

its displeasure with the failure of the RCMP to have so penetrated the *Front de libération du Québec*, that the two kidnappings (those of James Cross and Pierre Laporte) and the murder of the latter, could have been prevented or at least their rescue effected quickly. A top secret Cabinet memorandum dated November 20, 1970 was prepared by a committee of officials under the chairmanship of the deputy Minister of Justice. It went before the Cabinet Committee on Priorities and Planning of which the Prime Minister was and is the Chairman. The paper contained among other things a presentation of the problem. It is evident from the public testimony that the Force assumed that acts illegal or of doubtful legality could properly be performed by members in the course of their official duties.

The Cabinet Committee reached no decision on the problem. Instead the Prime Minister directed that the memorandum be re-written and presented to the Cabinet Committee on Security and Intelligence of which he was also the chairman. It too took no decision on this obviously thorny question. This reviewer has been informed by reliable sources that the problem still has not received the attention by Cabinet so obviously required.

Moreover, it was not until March 27, 1975 that Cabinet defined the mandate of the Security Service as revealed by then Solicitor General Fox in the House of Commons on October 28, 1977. Indeed, Fox tacitly admitted this failure by the government to address the problem of conflicting responsibilities when he said: "It is of very little help to transpose the dilemma to the level of ministers of government. The basic question remains the same."

In his final chapter entitled "Dirty Tricks in Vancouver", however, Sawatsky has most usefully put real flesh on the dry bones of the public testimony. The Commission heard public testimony from two Security and Intelligence officers, on the founding, purpose and operations of a unit in the directorate devoted exclusively to operations to counter and to disrupt subversive activities. Some of the evidence was released as the 'Checkmate File'.

It disclosed that after the Québec crisis in the fall of 1970, the government expressed its dissatisfaction with the performance of the RCMP in Québec, and did so in most emphatic terms. Mr. Fox, in his statement in the House of Commons on October 28, 1977, after revealing that in 1966 the government recognized the need for the Security Service to give greater attention to the separatist movement in Québec, especially to those in the movement who planned to use violence, stated: "Nonetheless, when the October crisis of 1970 struck, there was an immediate realization that information on groups responsible for the crisis had been wholly inadequate." Instead, the War Measures Act was proclaimed, unnecessarily as events proved.

The Force reacted by establishing a unit called Special Operations Group, not to collect intelligence

but to counter and disrupt subversive activities. The Checkmate File as made public described the Group's operations in minimal terms; no place or personal names were used. Only the barest outline was provided. One was described as planning to relieve a person of a file cabinet or box by grabbing and running with it while other Security Service members assaulted the person's companions. Sawatsky's final chapter fills in the gaps in the public account of this operation. He shows it to have been a thoroughly misguided, maleficent and totally unjustifiable operation. It reeks of the *Gestapo*.

The scene is Vancouver, October 1971. The persons to be assaulted were members of the Partisan Party, an openly Marxist group that had grown up in the atmosphere of the radical student movement of the late sixties and early seventies. The group was not following a policy of change by violence and other subversive means. Instead, its program called for spreading the Marxist gospel among community organizations to win more support for openly Marxist programs.

The plan for assault and seizing the file case was to be executed by three RCMP noncommissioned officers imported from Ottawa headquarters for this special purpose, a precaution to avoid the chance of recognition. Their cover story, in case they were caught, was that they were unemployed and looking for work in Vancouver. They had false names and carried no identification. It is important to note that the operation had no intelligence objective since the party had been thoroughly penetrated by informers and electronic means.

The operation was cancelled only when the local commander, whose consent was necessary for its execution, learned that the person to carry the file case was not only a woman but pregnant. The concerned citizen will be relieved to know that Special Operations Group has since been disbanded. This does not, however, preclude similar operations occurring under Security Service auspices.

The book is marred by some avoidable errors of fact. In his account of "the International Security Network", the author described Hamilton Southam as "publisher of the Ottawa Citizen". Not so. John Starnes was the son of a Montreal grain broker who was not 'wealthy' as Sawatsky claims.

Despite its shortcomings, however, *Men in the Shadows* can certainly be recommended to Canadians as a stimulating introduction to the history of Security and Intelligence work in Canada. A critical examination will have to await publication of the reports of the McDonald Commission.

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Sawatsky, John, *Men In The Shadows: The RCMP Security Service*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada Ltd., 1980