

The main target of American investment were the Canadian natural resources. Quebec abounded in these, and was naturally a prime target. The provincial government had made little effort to employ these resources or develop them for the people of the province. With little trouble, the Americans took hold of a primary sector of direct extraction — the entire pulp and paper industry, hydro-electric works, asbestos, gold and silver mines. The Quebecois became employees of the Americans, who used them to develop the resources, while receiving no real payment for doing so.

In 1926, for example, the pulp and paper industry grossed \$107 million. Of this, less than \$1 million were paid out in wages to the thousands of Quebecois. The Quebec provincial government collected a few thousand dollars in tax returns that went into road construction for the benefit of the same companies. That means that only 2 or 3 percent of that year's pulp and paper production went to the Quebecois who were the actual producers and owners of the province's wealth.

As Leandre Bergeron says, "This legalized, institutionalized robbery makes us slaves in the lumber yards and factories of our own country."

**WHEN QUÉBÉCOIS WORKERS** tried to organize unions to combat slave wages and exploitation of the resources, the Catholic Church organized counter-unions which could perpetuate existing conditions. Two such unions were the Confederation of Catholic Workers of Canada and the Catholic Union of Farmers. In both instances respect for the established law and order were emphasized.

Nationalism, backed by a fervent religious feeling, started to dominate Québec. It almost returned it to a feudal system, where the clergy defined the roles of the Quebecois and preached about the goodness of those roles.

This ultra-nationalism led to such leaders as Maurice Duplessis becoming premier in 1935. In 1937, he produced the Padlock Law, allowing the government to close down the business of anyone it suspected of wanting to overthrow the government or of harbouring "communist" ideas. A "back to the soil" philosophy was introduced to combat the economic depression.

World War II saw Canada again passing a conscription law, but this time a partial one for the defense of the country only. Quebecois agreed with the measure for they were willing to defend their country. This differed from the first conscription act when they were forced to go to war over someone else's quarrels and interests.

**ONCE FRANCE WAS DEFEATED**, Prime Minister King decided to call for full conscription. His 1942 plebiscite, was rejected in Québec. 71.2% of the province answered no; 85% of the Quebecois responded in the same way. The other provinces voted 80% in favour of this new conscription. The Quebecois simply did not want to be shipped overseas to be used as cannon fodder for the English.

King presented his bill to Parliament. He seemed to forget that it was the Québec votes that got his Liberals into power, and ignored the number of Quebecois who did not want his kind of conscription.

The law was passed, but King, fearing renewed violence in Québec on the 1917 scale, wouldn't immediately put conscription into force. It wasn't until late 1944 that he was forced by pressure from military leaders to drag non-volunteers into the fighting forces.

Window-smashing demonstrations and mass desertions by Quebecois from the army resulted. It was only the quick end of the war in Europe which saved the government from mass turmoil in Québec.

**THE CANADIAN POST-WAR ECONOMY** was in recession. World War II cost the country over \$25 million. To compensate during the change from wartime to peacetime economy more American investors were invited to enter Canada. As this was done, the vast profits from both the primary and secondary industries of Québec came into the hands of U.S. capitalists. The money that remained in Canada was used to build bridges and roads — to facilitate industrial transportation.

1949 saw the famous Asbestos Strike. It is an oft-used example to describe government complicity in corporation exploitation of the workers. The company, the Canadian Johns-Manville Co. Ltd., paid very little in taxes to the provincial government and shipped its asbestos to the U.S. Quebecois workers mined the asbestos but were paid low wages and suffered medical problems from dust they inhaled. Asbestos dust attacks the lungs, in particular.

The workers, disgusted by these conditions, went on strike. Union Nationale Premier Maurice Duplessis, at the request of the company, called in the Québec Provincial Police. Strikers were arrested and beaten, but the strike continued.

**BERGERON DESCRIBES IT THIS WAY:** "Johns-Manville, the big US capitalist company, exploits the Québec workers. To continue this exploitation, the company has to use the government it controls by means of the party treasury. It orders the government to put down the workers. Caretaker Duplessis orders the Provincial Police to beat up the workers. And the cops do their 'job' as they are told."

One member of the clergy, Bishop Charbonneau of Montreal, sided with the workers. He was subsequently shipped by the government to British Columbia. Duplessis, following a request from Johns-Manville, warned the clergy to watch their tongue if they didn't want to lose their privileges. Camille Roy, Archbishop of Québec, was appointed to mediate the dispute and he obeyed. The workers went back to work, with nothing settled.

Murdochville was the scene of another strike in 1957. The strike, against Gaspé Copper, owned by Toronto-based Noranda Mines, resulted in brutal police repression and the death of two workers.

In 1959 Duplessis died, leaving the province in an unsettled condition. The people were still living in the 19th century, while the corporation executives lived comfortably in the 20th century. They were hardly prepared for new premier Jean Lesage's Quiet Revolution, let alone the rise in nationalist sentiment.

**LESAGE ATTEMPTED TO INCLUDE** more French-speaking people in the economic life of the province, to create a home-grown capitalist class. This urban middle class later split into two wings; one prepared to collaborate with the English bourgeoisie — Lesage and later Robert Bourassa, the other pushing for still greater power for itself — René Levesque and the Parti Québécois.

Between 1961 and 1966, Québec saw the formation of a number of new political organizations, radical magazines and journals. Two of the larger political parties were the Parti Socialiste Québécois, and Le Rassemblement pour l'Indépendance Nationale, which drew 10% of the



popular vote in the 1966 provincial election. Newspapers such as Parti Pris, Socialisme, and Révolution Québécoise, opposed the province's capitalist and colonialist status.

**THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT** sweeping the entire population prompted the Lesage Cabinet to push for nationalization of Hydro-Québec. In 1962, the government established a Québec Investment Corporation, designed to draw outside capital into the province.

In 1963, symbols of Anglo-Canadian and American economic domination were bombed by Le Front du Libération Québécois. Another organization, l'Armée de Libération du Québec claimed responsibility for raids on federal armories.

Strikes, the emergence of the CNTU representing some 250,000 workers, and the continuing conflict between the federal and provincial governments over special status for Québec kept the province in the national spotlight for the next few years.

Despite the increasing awareness and radicalization of Québec students and the visit of French President Charles DeGaulle, 1967 was relatively quiet, particularly during Expo '67.

The Quiet Revolution had been underway for eight years, but workers and students failed to see any concrete changes. Militant strikes at Seven-Up, Dominion Tar, an explosive St. Jean Baptiste parade in Montreal, preceded the establishment of the Parti Québécois in 1968.

Under René Levesque's strong leadership, the PQ brought together the various elements of the independence movement, and tried to present a united front to the Québec people.

**QUÉBÉCOIS BEGAN TO MOBILIZE** in huge numbers in 1969. There were waves of sit-ins in high schools and CEGEPS (community colleges) in opposition to the capitalist educational system. English reaction erupted during disputes over Bill 62 and 63.

Bill 63 which came first provided increased French language instruction in English schools, in an attempt to make English students fluently bilingual. More overt action came with Bill 62, which called for the replacement of the hundreds of school boards on the Island of Montreal with 11 non-denominational regional boards. The Bill never became law, mainly due to the protests of the English school boards.

The provincial election of April 29, 1970 was the first one contested by the PQ. Election ploys designed to undermine the PQ, added to enumeration and voting irregularities (many of which have been substantiated), and the Liberals, under millionaire Robert Bourassa, swept to power.

The night before the election, there were reports in all the media, that millions of dollars worth of stocks and bonds were being transferred to Ontario in heavily armoured Brinks trucks. The ploy was soon discovered but not before the voters went to the polls.

The Liberals captured 72 seats with 44% of the popular vote, while the PQ obtained 7 seats with 24% of the vote.

**MANY QUÉBÉCOIS DECIDED** this was their last frustrating experience in electoral politics. A lot of them moved to the left, joining or working with more radical groups.

The FLQ, until then a small group not often understood by the majority of Québecois, decided to act. They decided that this radicalization, also reflected by 'the guys from Lapalme' and the militant Montreal taxi drivers, could be increased by a major direct action — the kidnapping of a foreign diplomat — Cross.

Then came the October crisis.

## The FLQ

Canadians who were not in close contact with the situation in Québec, saw the events of a year ago bring the Front de Libération du Québec into national and international prominence.

An analysis based on stories circulating at that time could conclude that this organization was a spontaneous uprising of a terrorist group. However, this was not the case.

The FLQ operated in Québec for a decade before last October. They are extremely cohesive and well organized, not an outgrowth of spontaneity.

**THE FRONT WAS ORGANIZED** by Georges Schoeters in 1963. It consisted of a widely varied group of individuals, mostly radical students. These people had grown under the Duplessis dictatorship, had seen Québecois workers attacked and often clubbed by provincial police over issues of better wages and living conditions, and were tasting the concept of Québec liberation.

The group spent two years dealing with the basics of their struggle and emerged with their first political act on March 8, 1963 — the firebombing of three Montreal armories. For the next two and one half months the FLQ lived up to their aim of "systematic sabotage". They bombed and defaced a score of symbols and institutions of exploitation: political buildings, armed forces installations, police facilities and English radio stations (not to mention the well-known mailbox bombings).

The established order reacted first in disbelief and then in anger, dispelling the movement cranks and communist sympathizers. In spite of the negative reactions of the "establishment press",

support for the FLQ grew among students and workers.

Then Premier Jean Lesage and his cabinet posted a \$50,000 reward for information regarding the terrorists. By June 7, 17 had been arrested and it was announced that "We've got them all."

**WHEN IT WAS REVEALED** that most of the "raceless communists" were students, some from very respectable families, public sympathy was aroused. La Presse editors Gérard Pelletier and Pierre Trudeau were two of the strongest voices insisting that the authorities observe proper legal procedure. The press in Québec was soon taking sides in the question of those arrested as well as the Front's arms.

In spite of this, most of those arrested received convictions (the ringleaders got ten years each).

Why was the FLQ unsuccessful at this time? Were they indeed a failure? They certainly brought the issue of foreign domination of Québec to a head. People, especially Québecois, were forced to think and decide. The Front's failure came because they were not well enough organized to achieve their stated aims, and attempted to do so too soon.

After this setback, the struggle was continued by the Québec left. A number of groups dedicated to the establishment of a political base among the workers were formed. They organized, picketed and demonstrated for the right of workers to unionize and obtain a living wage; they were beaten alongside the workers as the police attempted to put down their activities. After nearly three years of trying to work within the law, they turned to violence.

At this time the second Front de Libération du Québec came into existence. This time it was well organized and had a more definite composition and aim. Their targets were the factories where striking workers were being oppressed. They explained their reasons in news releases and phoned in warnings where lives were endangered. (These warnings were not always heeded: On May 5, 1966, a bomb explosion killed a secretary at LaGrenade after a warning was ignored.)

**THE TWO CHIEF FLQ PROPAGANDISTS** at this time were Pierre Vallières and Charles Gagnon. Vallières made such a good impression on Trudeau and Pelletier at Cité Libre, they chose him as one of their two successors, and later hired him on "La Presse". Since that time Vallières has spent most of his time in jails and is currently awaiting an appeal trial, a sedition trial and a seditious conspiracy trial. Gagnon did not fare much better.

The year 1968 saw Montreal Mayor Jean Drapeau's machinations bring increased unemployment and difficulties between labor and management. It also gave rise to a new FLQ. This group began attacks in May and in a few months had reached the plane of the labor-connected industrial bombings that were to become their trademark. Wherever working men demanded their rights, FLQ bombs added noise and urgency to their cause.

There was a lull early in 1969 when the police captured Pierre-Paul Geoffroy in the possession of explosive equipment. Refusing to betray his comrades, he pleaded guilty to 129 charges and was given a life sentence.

During the remainder of that year and the first half of 1970 the Front was quiet.

This was largely because the young people were attempting to change the existing system by legal, electoral means through the Parti Québécois. The attempt failed, disappointingly. It showed the people that such vast reforms could not be allowed through the system that presently existed.

Unemployment rose to unprecedented levels, the government encouraged more foreign investment and clamped down on strikes that would "erode the confidence" of investors... and the FLQ came alive again. Then came October/70.

On Monday, October 5, James Richard Cross, British Trade Commissioner in Montreal, receives an unscheduled visit in his comfortable mansion on the slopes of Mount Royal. The armed visitors identify themselves as members of the F.L.Q. and ask him to follow them.

Mrs. Cross phones the police. The news spreads like wild-fire. An earthquake could not have caused a greater shock.

**AN F.L.Q. CELL CALLED LIBERATION** tries to get communiques to certain journalists, but the police intercept them. At a press conference, Minister of Maintenance for Québec, Jérôme Choquette, spells out the F.L.Q. demands for the release of Mr. Cross:

1. an immediate stop to the police hunt
2. broadcast of the F.L.Q. Manifesto
3. liberation of certain political prisoners
4. their free passage to Cuba or Algeria
5. the rehiring of the Lapalme drivers
6. \$500,000 in gold ingots
7. identification of the informer on the last F.L.Q. cell.

**THROUGH THIS ACTION**, the F.L.Q.-70 seeks to polarize the social forces at play: on the one hand, the bourgeois class and the state apparatus it has at its disposal; on the other, the working class, the exploited class of Québec. The F.L.Q.-70 believes that in directly attacking the state apparatus by kidnapping a foreign diplomat, it can help the working class become conscious of its exploitation as well as the strength it can develop through unity to overthrow the bourgeois state.

But since this action does not spring from the very concrete struggle of the workers, since this action seems to be done more FOR the workers than WITH them, it awakens some support but can hardly lead to mobilization of any kind.

Yet this action shakes up the structure of Québecois and Canadian society. The existing social order is threatened. The caretakers have some work cut out for them. In this case, the Great Caretaker himself will take over. The federal government is to take all the decisions in this affair, and the sub-caretaker government of Bourassa simply has the job of carrying them out.

Arrests are made. Ottawa indicates it is willing to negotiate through a mediator. The LIBERATION cell replies that it rejects all mediation.

**OTTAWA THEN BROADCASTS** the FLQ Manifesto. Following this, the LIBERATION cell reduces its demands to two; an immediate stop to the police hunt and the liberation of the political prisoners.

On Friday, October 10, Jérôme Choquette whose Montreal office is in constant contact with Ottawa offers the kidnapers safe conduct to a foreign country in exchange for Cross' release.

Jérôme Choquette has barely finished speaking when Pierre Laporte, Minister of Labour and Immigration in the Bourassa cabinet, is kidnapped in front of his St. Lambert home. The Chenier cell that claims to be the author of this second kidnapping re-issues the seven original demands for Laporte's release.

These kidnappings relegate to the background the negotiations underway between the provincial government and the specialists on Medicare, as well as the municipal election campaign in Montreal where mayor Jean Drapeau is facing the rise

of a real opposition in FRAP (FRONT D'ACTION POLITIQUE), a coalition of citizen's committees of Montreal.

**THE GOVERNMENT TALKS** of possible negotiations to kill time and give the police a chance to discover the kidnapers' hideouts, but on Thursday, October 15, it rejects the FLQ demands. That same evening 3,000 people rally in Paul Sauvé arena to show their support for the FLQ.

Students are starting to move. Classes are boycotted in high schools, CEGEPS (community colleges) and universities. The FLQ manifesto is discussed everywhere, and everybody is following the match between the government and the FLQ with the greatest interest. Support for the FLQ is mounting among the masses of Québec. Thousands of Québecois support the goals of the FLQ although they may not endorse the means taken to achieve them. FRAP and the Central Council of the CNTU of Montreal come out with statements to this effect.

In the face of this mounting support, the government panics and imposes the War Measures Act on Québec. On Friday, October 16, Québec again witnesses the military occupation of its territory. The HABEAS CORPUS is again suspended and the police have the right to arrest and search without warrant as well as to detain 'suspects' for three weeks without charging them. More than 12,000 police and soldiers are at work. Over 340 Québecois will be thrown in jail in the coming days. The forces of repression behave like Hitler's SS troops. In the middle of the night, they knock doors down, wake up 'suspects' with machine guns in the ribs, brutalize them, cart them off like criminals and leave behind terrified women and terrorized children.

**AMONG THOSE ARRESTED** are Michel Chartrand, chairman of the Central Council of the CNTU of Montreal, Robert Lemieux, counsel for many political prisoners, Pierre Vallières, Charles Gagnon, Doctor Serge Mongeau, chairman of the Movement for the Defense of Political Prisoners of Québec (MDPPQ), poet Gaston Miron, singer Pauline Julien and journalist Gérald Godin.

The state is hitting back in anger. All FLQ sympathizers or supporters not in jail shut up and duck. The bourgeois state is taking its revenge for the scare it got. The bourgeois have to be reassured.

On Saturday, October 17, an anonymous telephone call gives the place where the body of Pierre Laporte can be found. Near the St. Hubert air-base the police find the body in the trunk of a car. Searches, arrests, dragnets, questionings continue.

Marcel Pepin, chairman of the CNTU, Louis Laberge, head of the FTQ (Québec Federation of Labour), Yvon Charbonneau, chairman of the CEQ (Québec Teachers Association) Claude Ryan, editor-in-chief of Le Devoir, René Lévesque, leader of the Parti Québécois, all beg the government to negotiate the release of Mr. Cross.

In spite of all that's going on, the municipal election of Montreal takes place on Sunday, October 25. The Civic Party of the Boss of Montreal, Jean Drapeau, exploits the situation to the full. Drapeau accuses FRAP of being a front for the FLQ. The trick works. His Civic Party takes all the seats while FRAP gets 15 percent of the votes, despite the imprisonment of a number of its candidates and Drapeau's terrorist campaign.

