

If there is not a massive wave of opposition we are going to have a police state in Quebec

By Stan Gray

What I want to speak about mostly is the current situation in Quebec, specifically the recent events. I think it's necessary, because I gather from the kind of press coverage that comes out of Toronto that you tend to get a slightly untrue picture of things.

When I was in Ottawa the other day, which I hear, according to Lucien Saulnier and Pierre Trudeau, has become a red base for the Quebec independence movement, I picked up a copy of The Globe and Mail. The first page says: "Quebec lawyer lists 27 subversives; foreign financing charged."

The Toronto Globe and Mail charges foreign financing! The thing here is a speech by a character called Anthony Malcolm, chairman of the "blue-ribbon" Canada Committee. What's the Canada Committee? Well, it's described here very accurately.

"The Canada Committee was launched in March '68 as a publicity organization to combat the separatist movement. The group has about 500 members, including leading members of the Montreal business community. Companies represented by some of their executives include Bell Canada, Alcan, Northern Electric, Domtar, chartered banks, insurance firms." Now I'd say that in terms of the composition of the Canada Committee, it's a fairly accurate representation of what Canada means to most people in Quebec at the present time.

This character Malcolm was speaking before a Women's Club in the town of Mount Royal, a very rich English suburb of Montreal.

The Globe report says: "In an address brimming with names, dates, and figures . . ." it's supposed to be a real expose of what's happening in Quebec, what with all these separatist movements, they're all training in Cuba or Ottawa or wherever it happens to be. He gives an expose of these subversives who are financed from Cuba and the El Fatah and from all these subversive organizations.

On page seven of this copy of the Globe it says: "Enough Violence? The Subversive Side of Separatism." One of the facts quoted is very interesting: "On the one hand we have the Front de Liberation de Quebec, which is a very strong rightist group, and which acts as the terrorist arm of the separatist movement." Very interesting that a rightist group bombs corporation headquarters. And the guys they arrested had pictures of Che Guevara on the wall. By the way, FLQ also stands for the Federation Liberale de Quebec, the Quebec Liberal Party — maybe that's what he means.

Wait, it gets very interesting now: "With and closely allied to the FLQ is the leftist FLP Front de Liberation Populaire, which is the subversive arm of the separatist movement. This latter group is at present involved in setting up cells throughout the province for the FLQ."

We have the leftist FLP setting up cells all over Quebec for the right wing FLQ! It goes on: "These cells are at present dormant and are only waiting for the signal to come to life and strike a blow for the achievement of their aims."

The point I want to make is simply that the kind of press terrorism that's going on, the systematic lies and distortion and slander against the movement in Quebec, is using the lack of information by the English-speaking people to make these kinds of fantastically ridiculous charges. Anybody who seriously reads this thing can see the contradictions that are in it.

I'd like to talk a bit about some of the background to the current "trouble" in Quebec. What we've seen in the last year is the convergence in Quebec of two movements or two struggles that had not previously been linked, that is to say: the national liberation struggle in Quebec against Anglo-American colonialism, which originally was very much a phenomenon of the middle-class type intellectual, small businessmen, some state functionaries, as well as all kinds of media freaks; and also at the same time developing, but not yet linked to it was a fantastically militant rise of the working class as a whole in Quebec.

This has been changing in a fantastic way in the past year. The most significant sign was recently when the Quebec-based central labour federation, the Confederation des Syndicats Nationaux (Confederation of National Trade Unions), which has been at the heart of all the increased militancy of Quebec workers, came out at its recent conference for the unilingual language policy in Quebec; that is, that French alone be spoken and taught. That is quite a change, because for the first time a major workers' group took a radical and clear stand, and it came from the CSN, which up to that point had not declared itself at all.

The most significant feature of it all was that it was a

decision taken at a delegates' conference against the combined wishes and pressure of the national executive.

In other words, it came from the rank and file itself of the CSN, of the working class of Quebec, against the expressed wishes of the leadership.

Now, I say this is only the result of a process. The CSN, at the present time, is participating in a very active and militant way in the whole opposition that is beginning to express itself in a lot of open forums and so forth in the coming weeks against the new language bill introduced by the Quebec government. A language bill which would, in fact, institutionalize and guarantee the privileges and rights of the English-speaking exploiting minority in Quebec. The hardest core and a key element in the whole common front that's developing is the CSN.

Now I said this was part of a certain process. On the one hand, a great increase in labour militancy last year and the increased politicization of the workers' struggles.

It's important to bear in mind that what lies behind this — and without claiming to make an analysis that explains the situation — is the dual status of Quebec, in the sense that is on the one hand a colony, a national entity that has been conquered from the outside, which has had imposed on it a language, a culture and economic control.

On the other hand, it is a capitalist country in which the relationships of the working class and the ruling class exist; and therefore the working class in Quebec suffers from a dual sort of oppression: exploitation which is a colonial exploitation and oppression, and a specifically capitalist form of exploitation and oppression.

And these things are not in reality divorced or dissociated, because the same people who are the bulk of the oppressors of the workers in the plant are also the English.

In fact, the English constitute virtually 90 per cent of the managerial class in Quebec, and constitute the entire property-holding class, the majority of which is, of course, controlled by American capital.

And therefore everything — the kinds of complaints and grievances that are at the roots of the workers' discontent and increasing militancy include not only what are normally class demands, but also include national demands, because it is a fact that all workers have to speak English in the plant. They in fact suffer a fantastic kind of cultural alienation and oppression throughout their whole lives in the plant, in the workshop, in industry, and everywhere else.

So this is the kind of structural fact about the status of Quebec — colonialism and capitalism — that explains the converging of a national consciousness and a class consciousness on a very much more increasingly political and militant scale in the working class in Quebec.

At any rate, when it came to the time of the parade, in the early afternoon, what happened was that the FLP announced that we were going to organize a popular parade of protest behind the official parade.

The official parade is a long show of floats by a bunch of Quebec and American corporations which say: "Quebec knows how to drink some kind of coffee" or "Long Live Quebec and Bell Canada." People are supposed to stand in the streets and watch this parade go by.

What we organized was a parade of protest behind this official parade in protest against the conditions in Quebec — that is of the national oppression and of the capitalist exploitation. In spite of all the warnings about the riot squad and all that crap, there were about 10,000-15,000

first political party in Quebec to campaign for independence. The group pushed for transforming the RIN out of its parliamentary, electoral orientation toward an extra-parliamentary, movement-building perspective. When the RIN merged with other independence groups in 1968 to form the Parti Quebecois, many people opted out of party politics to work a la base to build a radical workers' and independence movement.

The FLP played an active role in organizing Operation McGill, the counter-parade last June 24 on St. Jean Baptiste Day. Operation Anti-congress at the Union Nationale convention last August, and is currently heavily involved in the campaign against the Quebec government's new language bill. (Bill 63).

Gray was fired from his position as a lecturer in political science at McGill for his part in Operation McGill and his actions criticizing what he calls McGill University's contribution to the oppression of the Quebec people.

question, the national liberation struggle. In 1963-64, with the RIN (the now-defunct Rassemblement pour l'Indépendance Nationale), there were 300 or 400 people really involved — very small and marginal in terms of numbers in groups. Election campaigns that always flopped.

What we've seen in the last year or two regularly, and this is not an abnormal thing — 10,000 to 15,000 people in the streets in Montreal demanding very radical programs around the national question.

As well in the movements which have tended to have only the national aspect, the actions have more and more tended to incorporate a socialist perspective or a class analysis and perspective as part of the action.

For example, the famous Operation McGill, which we organized last March 28. It came across in the mass media as lunatic, racist, trying to turn McGill into a French university.

In fact, the basic program of Operation McGill was only partly this, to turn McGill into a French university — for all the reasons that are obvious. But it was as well to turn McGill into a working class university integrated into Quebec society and serving the majority of people in Quebec, and not the ruling corporations that exploit the Quebec people.

And it was very much a program designed to integrate a class perspective and a national perspective at the same time. It was officially supported and financed by the CSN.

Many workers came on the march, as did Michel Chartrand of the CSN, who did a lot of organizing for the march. This is one of the few times you really saw in action the much talked about worker-student alliance. There was a real worker-student alliance around the university issue, a common worker-student demonstration in the streets of Montreal.

Then there are the things that happened on June 24 this year. June 24 in Quebec is St. Jean Baptiste Day, a traditional national holiday. In 1968, on June 24, that comedian who's in Ottawa came down to Montreal and provoked the biggest protest that ever occurred in the history of Montreal. Since that demonstration — when something like 90 cops ended up in hospital — June 24 has become a symbolic protest day on the national question.

This year, we in the Front de Liberation Populaire organized a demonstration. Of course, they announced beforehand that the parade would now take place in the daytime.

You see, it's clear that it's the evenings that cause riots, there are no social causes for it, the people are all happy, it's the climate that causes riots to occur.

You know, there's a different level of analysis coming out of the ruling class recently.

The big problems in Quebec come from outside agitators — Cuba or Ottawa or El Fatah are organizing to agitate the people. The people don't know what's happening, there are no problems in Quebec, no unemployment, no colonialism or anything else. Everybody's happy, except for either the climate or the time of day or the few people who were trained in Cuba or Ottawa or Algeria.

So in general that is the picture of what has been developing in Quebec recently. Now the political result of all this is a situation on the one hand of a very polarized political and social situation in Quebec, on the other hand — and as a result of this — the institution of very severe repressive measures by the state. This is the only way at this time of replying to the mass movements that are developing in Quebec.

It's very interesting that just two days after the riots during the police strike, the FLP tried to organize a march — on Oct. 10, a Friday night — on City Hall to demand the resignation of the Drapeau-Saulnier administration in Montreal.

Now it is normally assumed in a bourgeois democratic country that you're allowed at least to have the right to demonstrate.

The cops usually harass you before demonstrations; they arrest the organizers and they beat up the people on the demonstration itself, but at least you're allowed the right to call the demonstration.

Well, it happened that five minutes after we called the press conference, the police began a mass number of raids and arrests — not only involving the principal people involved in organizing the demonstration itself, but vir-

ally every single popular committee in Montreal or virtually every committee or group in Montreal that opposes the Drapeau-Saulnier administration.

That is to say, tenants' associations, citizens' committees, union groups: systematic raids were made on all these places the day before the march, all their documents were seized and the people arrested.

Not only that, but the government began a campaign of terrorization of the population in the mass media. That is, from that morning in the radio and newspapers, after the statement by the minister of justice of Quebec (Remi Paul) that the demonstration was illegal — which means in advance it was illegalized — the authorities warned that if anybody did show up there, the Riot Act would be read on the spot. To read the Riot Act on the spot means that anybody caught in that area can be arrested and simply if it's proved in court that he was in the area, he can be sentenced to life in jail.

All this was designed to terrorize the population, to stop them from coming to the march. The march was illegalized in advance, 600 soldiers with machine guns and tear gas were ringed around City Hall that night.

Now one thing is clear: what these characters were claiming at the time was that we have to have the army, the provincial police here to protect the people, when it was obvious and clear that this fantastic demonstration of force was designed to protect the ruling class, to protect the rule of City Hall from the people, and not to protect the people from us.

When the police go into the headquarters of every single group that's protesting against City Hall and seize all their documents and all their files, all their printing machines, there's only one purpose in mind there, and that is to stop these groups from functioning, to destroy any kind of political opposition. Quite clearly they recognize how isolated and how threatened they are by the population as a whole, and that's the reason they embarked on that campaign of terrorization in the mass media the day of the march.

Since that time there has been a fantastic witch hunt against every opposition group in Quebec, stealing stuff from all their offices, so that it's almost impossible for any group to function in any kind of effective way. What's going on is absolutely incredible, not only the fact that the Company of Young Canadians is being attacked, but now Trudeau is claiming that even the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is the headquarters of separatism.

Remi Paul, the Quebec minister of justice, recently claimed that Michel Chartrand, who is the present of the CSN in Montreal, was in league with the comrades of a group of 24 terrorists operating in Quebec.

I should add a word about Remi Paul. This minister of justice of Quebec was a former political colleague of Adrien Arcand, the former leader of the Nazi Party in Quebec. There was a photo on the front page of La Presse, Montreal's biggest newspaper, a few weeks ago, showing Adrien Arcand speaking to a rally in Montreal in support of Remi Paul. All around, the posters said: Vote Remi Paul.

Now this fellow, is the minister of justice in Quebec, and the one responsible for inaugurating the campaign of repression against the left and against all forms of opposition that exist.

The line which is coming out now is shocking even to the liberal bourgeois mind. What is happening in effect is that every form of challenge, of opposition activity — called contestation in French — is being called illegal and seditious, and equated with terrorism. That is to say, they always mix terrorism and protest marches, leaflets, demonstrations in their denunciations in a very clear way; they're all the same to them.

That fits in well with the line that The Globe and Mail is taking, that the FLQ and terrorism are behind every form of opposition activity that occurs in Quebec. The implication — it's not just that it's rhetoric, they really do mean it — all these activities for them are now being made illegal.

The recent search warrants, for example, are new. The old warrants used to have things like: they're looking for bombs or something like that.

Now the search warrants say: they're allowed to seize anything written or unwritten, or printing machines, that could put into the head of someone or could lead him to conclude that he should engage in actions which could disturb the peace.

On that pretext, they've been seizing books, leaflets, anything of the sort, any ideas or documents that oppose the status quo. And they're making it quite clear that legal organizations, simple forms of opposition that can't be considered the same as illegal organizations, are the same as terrorism — all are now illegal and seditious, for which you can be thrown in jail. In brief, we are not very far from a police state in Quebec at the present time.

It's not a situation that was produced all of a sudden, it's been developing for a long time in Quebec. From at least a year or a year and a half ago, there has been an escalation in the repressive means used by the government and by the established powers in Quebec. I'd like to mention a few

working class kids in the streets who marched behind the official parade.

This was not at all a student phenomenon — there were very few middle class people there, because they were all scared. It was only the working class kids and the street kids who came out there in popular protest that the national holiday of Quebec was being used by the English corporations just to advertise their particular wares.

They were also saying that they too wanted to participate in their national holiday as a protest against the kind of exploitation they are subjected to every day.

Of course, as an indication of the change of climate in Quebec, at one point the statue of St. Jean Baptiste was overturned by the demonstrators, his head cut off and used as a soccer ball in the streets.

That scandalized the newspapers, but what it showed is that kids these days and the new movement is very much divorced from the traditional kind of nationalism that characterized some of the nationalist movements in the past in Quebec.

Afterwards, horrible, horrible deed — they went down to St. Catherine Street, the main business street, and looted, broke windows and so on until the cops came again.

This is another example of the rise in numbers and size of protests in Quebec on the national question, and how it more and more is having a class character.

Another example recently was the police strike — the situation is so bad that even the cops are going out on strike and complaining that they're colonized, that they don't get enough money or as much as in Toronto. When the cops went out on strike, there was a big demonstration organized by the taxi drivers, and which later on in the evening resulted in looting and robbing and everything else.

Again, some political targets as well as against the stores, which are as well not simply places to rob but for those people political targets, in that these represent the people who are exploiting and robbing them every day.

The moment the repressive and violent apparatus of the state disappears, these people immediately go and take what they think is their due.



A new escalation in repressive means was taken in August this year when Remi Paul proclaimed the so-called anti-terrorist laws with a big huff and fluff. He gave this big speech denouncing these bearded types, Cuban-

continued next page