

*A Builder of Institutions for Social Research:*  
**Georges-Henri Lévesque (1903–2000)**

JEAN-PAUL MONTMINY

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Georges-Henri Lévesque was born at Roberval (a region of Chicoutimi), in Quebec on 6 February 6 1903. A region of Québécois pioneers, Roberval would always remain the heart of his patriotism; ‘my land’, was how he loved to recall it. His father was a stationmaster, putting the young Georges-Henri in a place of movement, of displacement, of an ‘opening to the world’. These three features would mark the life of the young Lévesque, with particular emphasis on the importance of liberty. Very early in his life, Fr Lévesque discovered the ‘marvellous’ power of the word – the word which captivates, which seduces and enchants, the word which traces routes. More than an intellectual, dedicating his life to writing, Fr Lévesque was a man of the word, a man of action.

Having entered the Dominican novitiate on 15 July 1923, he followed the regular formation of all new members of the Order: apprenticeship to the religious life, followed by regular studies in philosophy and theology.

At the end of his studies, his superiors wanted him to become a missionary in the new apostolate of the Canadian Dominicans in Japan. Keeping in mind a concern for freedom and the exchange of ideas, he indicated that he would prefer to stay in Quebec and devote himself to social work. His dream would be to specialise in social sciences, as he would write in *Souvenances*, volume I.

In 1930, he left for Lille in France. Two years later he returned with a diploma in social sciences obtained at the university of that city. His masters were the respected specialist in international relations, Thomas-Joseph Delos, and above all, the Belgian, Georges Ceslas Rutten (see the article on Rutten in this book) – a ‘worker-priest’ with whom he would do various practical work experiences in 1930 in order to prepare himself for a life of action based on observation and reflection.<sup>1</sup>

Returning to Canada in 1933, he taught at the Dominican college in Ottawa, while participating in studies with the Universities of Montreal and