

Quebec in the US

This official referred to a June 25, 1981, story put out by UPC, that in his view unnecessarily lumped the previous day's celebration of St. Jean Baptiste Day, a "national holiday," with some "mafia" killings. "Such murders," he said, "sometimes take place in New York or Chicago, but when they happen in Montreal, UPC makes them look as though the separatists are doing them."

I asked a New York Quebec House spokesperson to get me a copy of the story. She called UPC's senior news editor for Canada, Bob McConachie, in Toronto, who told her, "I won't release the story because I know what use you people will make of it." I then called McConachie, explaining that I do not represent the Quebec government, that I am an American who is looking into the ways Quebec news travels to the United States. "I don't see where we fit in," he said. When I reminded him that he was the conduit through which all Quebec news flows from UPC to UPI, he moderated his tone and told me, "We've had a running battle with the Quebec government, which is why I was so touchy." But still he refused to release the story. I told him I thought it was absurd to hold back a news story that had

interpretation by the English press, which then becomes American press. You cannot persuade them that UPC is not an American organization in Canada."

In Washington, a UPI executive adds, "There are not a lot of Canadian stories that make the US wire. Two stories a day would be a lot — unless they have violence, death or destruction." The St. Jean Baptiste Day story had the elements, though not to the extent that some stories mayhem do. That story, just as it appeared in *The Toronto Sun*, is reproduced elsewhere on this page.

After having gone the extra mile to find the story, I was surprised at its innocuousness. I disagree with the Quebec official who said that the juxtaposition of the murders and the celebration was unwarranted. I do not see how it would have been possible to tell that story without mentioning what the crowd was doing.

And on television — the same story

The US television networks have no staffers anywhere in Canada. When there is a Canadian story of substance

3 DIE AT QUEBEC FESTIVAL

JUN 25 1981 SUN

Gunman blasts crowd

MONTREAL (UPI Special) — A gunman who hit six people when he sprayed bullets into a crowd of 200 St. Jean Baptiste Day merry-makers early yesterday continues to elude police.

Three people were killed and three others were injured when the lone gunman opened fire in an apartment house courtyard at about 1 a.m.

Police said two men slain: Serge Desmarais, 20, and Bruno Michaud, 23, had criminal records and theorized the shootings may have been motivated by a drug-related "settling of accounts."

But a young girl also killed, Manon Laprise, 19, appears to have been an innocent victim of the violence which marred observance of Quebec's national holiday, police said.

Confusion swept the crowd as the gunfire rattled against the noise of the festivities.

"People didn't know what was happening until people started falling," police spokesman Charles Poxon said. The gunman escaped through the crowds.

"We don't have a heck of a lot to go on."

been sent all over the world a year earlier. He did not change his position, but he agreed to discuss the circumstances of the controversy with me. He said: "Most of the criticism we receive from the Quebec government has to do with how American newspapers rehandle Canadian copy. When we were a division of UPI, we wrote our copy for American consumption, but now we write for Canadian newspapers. There's more than a subtle difference. When you write for the Americans, particularly on a subject like the Canadian constitution, you oversimplify. If Allan Singer is mentioned, you have to explain that he is a Montreal businessman who took the Quebec government to court because he refused to change his [stationery store] sign to French, and so disobeyed the law. Then you have to explain what the law is. The story builds up and up. Now we just write for Canadian newspapers and give a drop to our New York office. It's picked up there and rewritten with the American perspective. There is an attempt to simplify and that obviously is very touchy, so this is where you run into difficulties. We are happy with the job we are doing in representing Quebec to the United States. But the Quebec government misunderstands the relationship between UPI and UPC. They think that any criticism amounts to 'misin-

Quebec or elsewhere, it is frequently reported to the enormous American TV audience by Peter Jennings or Barbara Dunsmore of ABC, by Morley Safer of CBS or by Robert MacNeil of PBS — all of whom are Anglo-Canadian, though the networks never identify them as such.

Computer checks, using the cues "Quebec" and "French Canada" of the ABC and CBS evening news programs going back to the 1980 referendum reveal that CBC has had thirteen stories on the air between that time and summer 1982. Five were about violent crimes or calamities. Two were about the air controller strike. Two were about patriation of the constitution. And four were about referendum. That is an average of about one minute every three months. There was less coverage on ABC, where only eight stories were presented in the same period. One of them bears repetition here in full. Anchorman Peter Jennings reported from New York on April 15, 1980, as follows:

Political news from north of the border today. The residents of Quebec have learned they will vote on May 20th for or against partial independence from the rest of Canada. It's a vote on political independence for the largely French-speaking province