

# LAST POST SPECIAL REPORT LAST POST



Photo: Dave Clark

*These pages are written in Montreal in the midst of a whirlpool of events whose final solution one can only begin to glimpse. This is not an explanation of the grievances of Quebec—that must come later, and some even think it's already too late for that, years too late.*

*This special preliminary report has been prepared by the staff of Last Post magazine, working with journalists in Montreal, Ottawa and Quebec City, whose examination of events, and their treatment in the English press outside Quebec, has given them the profound conviction that too much has not been told, and too many questions have failed to be raised in the explosion of events.*

*It is our aim—those at the Last Post and those of us in the papers and broadcast media who have joined the Last Post in this effort—to raise questions about the motives of men in power in the cataclysmic days of October, perhaps not to answer many of them, but to begin the urgently needed examination of what some have already begun to call:*

## The Santo Domingo of Pierre Elliott Trudeau

**I**n the peak of the hysteria about "apprehended insurrections", "coups", and "armed uprisings" that was being cried from Ottawa, one reporter remarked, in the wry wit that sometimes comes out of frightening events, that "This is the first time in this country we've had a counter-revolution before having had a revolution."

The remark won't stand in stead of cold analysis, but it has a grain of truth in it, and at least it underscores some of the unreality of the events that exploded on the cool morning of Monday, October 5.

It had been a singularly quiet year in Montreal, which has been accustomed over the last few years to rushing mass demonstrations in the streets, gunfights at the Murray Hill garages, police strikes, student strikes and occupations.

The most significant political event was the April 29 election, in which the liberal-separatist Parti Québécois of René Lévesque won one quarter of the popular vote and a tenth of the National Assembly's seats. But that had been an electoral battle, fought in the ballot box. The streets have been quiet, relatively. The largest demonstration this spring in eastern Canada had been in Toronto at the American consulate after the invasion of Cambodia, and nothing approaching it occurred in Montreal.

Much of the organized left was in disarray, the rest of it was either working in the Parti Québécois or working with citizens' committees. The rise of the citizens' committees, which reflected the left's shedding its student image and working in clinics and with labor unions reflected a very peaceful form of political activity.

Quebec's novice Liberal premier, Robert Bourassa, hopped down to the U.S. to make his first major plea for American investment and for loans—a reflection of his assessment that things were cool and that investors would be more prepared to shell out in the apparent climate of stability in the province.

In Ottawa, Prime Minister Trudeau delivered a glowing Throne speech at the opening of parliament, expressing his confidence in the state of Canadian confederation.

Parliament was gearing for its first major debate on the most immediate critical issue—pollution.

Then, the whole balloon began to burst.

In the early morning of Monday, October 5, James Cross was kidnapped, whisked away from his home on wealthy Redpath Crescent by four men in a cab. Hours later, the police announced that it had received, via a popular French radio station, a communique from a group that claimed to be a cell of the FLQ, and that James Cross would only be released if the government released 23 men jailed for terrorist and other activities, read the FLQ's manifesto on the crown's tele-

vision network, delivered \$500,000 in gold bars, released the identification of an informer who had turned some previous FLQ men in, and rehired the Lapalme postal delivery men whom the government fired for striking.

The government, in a series of statements that culminated the following Saturday with the televised speech of Quebec's Justice Minister Jérôme Choquette, said "no".

Within half an hour of Choquette's speech (too soon for it to be a response to his speech), Pierre Laporte, the Labor Minister of the Quebec Government, and Bourassa's number two man, if not the strongman of the Liberal government, was kidnapped by four other men outside his home in suburban Montreal.

The confusion in government circles in Ottawa and Quebec City following this resulted on Thursday, Oct. 15, in the entry into Montreal of 7,500 federal troops armed to the teeth, reportedly to "aid the police" by guarding principal buildings and people. The troops were later called into Ottawa's exclusive Rockcliffe Park section to guard members of parliament and cabinet ministers.

On Oct. 16, at 4 o'clock in the morning the Trudeau government invoked the War Measures Act, the most powerful document at its disposal, giving it next to dictatorial powers.

On Saturday night, following a curious set of events no one has yet been able to explain, the body of Pierre Laporte was found by the police in the trunk of a car near the St. Hubert air force base in suburban Montreal.

A nation's hysteria is unleashed.

Suddenly we are back where we were five years ago. A cold civil war is being fought along national and linguistic grounds. The country is polarized, but not on social issues, on issues of language and race.

The political life of this country is never going to be the same. Quebec is never going to be the same.

What happened to so disturb the calm of a listless October and so hurl a nation into a tortured vortex of political explosions, so violent a shift of the forces in this country, so sudden an alteration of the stakes of the political game? Who wins, who loses?

What happened between October 5, and today?

Who was making what decisions?

What were their strategies?

What may be the fruits of their strategies?

Was it a hunt for kidnapers and terrorists, a hunt that went wild, or were there more basic, long-term motives that directed the men in power over the first four weeks?

With an urgency that cannot be underestimated, we must begin to piece together the beginnings of answers to these questions.