

Take away the cops and you have open class warfare, with guns

— a report on Quebec

We shall take as our text this scene from the streets on Montreal the night the cops went over to anarchy.

Window smashed, people running in and out of a stereo store carrying nice pieces of equipment. English-speaking people, some of them Black.

One Black kid, a turnable tucked into a bag under his arm: "Not bad, eh?"

At length some of the French-Canadians around get up the guts to zap in too, and one of them comes out with a funny elated look on his face.

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"Kalidetabarnak," he says and caresses his loudspeakers, "Pas plus fou que les autres, hein?"

That, Anglos, means why should we be any dumber than anybody else. Goddamit, and the whole story of Quebec is in it.

The colonized Quebecer has taken maybe more of his colonizing into himself and self-depreciation and self-controlling institutions than any other oppressed man, but now the barriers are cracking.

"Pas plus fou que les autres," says the Ti-Pop man now, instead of "Né pour un petit pain."

Can you figure it? A popular proverb. A people's description of itself, coming out that way: "Born for small bread"? So the English find the French lack business sense, and the French admit there's a little truth in that, but to make a self-condemnation your national philosophy? The French-Canadians did it, and a few years ago the intellectual left found a word for it: it was Ti-Pop.

For the Ti-Poppist to reach the point where he doesn't rate himself dumber than average is already insurrectional.

For it to be revolutionary, though, it would have to get to the point where he actually conceives of *out smarting* the people who are putting him down. When you have to take lessons in looting, it isn't yet there.

That's part of the story of what's happening in Quebec.

The heritage of three centuries of elitism among the small bread eaters.

Some were born for smaller bread than others, after all. Ti-Pop.

It used to be the Curés and the Notaries, now there's a whole new crowd of Economists and Administrators, P.R. Men and Industrialists who would like to be bigger Industrialists, grafted onto this native élite, all with their reflections in Government Opposition, Civil Service, Parti Québécois.

Ti-Pop is still knuckling under to these Sound Heads.

You could see this in Guy Marciel, the cop sergeant who took the Fraternité des Policiers out on strike. In Quebec the day after, he had a hangdog look. There was cop pride as the told how his boys had gone back on the beat when the National Assembly told them to. Some had even worked double shift to help the provincials and the army clean up the disorder.

There was cop pride three nights later when the Montreal constable poked his three-foot nightstick at you, showed the army how it was done, and told you in case you were thinking of demonstrating

at city hall, "Sorry, my good man, this street's closed."

The cops are that part of the indigenous population you hire to keep the troublesome parts of the indigenous population in line. They stand off the sieges on those parts of your order that provoke anger. You do well to keep them happy. For if they get out of line, if the sentries disappear from the battlements, your society is naked, and its battles are fought directly between the adversaries.

Montreal is simply a city where the conflicts are many, the provocative faces of the establishment many, the discontented groups many. Quebec is such a place and Montreal is the wen of Quebec.

In Montreal you have, all over the poor city, projects in what is called *animation sociale*. Citizens on relief formed into citizens' committees, animators who may be Young Canadians or paid by McGill University but for who this work is revolutionary work, grievances, irritants, fear that rates of welfare will get even lower, marches on Quebec to tell the legislators about it. Such Committees exist in Quebec City too. They exist in St. Jerome. The raw material exists in every Quebec town. They touch a minority of the population, certainly, but they do not cool things down.

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You have, in Montreal, labor conflicts aplenty. You have hydro and hospital strikes, you have school teachers on strike at one end of the suburban rim, and teachers locked out at the other, leftovers of contract negotiations that took two years and a flood of teachers' unionists at parliament's gate. The Murray Hill dispute is nothing new. There have been bus overturnings and burnings before, there have been grievance filings before, there have been pleas for a better deal for the taxi drivers before. Every Montreal taxi driver is outraged by the fact that only the limousine firm can bring passengers into town from Dorval Airport, though only a few are in the *Mouvement de Libération du Taxi*. Many who aren't in it read its paper. Those who are in it are not all marxists, but they have the backing of the left, they took their name from the left, the left's artists perform to raise funds for them, they are listening to the left, and they have their anger. Take away the cops here, and you have open class warfare, with guns.

The taxi men don't even care if the public is with them, if the plane-riding public likes Murray Hill's cheap service. Murray Hill is the hotels, and the city hall, and the mayor and the government all in together, and it's english, it's Them.

In Montreal you have that Mayor, the Expo and Subway man, Jean Drapeau. He's french, he's modern, he was a nationalist years back, but now he opens a luxury restaurant — his own — in a hotel called the Windsor, in the english downtown west. His cops train in riot control, and union lawyers who organize tenant committees and put their nose in public housing projects get visited by those cops. Left-wing groups collect dossiers on him and his executive secret-

ary Lucien Saulnier and their regime, and he goes on television after the police strike and says it's because Montreal is great that she has this anarchy problem, but he'll go on negotiating the baubles that will make her greater, even if they bomb his house.

Because you have also the bombs. The underground left, really underground, which they can't wipe out, which mushroom again with every set of arrests. Which has everybody up-tight, which has the cops raiding and the suburban ladies staying home and the hippies twice as pig-nervous as in other cities. Which has cops in hip disguises watching dope and dynamite, anti-terrorist specialists in and out of witness boxes for months, rattling off their stories, checking their

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notebooks with the judge's permission. Which has a good gang of young men behind bars, a good handful in Cuba, but which can't convict the two biggest names in terrorism, Pierre Vallières and Charles Gagnon, because the evidence won't come forth, or the accomplices won't testify, or the jury won't convict-doubts, sympathies, their own kids separatists ...

But the death of a provincial cop, in plainclothes among the demonstrators according to weekly tabloid reports, is getting at the tabloid reader, too. And the old working man in the east end says to a chum on a bus: "You heard about that? Vallières wants Trudeau to testify for him. Vallières — a member of the underworld, with Lemieux and those guys. Underworld types. And Trudeau has to testify that he's a good boy — knew him at university. They'll all get off free." He knows it's not the same kind of underworld as Rivard, or he wouldn't have said Lemieux. He doesn't know about the intellectual magazines, *Cité libre*, so he says The University. Those university guys who get off scot free for their crimes while the little guy gets screwed. Ti-Pop.

You have a developed, though not numerous in terms of a two-million population, left. You have the CEGEP's, the new technical-academic colleges, which were occupied one after the other by their students the year of their creation. You have the *Front de Libération Populaire*, begun by Andrée Ferretti, the Marxist bookseller's-wife who used to be in the *parti pris* group, moved to the R.I.N. as the left wing of separatism, and then into her own group when the R.I.N. expelled its left. She's not there anymore — with FLP which has inherited many of the toughest militants of *parti pris* and retained some of the separatists it socialized during the R.I.N. period. It puts out a paper, *La Masse*, and this paper is one of a panoply of left paper in Montreal — *Go Shit* one is called, *Mobilization* is another, there are the english hip left's *Logos* and *The Local Rag*, there is the slick magazine which is the university of Montreal paper *Le Quartier Latin* looking for a mass audience, a CEGEP audience, there is *The Network* and that's what it all is, a network of small groups which can, without any one of them being a real mass movement, get together a big crowd on short notice to hit the system at some sore point. "Nothing is happening" a vete-

ran militant will say, and he's referring to that lack of mass support for what is specially left. "They're getting married like mad on the left, and drugs are taking their toll." Still, they stir the pot.

You have the language thing, which makes all this explosive. It enables the rallying of big numbers even when the organizing groups don't have big memberships. The rallying of the unemployed adolescent window-smasher. The society is turning out in greater and greater numbers.

You have St. Léonard, where an alliance of left-wing separatists like Raymond Lemieux and worried nationalist, maybe even a little racist, working-class parents has instituted on a small scale the unilingual plan that the separatist movement has for the whole of Quebec. They've seen the Italians testify to the moribund state of their language. Its inability to do the job, by choosing English to assimilate to, and they've decided they'd better revive the thing, and fast, if they want to go on being French. They've aroused the anger of the Italians who see this as a brake on their climb up the ladder, who know the industrial system is English, and want the right to knuckle under. The result is two oppressed groups at blows, with the oppressor cheering on the weaker oppressed as a trip-up to the threatening one. All for humane Anglo-Saxon reasons.

This last is the most important of all.

This gut national thing. It may be the saving of Ti-Pop, the eventual link between the anger of the taxi driver and the resentment of the east-end bus rider.

The angry conservative can have it both ways, maybe, with the right-wing nationalist politicians, with the promise that the Quebec man will come into his own and the riotous *Universitaire* will be put away.

It's a race between this, though, and the left's mudslinging at the politicians offering it: Cardinal and Bertrand spending millions on booze-and hostesses conventions when they can barely borrow enough to pay the province's bills. Wagner with his delusions of kennedyism at the new england summer resorts, Drapeau and his Golden Ship in the basement of the Windsor.

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Montreal is like any other city, it has slums and pollution and crime and ethnic groups getting walked on. Quebec is America, except that a walked-on ethnic group is the majority of the population and wants to be more than an ethnic group, and everything else becomes part of that. Rene Lévesque says that his party, offering that more-than-ethnic objective as a parliamentary accomplishment, is the insurance policy against chaos. Maybe.

But if all problems are now swallowed by the national problems, all will be vomited up again by the national solution. The citizen's committees and the unions and the taxi liberators and the clandestine castrists and the local rags will see to that. Maybe even the cops.

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