹*Le Canada*, September 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21; *Le Soleil*, September 11, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 22, 23; *October 6, 14. 16, 20, 31; Le Jour, September 16, 30; *L’avenir du Nord*, September 15, 22.
of a Christian social order, the protection of children, etc. But *Le Devoir*, it seemed, would not accept the accomplished fact, and held its ground. All was grist to its mill, and piling figures on figures, it continually deplored the expenditures the war would require.

Other nationalist editors, while accepting the situation, gave warning that they had not changed their opinions. For example, *L’Action Catholique* wrote that there were two things to do, “First, to spread by all Christian and wise means the spirit of ‘Canadianism’ wherever it is lacking and, secondly, whenever the opportunity occurs, to use our constitutional right to discuss the best manner and amount of participation, while avoiding any appeal to disturbing passions, and always following the line of reasonableness.” Or again, *Le Droit* and *Le Devoir*, in the middle of September, said that, once the war was finished, Canada should declare its neutrality since the events which marked our intervention in European affairs constitute a precedent that denies the doctrine that Canada is at war when Britain is. Perhaps the reactions of nationalist writers are best seen in the humorous columns such as the “Adolph Hitler’s Daily Letter to his Sister” of *L’Événement-Journal*, and the “Grincheux” column of *Le Devoir*. The two papers saw danger in the “realism and opportunism” of the French-Canadian M.P.’s, who, for fear of the parliamentary majority, would not come out. Such conduct might give Canadians of British origin a misconception of French-Canadian feeling. Sauriol of *Le Devoir* wrote: “If we must revert almost to the status of a British colony, for the sake of avoiding conscription, many French Canadians would not hesitate.”

As the Liberal papers and others spoke of moderate participation, the nationalists began to go further and insist on “very” moderate participation. To *L’Action Catholique* the existing programme amounted to the old formula, “to the last cent.” It was repeated continually that participation necessarily involved conscription, “which could not be accepted or
applied in Quebec.” They all re-stated the promises made by the Government, but some added that external circumstances and internal pressure might lead Mr. King to form a coalition government not bound to a policy of compromise. None of them, least of all Le Devoir, welcomed talk of a union government. It was interesting to see the nationalists torn between contradictory opinions. One day they distrusted the Government, taking a malicious pleasure in quoting declarations which Cabinet Ministers had previously made favourable to their cause. The next day they would say, as did L’Action Catholique, that the Government’s policy of compromise “is, perhaps, not devoid of wisdom.” Even Le Devoir said, though before Canada declared war, that “the Cabinet, under the authority of Messrs. King and Lapointe, is the least imperialistic Government possible we could have at the moment,” a statement on which the Liberals and La Patrie at once capitalized.

The nationalist papers readily recognized the necessity of censorship, but they drew attention to the fact that, while isolationists refrained from raising certain questions for the sake of national unity, other papers seemed to have complete liberty to demand from the Government laws that would create misunderstanding throughout the country. But it must be made clear that the champions of moderation in participation did not mean that Canada should not protect itself against danger. On the contrary. They objected to conscription mainly because it would be designed to provide for battle-fields in Europe.1

AN ONTARIO FRENCH JOURNAL

The same categorical denunciation of conscription is found in La Feuille d’Erable, a bilingual publication of Ontario. In

1Le Devoir, September 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28, 30; October 3, 5, 7, 10, 16, 20, 28; Le Droit, September 11, 14, 16, 22, 23, 27; October 6; L’Action Catholique, September 11, 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 27; October 5; L’Evénement-Journal, September 11, 12, 14, 15, 20, 23, 27; L’Illustration Nouvelle August 25 and September 5.

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the issue of September 28, Gerald Dillon, writing in English, said that the French minorities of the Maritimes, Ontario and the Prairies were displaying as firm a stand on conscription as Quebec. Jean de Fierbois, writing in French, supported him while saying too, that, as the Anglo-Saxon majority should take more account of the existence of the French outside Quebec, French Canada should, on the other hand, recognize the claims of the English.

THE QUEBEC ELECTION

Space does not allow even a summary of the French-Canadian press during the time of the election campaign in October. Only its opinion of the defeat of M. Duplessis may be quoted. The commercial newspapers which did not take sides in the elections saw in the Liberal victory a clear indication that “the Province of Quebec would not allow itself to get into the position of being apart from the other Provinces of the Dominion.” La Patrie, which shared the opinion of La Presse, made the reservation that the approval of the war policy of the country by no means extended to compulsory military service overseas. The Liberal papers were more enthusiastic. Le Canada said that among other things the Liberal victory meant that “the Province of Quebec remained faithful to its tradition of reasonable attachment to Confederation. . . . In the critical times of war it whole-heartedly accepted its share of the burden which the Canadian people would carry to the conclusion. . . . Thus the attitude taken by the French-Canadian Ministers and members at Ottawa was ratified.” To Le Soleil it was a rescue of signal importance; to La Tribune a victory of common sense, honesty and patriotism.

In the elections three nationalist dailies supported M. Duplessis’ party, L’Illustration Nouvelle, L’Événement-Journal and Le Devoir, the two former unequivocally, but the third somewhat left-handedly. The day after the elections, L’Événement-Journal gave no indication of how it would
explain the change of government. *Le Devoir* limited itself to sifting views on the opinion of Anglo-Canadians, Americans, English, and French, and claimed that in fact Quebec had simply chosen a provincial administration. *L' Illustration Nouvelle* still feeling the demagogic spirit it had shown in the last days of an election battle, shouted that the province had categorically pronounced against provincial autonomy. *Le Canada* and *Le Devoir* for once agreed as against *L'Illustration Nouvelle*. *L'Action Catholique*, which seemed gradually to move from its early impartiality and to lean to the side of the Liberals, as Quebec became more embroiled, feared lest M. Godbout's victory be taken as a blank cheque given to the Federal Government for the conduct of the war. It hastened to say that any significance it might have in the federal sphere was only to this effect—"Messrs, the French-Canadian ministers at Ottawa, Quebec accepts the policy of compromise which you say you have obtained, and wants you to stay at your posts and vigorously resist any attempt to go beyond the compromise lest Canada be ruined."

French-Canadian publications outside Quebec had shown the greatest anxiety, almost anguish, at the thought of the consequences for the minorities of a provincial policy in Quebec which would be considered as defiance of the bond of Confederation by the greater part of Canadian public opinion. So, on the news of the Liberal return to power in the Mother Province, they asserted without ambiguity that, not only Canada in general, but their own groups in particular, had escaped serious danger. But they, too, saw the other danger for the future of the Canadian nation which, as the dailies of Quebec gave warning, might arise from an erroneous interpretation of the change of government.

Finally, a brief but important conclusion presents itself; in August, September and October the journalists of the Dominion's official minority were anxious to explain their position in regard to Canadian external policy, as Canadians,
and not as French Canadians. Careful reading of their numerous articles, in ten dailies and about forty weeklies of both Quebec and other provinces, makes it clear that they abstained rigorously from appealing to racial prejudice to support their opinions. They spoke constantly of the need for our sacred union, in this time of trial. Their obligations toward their country, the respect which they recognized that they owed to the sentiments of the Anglo-Saxon section of the nation, their clearly perceived interests, and perhaps, even if they did not give full account to it, their conviction of the justice of the struggle of the British Commonwealth and the French Empire with Germany—all these influences induced them to accept or tolerate our intervention in Europe. But they still adhere to a compromise.
APPENDIX

NEWSPAPERS CONSULTED

DAILIES

NON-PARTY PAPERS:

La Presse, Montreal, circulation, 142,417—Saturday edition, 169,410.

La Patrie, Montreal, circulation, 12,832—Saturday edition, 29,091.

LIBERAL PAPERS (supporting both the federal and provincial parties):

Le Canada, Montreal, circulation, 13,551.

Le Soleil, Quebec, circulation, 51,304.

La Tribune, Sherbrooke, circulation, 8,377.

It is generally understood in the editorial rooms of Liberal papers that Le Canada is the official party organ, and that Le Soleil is only the mouthpiece of one man.

NATIONALIST PAPERS:

Le Devoir, Montreal, circulation, 13,662.

L'Action Catholique, Quebec, circulation, 56,303.

L'Événement-Journal, Quebec, 17,222.

(earlier considered to some extent Conservative).

Le Droit, Ottawa, circulation, 16,795.

L'Illustration Nouvelle, Montreal, circulation, 12,184 (the Arcand journal).

Saturday Night, in its issue of October 21, 1939, said that L'Action Catholique could be considered the organ of the most enlightened ecclesiastical groups; L'Action Catholique, reporting this statement, on the 24th of the same month, has not seen fit to deny it.

Doubtless the reader has seen that no really Conservative papers are included. The reason is simple; there is actually no daily which is permanently in the Conservative fold. But in certain circumstances, at election times for example, a daily, such as L'Illustration Nouvelle, may express the Conservative party point of view. Some persons, however, who may be considered well informed, consider L'Événement-Journal and Le Devoir Conservative organs. Perhaps this was true in the past, but at present this affiliation could scarcely hold, except in that these journals have shown themselves sympathetic to some extent toward M. Duplessis.

WEEKLIES

LIBERAL PUBLICATIONS:

Le Jour, l'Avenir du Nord, etc.

PUBLICATIONS FOR THE LABOURING CLASSES:

Le Monde Ouvrier (bilingual), Les Syndicats Catholiques.
PROTESTANT PUBLICATION:
L'Aurore.

NATIONALIST PUBLICATIONS:
Le Guide, Les Chutes, La Frontière, etc.

OTHERS:
Le Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe, Le Progrès du Saguenay, Le Canada Français, L'Echo du Bas Saint-Laurent, etc.

PUBLICATIONS OUTSIDE CÉBEC:
La Feuille d’Erable (bilingual), Ontario.
La Liberté, Manitoba.
La Voix d’Evangeline, New Brunswick.
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