

kidnappers were talking about the release and safe conduct of prisoners who had been condemned by normal legal processes not for their opinions but for crimes. Their release was certainly not in the cards. When planning for a safe conduct, what we were prepared to think about was the possibility of transport out of Canada for the kidnappers themselves.

Soon after the initial communique became public knowledge, the governments of Cuba and Algeria were advised, as a matter of courtesy, that their countries had been mentioned in these communiqués; from that point onward we kept in touch with the two governments.

At the outset we naturally concentrated our effort on what to make of the set of unacceptable demands which confronted us. The governments of Canada and of Quebec tried to decide to what extent these people could be influenced, what could be done to keep them from killing. The first stage was one where the main concern of the government was to keep a dialogue going while the situation was being assessed and work was proceeding.

Hence the broadcast of the manifesto as requested by the kidnappers and the offer of talks.

On October 10 when Mr. Choquette [Quebec Minister of Justice] outlined more fully the official position, he indicated among other things that the kidnappers would receive safe conduct in exchange for the release of Mr. Cross.

How were you able to feel the mood of the kidnappers?

There was a good deal of effort made to analyze very closely everything that came from them. There were signs in several of their communiqués that the so-called "Liberation Cell" was in no rush to kill Mr. Cross. The government had already made certain gestures, such as broadcasting what the kidnappers called the manifesto. Deadlines put on Mr. Cross' life passed without mishap and gradually one saw that these people might wish to take advantage of an opportunity to get out of the predicament they had created for themselves. Some of their conditions were soon toned down; for instance they declared that they would not kill for the sake of dollars. There was sufficient difference between the various communiqués to enable us to think that the situation was still fluid and that the kidnappers were not necessarily as unyielding as they had made out in the beginning.

Can you go into some detail on the safe conduct arrangements?

The only discussion we ever had with the Cubans and Algerians concerned safe conduct arrangements for the abductors. There was never any question

in our minds of their receiving prisoners.

For various practical reasons (geographical distance, presence of a Cuban Consulate in Montreal and of a resident Canadian mission in Havana), it was decided that these arrangements should be made with Cuba. We made a request that Cuba assist us for humanitarian reasons, and the Cuban government agreed. The safe conduct offer was then formulated in consultation with the Cubans.

Planning and implementation of the safe conduct involved complex consultations among federal and Quebec government authorities, Cuban representatives, the police forces and also the armed forces which provided transport facilities. There were rehearsals by the government personnel involved to ensure that the procedure worked out for the safe conduct would unfold without incident. The thoroughness and intensity of these consultations (including those with the Cubans) made it possible for the safe conduct to be effected as

smoothly as it was. Although it is not necessary to repeat all the facts that are already public knowledge about these events, one should not forget the major role played by the lawyer Robert Demers, who, consulting with all the authorities concerned, managed to secure the kidnappers' acceptance of the safe conduct procedure.

Safe conduct was offered in general terms on the 10th. The offer was repeated by Mr.

Bourassa [Prime Minister of Quebec] in his statement of October 15, which included a specific reference to Cuba. In commenting on the offer on October 16, Prime Minister Trudeau said "by offering the kidnappers safe exit from Canada we removed from them any possible motivation for murdering their hostages." A detailed description of the safe conduct arrangements was broadcast repeatedly on the 17th, before the death of Mr. Laporte. Even after the death of Mr. Laporte, Quebec sources promptly confirmed that the safe conduct was still available to the kidnappers of Mr. Cross. The object was to make sure that the kidnappers not only would know that this had been formally offered by the authorities, but that they would also be aware of all the mechanics of it, so they could assess the fairness of the proposal and know exactly how to proceed.

There is no doubt that the kidnappers received all this information immediately. They knew that the arrangements had been organized around the cooperation of the Cuban government. The Quebec and Canadian authorities early decided that it was essential not simply to make a vague offer of safe conduct but to be very concrete and even dramatic—to hold out to the kidnappers something which they could clearly visualize. The device of

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