**Pierre Trudeau – Federalism and the French Canadians (1968)**

**Thesis:**

Embracing nationalism will lead to material as well as moral ruin. French Canadians are better served by participating in the federal government and contributing to the building of a pluralistic, post-national democracy.

**Main Arguments:**

French Canadian thinking has long been monolithic and sterile. From clericalism, to corporatism to the new (post-Quiet Revolution) nationalism, it is poorly reasoned and stifles dissent.

Special status is a completely illogical concept, which has taken the place of previous concepts such as corporatism. The constitution cannot be revised to give more powers from Ottawa to Quebec without lessening Quebec's power in Ottawa. If Quebec becomes the state of French Canada, it must simultaneously abandon claims for parity between French and English in the rest of the country.

Nationalism subverts good government. It is inherently exclusionary and irrational. Advanced societies must be held together by rational political institutions, rather than emotionalism. Nationalism's concern is not with liberty or prosperity, but rather for pursuing the illusory purity of the ethnic nation. The notion that a nation must necessarily be sovereign is retrograde.

Canada, by its multinational nature, is unexpectedly ahead of its time. It should be made to be a truly pluralistic and polyethnic society. This requires both English and French Canadians to relinquish their nationalisms and engage each other constructively. Ruin will result from either party refusing to do this and retreating into itself.

Separatists constitute a petite-bourgeois counter-revolution. Revolutions involve freeing man from collective coercions. Separatists want to do just the opposite.

**Method/Approach**:

This is a work of classical liberal theory that draws on Enlightenment normative precepts, and past liberal theorists of nationalism (Lord Acton most notably). Most of the items in the collection are journalistic or editorial in style, not adhering strictly to a scholarly format.

**Contributions**

This collection of writings is the definitive statement of what Maclure describes below as the cosmopolitan anti-nationalist narrative of Quebecois identity. Most chapters were published originally as articles in Cité Libre, and they convey the general bent of that important journal in its response to the emerging post-Quiet Revolution nationalism. Counter to the nationalist writers of the era, Trudeau places a substantial portion of the blame for Quebec society's various (particularly democratic) deficiencies with Quebec's political culture itself, which Trudeau views as retrograde in its collective orientation. New nationalism is simply a new facade for an old, deeply conservative project that previously donned the garb of clericalism, corporatism, etc.

Trudeau adheres to the “procedural liberalism” to which Charles Taylor and a multitude of other scholars of Quebec would later juxtapose their “substantive liberalism”. Ajzenstat takes up this dichotomy in her piece described below. It views the ideal state as a neutral agent that allows private cultural identity to flourish without either positive or negative intervention.

It makes a case for a language regime based on equality of the two languages across the country, rather than territorial linguistic blocs. Kenneth McRoberts later argues that this vision is utterly at odds with the demographic reality of Canada.

It has inspired 40 years of responses, critiques and caricatures. It is the classical liberal statement of identity and the state, and as well as describing an approach to how Quebec should be accommodated and federalism organized, it outlines the normative basis for Canadian multiculturalism. Trudeau called for “polyethnic pluralism” built upon liberal principles, as well as the complete divorce of nation and state.