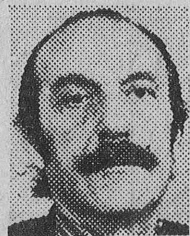


# Desbarats' biography probes paradoxes of Levesque

RENE doesn't like René, according to Peter Desbarats, author of the biography of the premier-elect of his province. At a recent literary luncheon to mark the Montreal launching of Desbarats' book, René, subtitled A Canadian in search of a country, Peter told Book Wise: "I don't mean he didn't like the book . . . it was the informality of the title that miffed him. He thought it too familiar, not serious enough. And I think that his objection may be indicative of an aspect of the character of the man."



## Book Wise

By John Richmond

"He's informal, as you know, but he wants his informality to be treated with respect. Giving just his first name as the title of the biography seemed to him, I think, indecorous . . . as though a biography, say, of the prime minister of Canada were to be titled Pierre . . . as though a biography of the mayor of Montreal bore the name Jean."

Peter started his book, published by McClelland and Stewart, in 1973.

"I worked on and off on the book because I had other commitments and I don't want to give the impression that I devoted years to its writing."

"Of course, I interviewed Mr. Lévesque, spending a week in the Gaspé with him and I also spoke to those who knew him or thought they knew him and to those who were knowledgeable with regard to his political career."

Peter, an outstanding jour-

nalist and totally unassuming about his intimate understanding of this province and the mood of this country (the quality of his book, The State of Quebec bears witness to this), spoke of some of his interviews.

"Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Lesage turned me down and as for Mr. Bourassa he granted me an interview on one condition: The interview was to take place out-of-doors, I was to use neither a note book nor a tape-recorder. I agreed and I still remember how, after the interview that was held on an airfield, I dashed off to my car at Olympic speed to jot down Mr. Bourassa's remarks before they skidded out of my mind."

That Peter was able to obtain so many interviews is a tribute to his integrity. "I had help from so many people," Peter said, "because they trusted me."

Did Peter find Mr. Lévesque a consistent character?

"Are any of us really consistent. The one consistent factor in his life has been his devotion to Quebec nationalism. And yet, as I wrote in the last sentence of the Introduction to René he might

be seen finally, by all Canadians, as a man who showed them how to live together.

"You know," Peter said, "that I've often wondered



Peter Desbarats

whether Mr. Lévesque is a separatist, I mean in the most pejorative sense of that word. There's a paradoxical character about his 'separatist' feelings."

In Peter's book the reader will find a great deal of new material about Mr. Lévesque . . . about his youth, his personality, his political involvements.

Had Mr. Lévesque seen Peter's manuscript?

"Yes," Peter said, "and he told me that my interpretation of Quebec nationalism was a fair and effective appraisal."

At this particular moment Peter's book is, as they say, 'a must.'

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**BREAKFAST** the other day with British journalist, Dennis Eisenberg, 46, whose novel, co-authored with Israeli journalist Eli Landau, is rapidly becoming a best-seller.

ain in 1954. I covered the Algerian war of independence, the Belgian Congo crisis in the days of Lumumba and spent a period as foreign editor on the Daily Herald and Sun—British papers, you know."

Book Wise did know.

Carlos has already sold 150,000 copies and is being translated into Japanese, Spanish, Turkish, Italian, Hebrew and Yugoslav. Its genesis is odd.

"I was walking along an Israeli beach about 18 months ago when a man I knew only slightly asked me whether a large dossier on terrorist activities, full of precise detail, would interest me. He told me the dossier substantiated the role the U.S.S.R. was playing in co-ordinating terrorist activities, training terrorists, and brainwashing them into serving the aims of communism."

Dennis asked why the dossier had been offered him.

"We know all about you," the man said. "And we think you would be interested in writing a book on the subject of international terrorism and its headquarters at the Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow."

"When I read the dossier I knew I had a scoop. Together with the military correspondent of the Israeli paper Ma'ariv, Eli Landau, we checked out the facts in the dossier. They rang true. They justified my feelings that wherever terror explodes in the world the nerve centre is in Moscow."

"We wrote the novel in three weeks."

Book Wise asked: Why write a novel when you have the material for an authentic piece of non-fiction?

"Well we had to protect sources and we knew that the information we had, presented in novel form, would stimulate interest in our themes."

Had Dennis ever visited the Patrice Lumumba University?

"No."

Is Dennis a Zionist?

but would also like to see a counterpart in the form of a novel listing CIA activities. By the way, Dennis Eisenberg is also the writer of a book called The Re-emergence of Fascism.

"When that book appeared," Dennis said, "it was praised in the Pravda as being the work of 'the champion of the people.'"

Book Wise doubts that Carlos: Terror International will receive the same encomium in any Soviet paper.

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**TWENTY FIVE YEARS AGO** a number of French women journalists founded Le cercle des femmes journalistes, an association to protect their interests, to exchange views and break through the male barrier erected around the typewriters of newspapers and other publications. The leading spirit of Le Cercle, Laure Harteau, was also insistent on the raising of standards of their profession.

To celebrate the occasion Les Editions La Presse recently launched Vingt-cinq la une, a collection of the experiences of 25 women journalists whose by-lines are very well known.

It is an excellent book — factual, encouraging and giv-

ing examples of the courage, tenacity and integrity of French Canadian women journalists.

The president of Le Cercle Mme. St. Amant told Book Wise that it has 150 members in Quebec and 25 in Ottawa.

Are male journalists allowed to belong to Le Cercle?

"No."

What are the present aims of Le Cercle?

"We hope to award grants to promising women journalists, and in 1978 we expect, in conjunction with the Quebec department of tourism, to hold a world symposium in Montreal of women journalists."

Book Wise was too much of

a poltroon to ask whether male journalists would be allowed to cover the event.

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**NEXT WEEK'S Book Wise** column will include an interview with Uwe Johnson, one of the postwar German writers who have established an international reputation.

## Jewish library plans 'happening'

The Jewish Public Library will commemorate an unusual musical "happening" Sunday, which has been taking place in Montreal for four decades.

It is the JPL's presentations of recorded classical music, for which Clarence Fink has been the commentator from the very beginning, when the library was still located on Esplanade Avenue.

On Sunday, Mr. Fink will be honored as

Pniewsky, a prominent Montreal contralto and artist, specializing particularly in portrait work.

Mrs. Pniewsky will be heard in Schumann's Frauenliebe und Leben, which she recorded some years ago.

Another feature of the event will be the presentation to Mr. Fink of a portrait done by Mrs. Pniewsky.