

Québec y Canadá: Íntimos y extraños.

**Por Juan José Riva.*

The Canadian brand of beer Molson has made a famous advertisement campaign with the motto "I AM CANADIAN" trying to use the nationalism of the country as a way to attract consumers, and relate the brand with the strong nationalism of Canadian people.

The advertising campaign was a success. Nowadays Molson is the beer we see everywhere in Canada, and also we see it as a symbol of what the Canadian hockey player is, the proud of the country.

However this advertising campaign was not showed in the province de Quebec. But, why not to show the add in one of the most important provinces of the country. Quebec has more than seven million inhabitants, and is one of the biggest economies in Canada.

The answer to this question is not just the language, as is well known; Québec is the only province of Canada that has French as its first language. The province is not just a part of the Canadian federation; they consider themselves as a nation. A lot of Quebecois do not consider themselves as part of Canada, and the motto " I am Canadian " could sound rude to the people that feel more: " je suis quebecois".

When we get into the city of Quebec we can see a panel that says: Quebec, capital national du Quebec. When I asked a friend quebecoise about that, she answered me with an obviously air : Yes, because is the capital of the nation of Quebec.

And indeed it is. The history did not let Quebec to be a country, or maybe the people, but it is a nation. If we see a nation as a group of people, with similar cultures, religions, languages, that share a past and believe in a future in common.

When I came here I already knew something about the soveranist movements in the 60's, and I thought that this idea was just history. But as everything that happened during the 60's in the Americas, it has not disappeared, it is totally awake. We can see in the walls and the street's graffiti's that said, "Vive le Quebec Livre".

This is the famous phrase from the former president of France Charles De Gaulle. In the middle of the tension with the soveranist movement in Quebec, the President appears in Montreal to visit the ExpoMontreal in 1967. When the expo finished the President pronounced a speech in front of a crowd waving

flags of the nation of Quebec, and in the perfect moment he said: Vive Montréal!
Vive le Québec ! Vive le Québec... libre! Vive le Canada français! Et vive la
France!

After that the crowd exploded, and the image of De Gaulle passed not just to the history of France but also to the vitrine of leaders that wanted a free Québec. We still can see a little monument of Mr. De Gaulle in Shorebrooke street Montreal as a recognition of what he said and its meaning.

But the federal government do not stayed without doing anything after that. And one of the most important decisions was, in 1971 the declaration of multiculturalism as a state policy. Canada was the first country in declaring multiculturalism as a state policy. The government made incredible efforts to relate the wide cultural gap in this enormous country (Almost 4450 kilometers from Halifax to Vancouver). To do that, they started teaching French in English provinces, but also pressuring Quebec to use English (against the province's government).

Nowadays if your parents are not English speakers and you are studying in Quebec, you have no right to study in English until you are in college. So we can see how there is still a fight between the federal and provincial governments about how Quebecois protects their French.

Anyways, talking in Montreal with a student of Political Science from English Canada, she made me see a very interesting point of view about this complicated situation. She told me that Quebec helps to the conformation of nowadays Canada as a multicultural country. She said that without Quebec they would be a classical English colony. But the problem with Quebec forces the multiculturalism, and made each part of Canada accept the other as a different part conforming the same state.

This is the history of America, how to deal with people from totally different origins, and how to work with them together for a better future, how we make from different beginnings a destiny in common.

Even if there are some problems, Canadians all over the territory feel their nationalism when they have to face the big neighbor U.S.A. and the Olympic winter games last mars were an example.

When in the ice hockey final Canadians beat the American, the entire country was waving the maple leaf flag no matter which province were they from. That is the clear symbol that show us how a country can live peacefully no matter the differences in past if they have strong believes in a future in common.

** Estudiante de la Licenciatura en Estudios Internacionales.
Depto de Estudios Internacionales.
FACS - ORT Uruguay.*

