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Freeing James Cross

HOW SAFE CONDUCT FOR THE KIDNAPPERS WAS ARRANGED



When James Cross was kidnapped by the Liberation Cell of the Front de Libération du Québec on the early morning of October 5, the whole government was galvanized; and the agency immediately drawn into the middle of the maelstrom, Cross being a foreign diplomat, was the Department of External Affairs.

Within hours a Task Force was created which was to become the central non-police operation in the crisis. The Task Force encompassed many government departments but External Affairs provided the location and the head of the group—Claude Roquet, special assistant to the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs and a man little known outside the Canadian government until he flew to Cuba with the kidnappers on December 3.

This is an interview with Mr. Roquet and Allen Rowe, a fellow officer of the Department.

The Laporte kidnapping is not discussed in this interview because of the impending trial.

The Cross kidnappers' demands, to recapitulate, were that police investigations be stopped, that 23 prisoners (political prisoners in the language of the FLQ) be released and moved to Cuba or Algeria,

that press and television publicity be given the FLQ manifesto, that a group of workers in Montreal be rehired, that \$500,000 ransom be paid, and that public disclosure be made about a police informer.

Mr. Roquet said that all of these demands did not seem to the Task Force to be of equal seriousness or importance. As soon as the demands were received, he said, there was a series of immediate consultations between Ottawa and Quebec at various levels leading to the position announced by Mitchell Sharp, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, in the House of Commons on October 6. Mr. Sharp then confirmed receipt of the FLQ note, summarized the seven conditions which it contained, declared them a wholly unreasonable set of demands, and went on to say that he hoped the FLQ would communicate further with the authorities.

At what point was work actually started on the safe conduct as a contingency?

It was felt from the start that a safe conduct for the kidnappers themselves would not be too difficult a problem. It could have been arranged very quickly. But one must remember that the

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