



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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THE EVENTS OF OCTOBER 1970 IN CANADA

An Address by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. André Ouellet, to the New York State Society of Newspaper Editors, New York, February 15, 1971.

Canada enjoyed a brief spell of unusual publicity in the United States and the world in the last few months of last year. They say in show business that all publicity is good publicity. I am not sure that the same holds true in the life of nations. If it was painful for Canadians to have the tragic events of last October front-page news throughout the world, they did, at the same time, take pride in the steadfastness shown by their Government and in the orderly way the great mass of our citizens carried on their normal lives, even in the city of Montreal, where the events had their focus.

I am grateful for this opportunity to address this influential group and to try to shed some light in what Churchill called "the twilight between the full glare of newspaper publicity and the cold light of history". Above all, I should like to try to put the events of October into their proper perspective, to look at them as dispassionately as I can and to see where Canada is now and how the future appears.

I should like to make clear that FLQ terrorism did not burst upon the scene last October. What happened then was a sudden escalation in terrorist activity that had already a seven-year history. It began with bombs in mail-boxes in 1963, increased through periods of violence, alternating with periods of relative inactivity, to bombing attacks on buildings belonging to the federal and provincial governments and other institutions regarded as symbolic, such as the Montreal Stock Exchange. In the course of these bombings five people were killed, the last less than a year ago, a middle-aged French-Canadian woman communicator at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa. That so few lives were lost was due to good fortune rather than to any particular care on the part of the terrorists to avoid murder. Prior to the kidnapping of James Cross, the police were able to foil plans to snatch two other diplomats.

It was against this background of escalation of violence that the Government had to evaluate the situation and evaluate the threats of further escalation that accompanied the kidnappings, including the threat of selective assassinations.