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# Québec Separatism in the Polish Weekly Newspaper *Czas* [*Polish Times*]

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Some processes in every country's history are significant and well-known to any scholar who is interested in the subject. In the history of Canada, there are many processes of this kind, for example relations with the Indigenous People or attitude towards immigrants. Québec separatism is one of these processes. There are a lot of publications and vivid discussions about this issue, however, they lack opinions from ethnic groups other than English speakers. This paper presents the history of Québec separatism from 1960 to 1980 seen through the eyes of Poles in Canada and expressed in *Czas* [*Polish Times*] – a weekly newspaper published by the Polish Diaspora in Winnipeg, Manitoba, which is a city in the prairies distant from Québec and the second largest agglomeration of Poles in Canada after Toronto. *Czas* was the only newspaper in that area which shaped the opinions of Polish speakers. The author used content analysis to best show the various aspects of research. This paper aims to present different views on Québec separatism that changed over time from ignorance through compromise, warnings, and danger to the first separatist referendum in 1980. The elaboration proves that even though there were not many original articles about Québec separatism in *Czas* – many of them were reprints from other papers, the Polish Diaspora was involved in keeping Canada united. It was a result of devotion to the Land of Maple Leaf as well as a reflection of the situation in Poland.

**Keywords:** Canada, Québec, separatism, Polish Diaspora, *Czas* [*Polish Times*]

## Introduction

New France called *La belle province* and created in 1608 was a special area from the very beginning. It developed differently from other colonies in North America. New France had better relations with Natives than its southern counterparts. There were also some religious differences between settlements. *La belle province* accepted only French Catholics as its colonists, while in the thirteen colonies Catholics were persecuted. Furthermore, there was a distinction in the system of government. New France accepted the seigneurial system, other territories were ruled by representatives governments. In 1763, as a result of the Seven Years' War, Great Britain gained control over the lands inhabited by the French. In 1774, the Québec Act was published which granted some of the power to the Catholic church; it also recognized *Coutume de Paris*, hence Catholics could hold positions in the administration. This act made *Canadiens* – francophones – a special group among all inhabitants of the area. For years, these people kept their identity as a distinct society. They were neither French<sup>1</sup> nor British – they were *Québécois*. They had their own culture, language, values, and a strong relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, they always felt the need to protect their identity as francophones. The idea of separation existed in Québec for years. It was shaped and developed by the Church, but it gained the most followers in the second half of the twentieth century (Kijewska-Trembecka 194).

In the years 1944-1960, Maurice Duplessis and his party Union Nationale were in charge of Québec's provincial government. This period is called Québec's *grand-noirceur* or "Great Darkness" (Francis et al. "Journeys" 517). During that time, the government was corrupt, it favored foreign capital, the Roman Catholic Church had much power over the schools, hospitals, and social agencies (Francis et al. "Journeys" 516). The Duplessis era is regarded as a time of economic and social stagnation in Québec. In 1960, the Union Nationale lost the provincial election to the Liberal Party. This event is considered as the beginning of the Quiet Revolution<sup>2</sup> (Grabowski 255). In a period of dynamic changes in Québec, and secularization of life in the province, the government took control over schools, health care, and social institutions. Liberals introduced universal health care and pension insurance (Kijewska-Trembecka 178). Jean Lesage – Québec's premier – nationalized private electrical power companies and created one corporation Hydro-Quebec, which had an enormous contribution to the development of the province (Francis et al. "Journeys" 517). During the Quiet Revolution, the idea of Québec separatism was expanded.

Québec separatism is a well-known problem. Nevertheless, it is important to look at this issue from many perspectives. This paper aims to present information about Québec separatism as shown in the selected newspaper and the views of the ethnic group to which this paper was dedicated. I have decided to conduct my research based on the paper *Czas-Polish Times*. It was one of the oldest newspapers of the Polish Diaspora in Canada, published weekly in Winnipeg since 1915 (Reczyńska, "Problemy kraju osiedlenia" 330). There were four Polish language weeklies in

<sup>1</sup> France was far away and *Québécois* did not feel connected to this country. They created their own culture.

<sup>2</sup> Most changes during the Quiet Revolution happened in the years 1960-1966, but some scholars believe that the period of reforms lasted until 1980 (Francis et al. "Desitnies" 360).

Canada, but only *Czas* was published in the prairies and that is why I selected it. The research has been conducted based on the materials from *Slavic Studies Unique Collections: CZAS Polish Press* at the University of Manitoba.

For my study, I have chosen a period of 1960-1980, i.e. from the start of the Quiet Revolution to the first separatist referendum. I am aware that the issue of Québec separatism and its effects lasted until the year 1995, but I have decided to stop my analysis earlier, because of the changes that happened within the Polish Diaspora.<sup>3</sup> The language policy in Québec is treated here as a separate issue from *Québécois'* efforts to gain independence unless the policy and separatism were directly connected. My research has been based on content analysis of chosen articles. In the research period, many articles containing information about *La belle province* were available – to be precise, 881 of them contained the word “Québec.” I have chosen articles with direct opinions, remarks, or information about separatism.

Most of the articles in *Czas* that contained information about my researched topic were reprinted from other newspapers, either from *Canadian Scene* – the Canadian publication for ethnic press (Reczyńska, “Problemy kraju osiedlenia” 335), *Gwiazda Polarna* – the Polish Diaspora publication in the USA (*Gwiazda Polarna*), or some other publications. *Czas* did not respect the copyrights. Not many original articles included information about Québec separatism. It could be explained by a quote from one of the articles in *Czas*: “(...) in Polish Diaspora environment Québec’s problem is either ignored, demonstrating ignorance of the subject, or an attitude of impatience is assumed while wishing Québec good luck on its independent way of life”<sup>4</sup> (Reczyńska, “Problemy kraju osiedlenia” 340: Frikke).

It is vital to underline the importance of the Polish press in Canada. The ethnic press is one of the most valuable assets in transitioning from a homeland to a foreign country – it helps with cultural adaptation (Turek 19; Reczyńska, “Problemy kraju osiedlenia” 329). What is more, the Polish press served as a way of communication between Poles who immigrated to Canada. Thanks to this medium, they were not isolated in the host country, and they could retain their identity and language skills (Turek 21). Additionally, the ethnic press kept them informed on the issues in Poland (Turek 21). Furthermore, thanks to the press Poles could get acquainted with events and processes that were happening in Canada. One of these processes was Québec’s fight for independence.

## The Beginning of the Quiet Revolution

The first article about Québec separatism I came across was from 1963. It was a brief note about a speech made by René Lévesque<sup>5</sup> (“Suwerenny Quebec”). The speech was a sort of warning for the Canadian society, Lévesque stated that Québec would

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<sup>3</sup> In the 1980s, the new kind of immigrants came to Canada from Poland—the ones who escaped it as a result of the marital law (Reczyńska, “Polska Diaspora” 35). This period will be covered in another paper.

<sup>4</sup> All translations are made by the author.

<sup>5</sup> He was the premier of Québec in the years 1976-1985, as well as the founder of Parti Québécois and leading advocate for Quebec separatism (Foot and Latouche).

fight for independence if French speakers in Canada would not be treated as equals as English speakers. The note was quite short in comparison with an advertisement for cheap flights to Poland on the same page.

A lengthier article was published a month later. It was placed on the front page of *Czas* of the journal ("Francuzi w Quebec").<sup>6</sup> In this paper, there was information about two important demands: making French a primary language in Québec, which was postulated by St. Jean Baptiste Society<sup>7</sup> and having more income tax from the government directed to the province, a demand made by René Lévesque. The article did not include any comments on these statements.

In 1965, there was another brief note titled "Canada and Quebec" ("Kanada i Quebec"). It contained information about the demand of Québec's Minister of Education Paul Gérin-Lajoie that Québec should have a right to sign treaties with foreign countries as a separate state. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada condemned this demand.

## Dialogue or Division

In 1965, *Czas* reprinted an article from *Canadian Scene*, which was the first article I managed to find where actual opinions about the Québec separatist movement were presented. These opinions characterized a speech made by the constitutional expert Eugene Forsey, Ph.D. According to him, if Québec wanted to be a separate state, the government and the rest of Canada had no right to stop it, but only negotiations should be initiated. Forsey stated: "(...) everything we can do is to sit together and discuss every possibility of resolving common problems" (Forsey). Additionally, he claimed that separation was not a good option quite the opposite, that it would be unfavorable for *Québécois* and the rest of Canada. The article also underlined the uniqueness of *La belle province*. It emphasized cooperation and mutual agreement with shared costs for greater benefits. Moreover, there was emphasis on the need of introducing bilingualism in Canada in every aspect of life.

Another reprinted article concerning researched topic was from *Głos Polski* – a significant newspaper of the Polish Diaspora from Toronto<sup>8</sup> (Encyklopedia PWN). According to this source, if the separation of Québec went through, it could destroy the whole country: "Odejście Kebeku (sic!) przecięłoby kraj na pół, otworzyłoby w organizmie Kanady ranę, która okazałaby się chyba śmiertelna"<sup>9</sup> (Sangowicz). The author of the article, Mieczysław Sangowicz, was a journalist from Montreal and he worked for Radio Canada. He had nationalist views ("Mieczysław Sangowicz") and underlined in the article that there were no patriotic feelings in Canada like in Europe and that Canadian patriotism was not built yet. There was a visible

<sup>6</sup> It is worth noticing that in the title of the article the word "Quebec" was not changed to the proper form "Quebecu."

<sup>7</sup> The organization that supported Québec sovereignty (Gagnon).

<sup>8</sup> This newspaper had national character; it was connected with the Catholic church (Turk 146).

<sup>9</sup> "The departure of Quebec would cut the country in half, it would open a wound in Canadian organism, which probably be deadly." It is worth noticing that the word "Quebec" was changed to fit the Polish spelling.

sense of the European superiority in this text. Sangowicz claimed that the country was built artificially and unnaturally, without real connection between provinces. He claimed that the only hope for the future of Canada was cooperation between the French and English sides. Even though there was a disconnection between the two cultures – the English side was a dominant one but did not have a feeling of national connection between its population whereas the French side was less populated although strongly connected with each other.

The article with an actual opinions about Québec separatism was a paper from 1967 titled “Kanada i Quebec (dialog czy rozbiecie).”<sup>10</sup> Such a title perfectly summarized the discourse visible in previous texts as well as in this particular piece. The article was reprinted from *Wiadomości Polskie*, a monthly newspaper published in Montreal by a group of Polish post-war political émigrés, connected with General W. Anders (Turek 144). In the article, it is said that Canadians should not be surprised that there was a constitutional crisis, as it began in the end of the Maurice Duplessis term as a premier of Quebec. Furthermore, the author of the article underlined the deficit of dialogue in *Canadian Scene* between Francophones and Anglophones, and he stressed that “serious, responsible, full of deep concern, and deep optimism” dialogue is needed in Canada. There was a criticism of the English side, its indifference as well as lack of the involvement in discussed issues. The article voiced an opinion that the English side did not understand what seemed to be a problem and did not value the importance of Québec. The author emphasized the need of compromise for the sake of the nation, stating that if there is no compromise, the nation will not be able to exist. Both sides were equal, and they should work together, making mutual sacrifices to create a formula of a new better country which will respect the two sides.

Another interesting position is a series of three articles<sup>11</sup> from *Canadian Scene*, published in *Czas* in 1968. They were another reprint of information provided by the English-speaking government, without comments from the editors. However, the editors had chosen these articles so we can assume they somehow agreed with the statements presented below. The articles were written based on a speech made by Claude Ryan, editor of *La Devoir*. The first paper stated that the problems of Canada’s future lay in Québec (“Jutro Kanady”). According to the author, there were two schools of thought in Québec: one pessimistic and one optimistic. Pessimists claimed that the English victory on the Plains of Abraham was a catastrophe and that the Canadian economy had nothing to offer for Québec. *La belle province* was probably destined to lose in favor of the English-speaking side. Supporters of this theory were advocates of separation from Canada. The author underlined that this school of thought was a leading force in Québec among the leaders and intellectuals. However, optimistically, part of the society agreed that the English takeover of the French colony was inevitable, and even helped the French. Not just by increasing the number of residents, but also by the Canadian economy. The optimists stated that Québec was still developing.

The second article was critical of pessimists, because “they did not care for Canadians of French origin in other parts of Canada” (“Przyszłość Kanady”). What I find interesting in this article is the distinction between separatists and isolationists

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<sup>10</sup> “Canada and Québec (Dialogue or Division).”

<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, I was unable to find the last part.

in Québec. The author suggests that even though separatists wanted an independent Québec, they also wanted to build relations with other countries, especially with countries of the French culture and language. Moreover, Ryan emphasized the need for dialogue and compromise between the provincial government and federal government as well as their competences.

The next publication was written by Claude Ryan in 1968 for *Canadian Scene* and reprinted in *Czas* (Ryan). He published a comment about two reports presented at the Constitutional Conference in Ottawa in February 1968. Ryan stated that both documents built grounds for negotiation between Quebec and ROC,<sup>12</sup> although these reports are quite different. This shows how complicated the problem was. A paper written by the federal government emphasized the need for equality of the English and French sides in the Senate and the Supreme Court. Nonetheless, the document lacked information about the political situation in Canada. A document written by Québec's government was focused on equality and a political aspect of French-speaking provinces existing in English-speaking country. Ryan underlined the fact that Québec was misunderstood, because Canadians lacked basic knowledge to understand its problems. He claimed that the basis of finding a solution to the conflict between two sides was to accept the fact of different societies living together in one country.

## Vive le Québec libre?

*Czas* covered the visit of the French president de Gaulle in the Montreal Expo in 1967 ("De Gaulle popiera separatystów"). The coverage included a planned route for his visit, his speech where he indirectly expressed his support for the separation of Québec,<sup>13</sup> and an extract from *French-Match* – a Paris newspaper ("Francja i Quebec"). The extract contained two interviews with the Canadian prime minister Lester Pearson and Québec's premier Daniel Johnson. Pearson voiced his understanding of Francophones' relations with France, but argued that separation of Québec would be unreasonable ("General de Gaulle zaatakował"). Johnson expressed his fears about the American culture dominating the French-Canadians. In another article in *Czas*, it is shown that Pearson condemned the French involvement in the Canadian internal policy and compared France in this matter to the Soviet Union.

*Czas* was involved in Québec issues by publishing an article on the front page titled "What Awaits on Canada in Six Years?" ("Co czeka Kanadę za sześć lat?"). The article contained predictions made by René Lévesque about the future of Canada, taken from *U.S. News and World Report*. Lévesque claimed that Québec was destined to create a new, separate country and if the civil war would be needed to achieve then it shall be pursued accordingly, although such a war did not seem probable. Lévesque also stated: "(...) similarly to how the Jewish nation sought to create their own, independent nation, so do French Canadians feel the need to have their own country" ("Co czeka Kanadę...").

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<sup>12</sup> The rest of Canada.

<sup>13</sup> During his visit in Montreal in 1967 de Gaulle said to the public "Vive le Québec libre," which was seen as a sign of support for Québec's separation (Axworthy).

In 1968, an important article was published in *Czas* based on a publication of Andre Brichant,<sup>14</sup> titled "Canada Option: The Economic Implications of Separatism for the Province of Quebec." Brichant explained that plans for Québec's separation would not succeed because of the resistance of non-French to francization. He believed that separatists did not think about non-French in Québec. Moreover, Québec's economic dependence on the country was underlined in the article. It is demonstrated perfectly by the direct quote: "Québec's economic independence and self-sufficiency is a fiction and illusory mirage which is alluring for utterly non-oriented nationalists. Fully independent Québec would become bankrupt on the first day of becoming independent" ("Niezawisły Quebec"). The author suggested that Québec's sovereignty was impossible. Additionally, if it somehow came to be true, Québec would have to quickly go back to Canada or create a regime like Fidel Castro's regime in Cuba (sic!).

Québec's separatism was also mentioned on the front page in a brief note which constituted a warning from Louis St. Laurent ("B. Premier St Laurent"). According to him, if Québec went through with the separation, Canada as a country would stop existing within ten years. The note was important and could be shocking as the statement from the former prime minister of Canada. However, it lost value because it was quite small and presented between other, much bigger, articles.

*Czas* also published articles about important Canadian events, for example Pierre Eliot Trudeau becoming a prime minister. There was a considerable bibliographical note about Trudeau and his views on Québec's separatism ("Nowy premier"). Even though he was Franco-Canadian, he criticized separatism, and he thought that Québec should resign from its demands. Another article about Trudeau was reprinted from *Gwiazda Polarna* ("Zwycięski premier"). This paper underlined the fact that Trudeau won the election with a slogan concerning one bilingual Canada. Although he belonged to Francophones, he strongly expressed an opinion that Québec is not a special area and should not demand any special treatment. He also made a statement about removing separatists from the French network of The Canadian Broadcasting Company and The Company of Young Canadians ("Premier Trudeau").

In 1970, provincial elections in Québec were ahead and it did not escape the attention of *Gwiazda Polarna*. The reprinted article in *Czas* emphasized the importance of the upcoming election in Québec and what it meant for the province and the whole country ("Prasa U.S.A."). A critical stance on separatism, as well as the statement of General de Gaulle during the Expo '67, was expressed in this paper. It mentioned that most Canadians did not want Québec to separate. There was of course a follow-up to this case after the election. The article presented a brief history of Québec and its separatist activities ("Prasa Amerykańska"). It also contained a controversial statement from the Canadian point of view, however typical for the American side, namely that Québec had two chances to separate: during the American Revolutionary War and the war of 1812 (Reczyńska, "Problemy kraju osiedlenia" 341). Finally, it was mentioned that the Parti Québécois suffered a defeat in the election, which made Canada stronger.

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<sup>14</sup> The Canadian expert who researched Québec and its ability to survive as an independent province ("Niezawisły Quebec").

In 1977, *Czas* published a document written by the Canadian-Polish Congress, an organization that “represents the Polish community’s interests before the people and Government of Canada” (Hamilton Public Library). The document stated that the Polish Diaspora was worried about the possibility of division of Canada (“Kongres Polonii”). According to the paper: “Québec with its French culture and with people with French background is an essential member of the federal union of Canada.” It can be concluded that Poles in Canada were against separation. They wanted *Québécois* and ROC to discuss the conflict. From their standpoint, the separation without the discussion was like “running away from the responsibility and avoidance of work and sacrifice for common good.”

The Polish Alliance of Canada<sup>15</sup> joined the call of the Canadian-Polish Congress in 1977 to save the unity of the Confederacy. PAC spoke against separation and underlined the importance of multiculturalism, bilingualism as well as democracy, as for Poles “(...) they aren’t idle chatter or empty slogans with no coverage” (“Apel Związku”). Authors of the article assured that Poles in Canada understand the need of French Canadians, especially *Québécois*, to preserve their culture. However, it was also said that: “Québec separatism will affect and will have a negative influence on the fate of every cultural minority, it will undermine and shake the entire Canadian structure” (“Apel Związku”).

The longer the arguments between Québec and the rest of Canada went on, the more people got angry and expressed this irritation. Donald Creighton, a well-known Canadian historian, presented his feelings in *Maclean Magazine*.<sup>16</sup> His opinion was reprinted in two issues as a part of the *Canadian Scene* publication in *Czas* (Creighton 1977a; 1977b). According to Creighton, everything was already done to persuade Québec to stay in the federacy. One could only wait for the announced referendum. Creighton stated that the victory of the Parti Québécois in 1976 should be a warning signal. There was a critical stance against the reconciliation policy towards Québec and the demands of the Parti Québécois. It is a clear difference in the context of the previous discourse when many authors, even from *Canadian Scene*, wanted to lead the dialogue. Unfortunately, the dialogue was replaced by the division.

## The October Crisis

In 1970, Québec gained attention from the entire world because of the October Crisis,<sup>17</sup> which was mentioned several times in *Czas*. However, the newspaper did not refer to the series of bombings that happened since the 1960s and were carried

<sup>15</sup> The first organization established by the Polish Diaspora in 1907, under the original name of the Society of Mutual Aid “Sons of Poland”. Created by merging a few Polish organizations in Toronto (Reczyńska, “Polska Diaspora” 41). “The aim of PAC is to carry out cultural, charitable and social activities, cultivating Polish traditions, and to promote the rich heritage of Polish culture” (Polish Alliance of Canada).

<sup>16</sup> The Canadian magazine about current affairs (Maclean’s).

<sup>17</sup> “The October Crisis refers to a chain of events that took place in Quebec in the fall of 1970. The crisis was the culmination of a long series of terrorist attacks perpetrated by the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ), a militant Quebec independence movement, between 1963 and 1970. On 5 October 1970, the FLQ kidnapped British trade commissioner James Cross



out by the Front de libération du Québec (Douglas 66). Nonetheless, the kidnapping of the English diplomat James Cross was mentioned (“Porwanie dyplomaty”). The importance of this event was undermined by a portrait of the princess Anne which was almost three times bigger than the said article (Reczyńska, “Problemy kraju osiedlenia” 341). Not long after this incident, *Czas* published an article, this time much longer, about the murder of Pierre Laporte (Trzcinski). Next to his short biography, there was a quote where he stated: “(...) history of Poland should be used as a bible of patriotism for us *Québécois*” (Trzcinski). This gesture had to be significant for the Polish Diaspora which condemned the murder (Reczyńska, “Problemy kraju osiedlenia” 341).

Another article published in *Czas* was a reprinted story from *Dziennik Chicagowski* – a Polish newspaper from the U.S. (Library of Congress). The text criticized the terrorist attacks in Québec and praised Trudeau for taking necessary steps to prevent more tragedies (“Trudności Kanady”). However, there was a noticeable generalization of separatists as if all of them were terrorists. It is shown in this quote: “French separatists (...) are a small group organized in Front de libération du Québec” (“Trudności Kanady”). In my opinion, this is not true, because not all separatists were radicals. What is more, they did not constitute a small group. One can see this conclusion in the results of a survey conducted in 1970, where 14% of respondents supported the idea of political and economic separation, and 35% of respondents voted “yes” to political separation with economic ties to Canada (“Victime de ses oscillations”). Such data show that the author of the article published in *Czas* did not have all the information available at that time. However, it is understandable, because the survey was presented in a French-language newspaper in Québec, whereas the article came from a newspaper originally published in the United States.

In 1971, *Czas* published an article “Separatism in Quebec” (Grabowski), reprinted from *Orzeł Biały* – the Polish Diaspora’s newspaper from London. It referred to the events which terrorized Québec in 1970. It also highlighted two approaches of *Québécois*: the one accepting compromise to integrate Québec into the Dominion and the separatist one. The latter was criticized because “they dream of some sort of small burgher republic, based on their modest economy” (Grabowski). According to the author, such a perspective could not be successful.

## Separatism on the Front Page

As the Québec issues became more pressing, the articles published in *Czas* were longer and appeared on the front page more often than before. In this way, Québec separatism turned out to be more visible. After the October Crisis, the radical option lost its popularity and the peaceful option of a referendum prevailed. Nevertheless, it did not gain more support from outside of Québec. We can observe this change in an article from *Canadian Scene*, reprinted in *Czas*. The referendum did not gain approval, because “so many questions about Québec separatism could not be

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in Montreal. Within the next two weeks, FLQ members also kidnapped and killed Quebec Minister of Immigration and Minister of Labour Pierre Laporte” (McIntosh and Cooper).

answered, so the referendum would not be a practical solution" (Campbell). To support this argumentation, the author mentioned various aspects of separation which were not discussed enough. For example, should Canada claim rights to the control of the St. Lawrence River, which is a major shipping route, it connects the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean. Moreover, it is shown that "independence will not improve chances of cultural survival of Quebec, because culture will be based on economically weak and secluded state creature" (Campbell).

Supporters of the peaceful option belonged to the Parti Québécois with its leader René Lévesque. *Czas* published a lengthier article on the front page about the spectacular win of this party to the provincial parliament ("Zwycięstwo Separatystów"). It was the main news of the week. The article mentioned that such victory of the Parti Québécois could be "a turning point in the history of Canada," because of the declaration of Lévesque to conduct a separatist referendum if his party won. The dispute between Trudeau and the new premier of Québec based on the researched problem – the separation – was outlined. Both sides put pressure on the democratic aspect of Québec's independence efforts. There was a follow-up story to the election and a reader of *Czas* could feel some doubt about the economic future of *La belle province* ("Po wyborach"). It is demonstrated in the quote: "Representatives of commercial and industrial zones are visibly disturbed by the win of Parti Québécois. Some of them speak openly that danger of separation alone could lead to economic chaos" ("Po wyborach"). This threat was repeated by the Federal Minister of Finance Donald MacDonald in another *Czas* article ("Zjazd Partii"). He warned the people of Québec that separation could mean the loss of many financial assets.

Since the tremendous victory of the Parti Québécois in 1976 fights between politicians about Québec have grown stronger. According to one of the articles, Premier Trudeau denied the reasonableness of the need of *Québécois* for the independence of Québec ("Walka o Quebec"). He even pretended during the interview that he did not understand what the famous words of de Gaulle meant. In another article published in *Czas*, Trudeau threatened to use military force if Québec would use illegal means to separate ("Trudeau ostrzega"). Other publications in *Czas* presented opinions of Lévesque who accused federal politicians of lying about the Québec situation and sabotaging it by those lies ("Walka o Quebec"). He also argued that "Québec will not be a 'banana republic'." According to him, the government should suggest some sort of deal for Québec or the province would work on separation ("Konferencja prasowa"). This diversity of opinions proves that at that time the editorial office of *Czas* tried to show arguments of both sides.

In the late 1970s, *Czas* started to publish articles which were focusing more on the domestic problems of Québec. This fact shows that separatism was a pressing matter for the editorial office of *Czas*, its readers and most Canadians. An example of such a behavior was visible in an article titled "Levesque Warns his Party" ("Levesque ostrzega"). It presented the demands of the more radical side of the Parti Québécois regarding language policies and Lévesque views on them which were not positive. Lévesque criticized the demands and highlighted the importance of a slow and steady approach to separation. At the same time, he used official statistics to show how Canada, was financially using Québec. However, the rightness of his argumentation was doubtful, as stated Jean Chretien – the Minister of Industry ("Levesque ostrzega").

In 1977, *Czas* published an article "Optimism of premiere Trudeau" ("Optymizm premiera Trudeau"). This was an interesting publication because it presented different operations that Trudeau was prepared to conduct to fight against the separation of Québec, for example the popularization of federalism, or even the use of military force. However, the word "optimism" in the title suggests that the author doubted whether Trudeau would succeed.

Trudeau's fight about Québec was described in another *Czas* publication. In 1977, Trudeau went to Québec and agitated for tolerance among Canadians. He highlighted the fact that he is *Québécois* as well as Canadian ("Rozpoczęła się 'walka'"). *Czas* calls him "a tireless propagandist" for his attempts to appeal to the national feelings of the public. Another article stressed the possibility of Trudeau living and working in Québec if the separation went through ("Premier Trudeau pozostanie"). Furthermore, the premiere put pressure on the fact that the French-speaking province had a much better chance of keeping their culture and language in Canada than as a separate country.

## Separatist Referendum of 1980

In 1978, *Czas* published an article from *Canadian Scene* about the future predicted for *La belle province* by leaders of the Parti Québécois, especially René Lévesque (Van Steen 5). According to the article, federalism ended, and there should be a sovereign "association, where every country has its own fiscal policy inside of the association" instead of the Confederacy. This article did not state what question *Québécois* could expect in the referendum whose date was suggested for the fall of 1979.

The referendum took place on May 20th, 1980 and on May 31st, 1980 *Czas* published a letter from the Canadian-Polish Congress ("Apel w sprawie jedności"). It contained a declaration against the referendum and asked Poles living in Québec to vote "no" in order to "show their belief for the need, rightness, and necessity of the existence of one and undivided Canada" ("Apel w sprawie jedności"). The letter shows that Poles were involved in the situation of Quebec. However, in my opinion, the publication of this letter was a little bit late, taking into consideration the fact that it appeared after the referendum.

The results of the referendum showed that separatists were defeated 59.56% to 40.44% (Fitzmaurice 47). When it happened, *Czas* printed an article on the front page titled "Separation of Québec Prevent" and a picture of René Lévesque holding his head was presented next to the text ("Separacja Quebecu"). On the whole page, there was only this photo, so it could be seen as a sign of the importance of the news, but also a triumph over Lévesque's aspirations. The paper considered the result of the referendum as a failure of Quebec's premier. It stated: "René Lévesque suffered a serious political and moral defeat which should induce him to (...) resign from office" ("Separacja Quebecu").

The most important part of the article for this research paper included the last statements. They spoke about the feelings of Polish Diaspora members towards the independence aspirations of *Québécois*. The author<sup>18</sup> wrote about a paradox where

<sup>18</sup> Anonymous, although it was stated in the article that this person was Polish.

the provincial government had so many rights and freedoms that speaking about the need for independence seemed to be an anachronism – especially in comparison to the situation of the citizens of Poland at the time, when the whole country was dependent on the Soviet Union (“Separacja Quebecu”).

## Summary

This paper shows that the interest in Québec’s struggle for independence has grown over time, even among the Polish Diaspora in the prairie. It is hard to ascertain, however, how much of that interest was stimulated through the materials prepared by the Canadian government for the ethnic press. The first articles were brief, they did not include any opinions, presenting just straight facts. Over time, when separatist voices became stronger, the articles were lengthier. What is more, they proposed a particular line of reasoning – the French and English sides had to work together to resolve the conflict, or the separation would happen.

After the Montreal Expo in 1967, the ideas of compromise expired and a new trend was established. The separation of Québec sounded unrealistic, taking into consideration the economical and practical perspectives. Furthermore, separation would mean the end of the Confederacy, which worried Poles in Canada. The editorial office of *Czas* was critical of the murder of Pierre Laporte, the October Crisis, and the radicals.

The triumph of the Parti Québécois increased the popularity of separatism in Québec. However, opinions published in *Czas* were quite opposite. The voices about the dialogue went silent, and warnings concerning the division consequences became predominant. These warnings lasted until the day of the referendum, which proved to be victorious for opponents of Québec’s independence. Poles constituted a part of that group.

This paper showed that the Polish Diaspora was against Québec separatism. Some voices of the articles published in *Czas* treated the Canadian society as an immature creature, without patriotism, who runs away from problems instead of facing them. Poles, with their culture and enormous history, could feel that the country they had chosen for their new life did not manifest a trait known in their homeland – an intense sense of unity between people. They could look at Canada as a young country, undeveloped in this regard, because the Canadian patriotism differed from their own. Perhaps such a perception created a sense of superiority within the Polish Diaspora. One could argue that calls of the Polish Diaspora for unity and admiration for Canadian values were reflections of their understanding of patriotism and Canadian interests.

Polish people were confident that they understood the need for freedom and independence like no other nation. Poles who lived in Canada obviously thought that the need for independence is reasonable, but for Poles who experienced the communist regime the call for independence of Québec was unnecessary. For these people, *Québécois* had enough freedoms and rights to feel like a sovereign entity. In addition, the separation threatened the country where many Poles sought refuge. That is why the Polish Diaspora felt endangered by Québec separatism. Poles were loyal to the English majority of the country – maybe even loyal to Canada as a whole.

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