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Cultural Commentary: Our Strengthened Ties to Quebec

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Poland ... continued

Party, the State, and the Society were to be directly controlled by the party leadership.¹¹

Apparently, Suslov believed that under the conditions developing in Poland these "fundamental errors" can be reversed. But drastic changes of this kind could not be carried out by a divided and unreliable party that was unable to control its own members. At this point, Suslov and his followers were convinced that the only reliable force in Poland, on which the Soviet Union could depend, was the Secret Police and the higher echelons of the Polish army.¹²

One might prognosticate that if the hardliners win the upper hand in Moscow, the present military junta in Poland might be used to purge completely the existing Party and replace it with a new party along the lines of Marxist-Leninist model identical with that of the Soviet Union. A large and radical purge of this sort would not be strange to the Soviet experience, and it would probably be even more bloody than the one accompanying Stalin's dissolution of the Polish Communist party in 1938.¹³ But a drastic change like this would initiate a new era of Stalinism within the Soviet empire which might have an adverse effect on the relations between the two super powers. Of course, there is always the outside chance that the present military regime in Poland might find a *modus vivendi* to defuse the existing conflict between itself and the Polish people, and to restore some resemblance of political and economic stability. But in this respect, the Western response to the Polish crisis is of crucial importance: How the West reacts to it will probably determine the nature of its relations with the Soviet world for a generation to come. Here, one can make a strong case for the argument that if the West continues to respond to the Polish crisis as it did to the Afghanistan affair, the long-term consequences of "doing business as usual" might be detrimental to its own self-interest, and it could contribute to further destabilization of Eastern Europe that might be prejudicial to the general peace.

¹¹*Pravda*, October 7, 1981; *L'Unita*, September 10, 1981.

¹²*Krasnaya Zvezda*, January 13, 1982.

¹³M. K. Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party in Poland* (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 149-150.

CULTURAL COMMENTARY

Our Strengthened Ties To Quebec

The value of residence in a foreign country received amusing testimony in an exchange overheard in front of Fanueil Hall on Patriot's Day. A preppy undergraduate asked his Scandinavian guest of the same age: "Do you have fried bread in Sweden?" The American may or may not have known that his fried bread has its origin in Navajo culinary tradition, a heritage that our forbearers did their best to eradicate during a painful conquest of the American Southwest. The Swedish guest may or may not have recognized the resemblance of the friend's bread to the pastry served in his country, and elsewhere in Europe as well. Eating habits rank among the most interesting but commonplace points of comparison when two cultures come into daily association.

Contact between the two cultures involves the trivial and the momentous, however, as BSC students will learn when they participate in the Quebec Exchange Program offered next year for the first time. Ties between BSC and the Quebec Province were strengthened by the recent signing of a reciprocal agreement that provides for student exchanges among nine Quebec institutions and twenty-three colleges and universities in New England. Under the terms of the accord, a BSC student pays BSC tuition, and, other expenses would be comparable to those on our own campus. Signatories encourage students from all disciplines to apply for the exchange.

The academic attractions of a Quebec sojourn span a range of issues that stem from a colonized people's effort to retain ethnic identity amidst vast socializing forces set in motion by the colonizing

nation. Our undergraduate can sample the eternal debate on anglophone (mostly American) domination of Canada's mineral wealth and our pervasive grip on the arts in Canada. The particular advantage of the Quebec program is that one lives in a "foreign" environment where one can survive reasonably well without native command of the local language or even without any familiarity with local language. An advantage of equal importance in the 1980's is that even a rudimentary language skill can develop into a vehicle for understanding the cultural strife that currently fires political and social debate in Quebec.

This recent agreement is only one more example of the close ties between Canada and BSC. The Canadian government currently uses the Maxwell Library as an official selected document depository, a service which BSC alone enjoys among Massachusetts State Colleges. The National Film Board of Canada provides films for BSC French courses and the Quebec Province Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs furnishes materials for our Canadian Studies Office and speakers for BSC classes. Most recently, the Quebec Ministry partially funded Professor Stanley Hamilton's sabbatical leave to research the contemporary French Canadian novel.

The BSC Canadian Studies Program, chaired by Professor John Myers of the History Department, provides a range of interdisciplinary courses to undergraduate and graduate students. Members of the program are active in a variety of professional conferences in the field. For example, Professor Philip Silvia presented a paper entitled "Neighbors from the



Assumption College Conference on Les Petits Canadas de la Nouvelle Angleterre, held on March 14, 1982. Left to right - Professor John Myers, Professor Philip Silvia, Mr. Ronald Petrin, and Professor Stanley Hamilton.

Quebec ...continued

North: French-Canadian Immigrant vs. Trade Unionism in Fall River, Massachusetts", at an Assumption College conference on Les Petits Canadas de la Nouvelle Angleterre, held on March 14, 1982. Professor Silvia documented the reasons for the immigrant's willingness to work for substandard wages and the consequent weakened effectiveness of trade unionism in Fall River mills. He noted the role of the Franco Roman Catholic clergy in encouraging passivity toward labor reform matters that affected francophone newcomers.

Appearing at the same conference was BSC alumnus Ronald Petrin (Class of 1972) who is currently finishing doctoral research at Clark University. Petrin is exploring political party affiliations of French Canadians in Fall River, Holyoke, Worcester, New Bedford, and Lawrence. His paper included findings on French Canadian involvement in local and state government and was entitled "Culture, Community, and Politics: French Canadians in Massachusetts, 1889-1915."

The activities of faculty and alumni in the field of Canadian Studies demonstrate the continuing improvement of our skills and the reputation that we foster in the academic marketplace. Our involvement in professional responsibilities provides ample justification for the Canadian government's willingness to engage in academic ties with BSC. Our students will find a rewarding experience in the studies in Quebec, and our francophone guests will add another international dimension to our campus life.

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Bach Cantatas Old Music, New Recordings

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) occupies a special place in Western culture through his numerous compositions of exquisite vocal and instrumental music. His works hold great universal appeal since they contain most of the elements which please the ear and stimulate the intellect; melody, harmony, symmetry, counterpoint, and color. The breadth of these works is truly remarkable: from the "simple" clavichord (piano) inventions intended to instruct some of his twenty children to the monumental B-Minor Mass and St. Matthew Passion involving full orchestra, double chorus and children's choir. Between these extremes lie numerous works for solo instrument organ, sonatas, and concertos for instruments, motets, masses, passions and cantatas for voices.

The vast majority of his cantatas were composed for specific Sundays in the Lutheran Church calendar, involving Christmas, Easter, Feast Days, etc. The church cantata employed a small "orchestra" of strings, brass, and wind instruments, and percussion. It was customary then to interchange score lines for various instruments so that singers could sing instrumental parts and vice-versa. For the vocal sections, Bach scored for solo soprano, alto, tenor, bass, and for choir.

A typical cantata opens with a chorus and orchestra stating the major biblical text clearly and forcefully. A recitative (narrative) follows the chorus, the baritone singing a rapid succession of works sustained by a few chords on the organ. Next arias or ariosos (usually solo) are sung, offering melodic lines and technical challenges to both vocalists and accompanists alike. Bach typically ended his cantatas with a Choral, a serene, melodic "hymn" for all performing forces, occasionally accompanied by the congregation during the service.

As any great musician, Bach created a perfect interplay between text and music. His pictorial themes depict such images as waves, clouds, laughter, sorrow, terror, devil, angels, serpents, etc., with the proper use of fast moving strings, melancholy cellos, cheerful flutes, terrifying timpani and organ, forceful trumpets and other evocative combinations. Certainly one of the most graphic of these is No. 80, titled "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott" ("A Mighty Fortress is our God") with its tumult expressed by repeated fast notes by the strings and by heavy use of brass and timpani. Another cantata employs correspondence of ten virgins, with dramatic syncopated

notes by the trumpets.

In addition to the 170 church cantatas, 20 of Bach's secular cantatas were discovered and analyzed by scholars. Bach produced these on such special occasions as birthdays and coronations, upon the request of friends, town mayors, and dukes. Here the music is more vivacious and bears such titles as "Coffee" (praising its virtues . . .), "Shepherd", and "Wedding".

All of Bach's cantatas have been recorded by several labels. In fulfilling current standards of performance, they use modern instruments and female voices for solo and choir parts. Many of the leading artists of the recording world have performed these cantatas, such as Ely Ameling, Janet Baker, Dietrich Fischer - Dieskau and Kurt Equiluz, under renowned conductors and with great ensembles. However, there is an outstanding collection of all of Bach's cantatas under the Telefunken label, using original instruments and the same number of vocal participants used in Bach's time. This monumental task of recording 20 volumes started in 1972 and ended in 1980, under the musical directions of Gustav Leonhardt and Nikolaus Harnoncourt with the Concentus Musicus of Vienna. Each volume (price: \$20) contains several recordings of cantatas with the following addenda: a complete score (reduced in size), complete texts in German, English and French, a history of each cantata and a description of the original instruments. The combined results of scrupulous scholarship, outstanding soloists, and boys voices, and superb acoustical engineering give predictably superlative interpretations. The total price of \$500 for such a treasure is well worth the sacrifices one undertakes occasionally.

Bach cantatas are quite frequently performed during ordinary concerts, Bach festivals, and on special Sundays in the church calendar. A few cathedrals in Europe quite regularly offer cantata cycles annually, one cantata per Sunday. Fortunately, one need not go to Europe to attend such performances. We are fortunate to be living in Massachusetts, where the Bach Cantata Cycle is superbly performed on Sundays by the Emmanuel Church Choir on Newbury Street in Boston. Should a trip to Emmanuel be inconvenient, you may hear a Bach cantata every Sunday shortly after 8:00 a.m., on WGBH/89.8 F.M.

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