

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Quebec and the Quebecois

The five conquests of Quebec

1759. After a long siege which destroys much of Quebec and neighboring towns, farms, crops, etc., the British Army led by Wolfe defeats the French Imperial Army under Montcalm. Quebec City surrenders 1760, Montreal falls 1763. By the Treaty of Paris, Quebec becomes a British colony.

1810. After a long series of disputes with the Lower Canadian Assembly, Governor James Craig dissolves the Assembly, suspends the Constitution and orders the troops into the major cities. Three leading French political figures, Pierre Bedard, F.X. Blanchet and F.J.P. Taschereau, as the printers

of the French-language newspaper *Le Canadien* are jailed. Bedard is held without bail for 12 months. In 1811 Craig is removed by Colonial authorities and returns home in disgrace.

1837. In response to the refusal of British authorities to allow responsible government, the French population led by L.J. Papineau begin to form guerrilla organizations. On Nov. 26, British authorities order the arrest of 26 principal leaders, then attack rebel positions. In a series of pitched battles at St. Charles, St. Denis and St. Eustache a dozen soldiers are killed and over a hundred wounded. The Patriots suffer heavy losses and the leadership retreat to U.S. territory from where they carry out raids for the next 18 months. The British burn

several villages in reprisal (St. Charles St. Eustache and St. Benoit among others), and numerous prisoners suffer heavy sentences. The Constitution is suspended and remains so until the Union of 1841 comes into effect as a device aimed at submerging the French-Canadians.

1914-18. Using the War Measures Act passed in 1914, close control is kept upon Quebec as conscription is forced upon the French-Canadians. Easter Weekend 1918, however, sees a series of riots against police and military brutality. On Apr. 1 soldiers machine-gun civilians with the result that four civilians are killed, over one hundred wounded and 58 arrested. Habeas Corpus is suspended by the government. Apr. 13, a Coroner's jury declares that the persons killed on that occasion were innocent and demands pensions for their dependents.

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Where is Canada going, and how?

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Canada is now in a state of national crisis. It may be that we are at the end of our pseudo-liberal era. But while the media line up behind the prime minister and feed a state of near-hysteria with feverish bulletins, perhaps a little sociological and historical analysis can help set things in perspective.

Ottawa, finding the Bourassa government confused and torn is now calling the shots in Quebec. First it refused to negotiate for the lives of two men, declaring in effect, that a power struggle was at issue. Then it declared a war situation, sent in thousands of troops, outlawed the FLQ and hauled in hundreds of suspects. Rather naturally the FLQ retaliates in military fashion and takes a life. (More more follow quickly.)

Who are the murderers? The FLQ are directly but those who decided not to negotiate are accessories. They knew the possible outcome of their decision. No bleeding hearts they. But at a deeper level, since a war has now been declared, is the term murdered quite appropriate? It's a matter of definition.

What is clear is that Ottawa has decided there is a serious threat of separatism and they are going to nip it in the bud. The FLQ have some dynamite — how much no one on the government side can know for sure — they have laid plans to use it, they have some trained fighters — at most several hundred — and they have some friends, so we are told, in high or strategic places.

If left to continue, perhaps in six months they might have initiated what could only be a small and abortive insurrection. (Without a substantial trained force with heavy armament, and control of the electronic media, it could have no chance of success.)

Papineau trained militia

Something over a century ago, Papineau led — in a manner of speaking — a rebellion in Quebec. It broke out after some years of British refusal to deal with elementary democratic demands. While at least a third of the Quebecois were sympathetic with Papineau, only in a few counties was resistance evident.

For several months, small bands of citizens in a few scattered areas underwent openly a kind of military training. When the government in the fall of 1838 decided to act, a total of three armed skirmishes took place, in which the British troops won the last two.

In two months of fighting the rebellion was doomed, Papineau had fled to the U.S.A. and the British forces had lost four men killed.

Are there any significant parallels to today? Yes, in terms of serious grievances, in terms of strong but factually unknown support for a break with Ottawa; no, in terms of the state of military preparation.

Government shows no evidence

The federal government claims an apprehended armed insurrection — but offers almost no evidence. (One version is they are afraid to say how serious it is because of a possible paralysis of business and commerce in Montreal.) George Bain, the Ottawa correspondent for the *Globe* noted on Oct. 19 that the public has "been entrusted

with precious little information on which to make a judgment" on the gravity of the situation. What we get is talk of a "secret report."

It would seem that Ottawa has jumped in, probably to rescue a tottering regime in Quebec City, and hopes to legitimate the move later on, either when some further facts can be discovered, or perhaps made up.

In the nature of the case the government can fabricate evidence as to the size of the FLQ's strength, and the nature of its plans — and broadcast it to the nation effortlessly.

Who, especially in English Canada, has access to informants who might negate extravagant charges? In fact, all the power in the situation belongs in the hands of Ottawa and the media, which are, in most cases, following the line.

And, it is clear, English-speaking Canada will go along almost 100% with Trudeau, because it does not want to lose Quebec from the Union, a very real possibility.

First, the Parti Quebecois wins, in an election fought with many subtle weapons by the Establishment, almost a third of the French-speaking vote. But the results in seats are so poor that many lose faith in democracy and Levesque begins to think of resigning; perhaps to a more aggressive leader.

Then we note that last week thousands, how many we don't know, of college students supported the FLQ in huge rallies. Montreal University is closed down. At the same time many strategically placed leaders of Quebec favored negotiation with the FLQ, but Ottawa quickly shunted aside such a move. It disregards legitimate demands of both students and responsible leaders in the media, labor and university circles.

Save Quebec

Trudeau is determined to keep Quebec within the Confederation. Many have said he got a lot of votes from English Canada, precisely because of the hope that he was the kind of person who could preserve the status quo. He seems to have taken that as his mandate and he clearly intends to do his utmost to carry it out.

By labelling the FLQ actions as potential insurrection, he hopes to kill the separatist movement before it can win a victory at the polls, or in desperation take to fighting in the streets. It looks as if, as in the case of Papineau, military and police might well be used to suppress those with legitimate grievances. The terror of kidnapping that struck at a few individuals in the elite, is to be met with massive police terror aimed at the disgruntled, the young and the politically radical.

How will Quebec respond? Trudeau himself realizes that it will not be an easy victory, that it may drag on. His tactics have driven the opposition underground and also helped win considerable sympathy for it in Quebec. A dragged out guerrilla struggle may be precipitated immediately.

Reports from the Quebec press hint strongly that the government's tactics are playing into the hands of the FLQ. Many youths will now want to help drive out the Ottawa military who have "invaded" their province. They will give up all trust in both the Bourassa government, for

its complicity in this, and also in the democratic electoral process.

In the short run, we can be sure that Trudeau's movement will add significantly to the numbers of young separatists prepared to fight violence. Trudeau's declaration of war in short will rally the other side.

Victory by jailing

Since there has not been and will not be a military skirmish, in which insurgents are roundly defeated, as there was in Papineau's time, the only way for Trudeau to win is to stuff the jails with separatists, and break up all underground networks. This can be done. But whether such a victory will work for more than a year or two is the \$64 question. (How long, we might ask, will military might in Czechoslovakia suppress their popular aspirations to increased freedom and democracy?)

Meantime, the War Emergency measures will be used — have already been in Winnipeg and Vancouver — to detain in English Canada leaders of left wing groups, and maybe anyone who refuses to knuckle under. Certain provincial attorneys-general and mayors can now suppress awkward hippie or radical groups, almost at will. This will but drive underground the radical movements and lead to serious trouble later.

In terms of Quebec, one might ask, are there any significant parallels between its present situation on and that of Algeria in the fifties, under the French government? This is a matter for individual analysis, and no doubt each reader will have his own perspective.

But if there are some important parallels, we might remember the lesson of Algeria, namely that an alien military power, fighting against a hostile population using guerrilla tactics will not finally prevail. The crucial question, here, of course, is how hostile to Ottawa are the majority of persons in Quebec, and how much more hostile will they become, as Ottawa locks away more and more people and suppresses liberties.

Trudeau has blundered

Historical and sociological analysis, and in fact common sense, suggests that the Trudeau administration has made two serious blunders. They refused to negotiate with the FLQ and they declared a state of war to exist. If reason and justice are to prevail at all, these two mistakes must be rectified and at once.

Adequate measures of dealing with the small terrorist core of the FLQ can be devised, which will not reach present extremes of the new legislation and further polarize the people of Quebec — and eventually all of Canada. That is the first priority.

Secondly, a massive effort to deal quickly with the grievances of French Canadians in Quebec needs to be put into effect.

Maybe it is all too late. Once a war is declared, its leaders have a big stake in claiming a victory, even if it be a pyrrhic one. But if Canadians don't force the government to take a second look at their blunders, we shall all grievously suffer, as our liberties are eroded, our friendships broken by further polarizations and force and bloodshed become everyday occurrences.