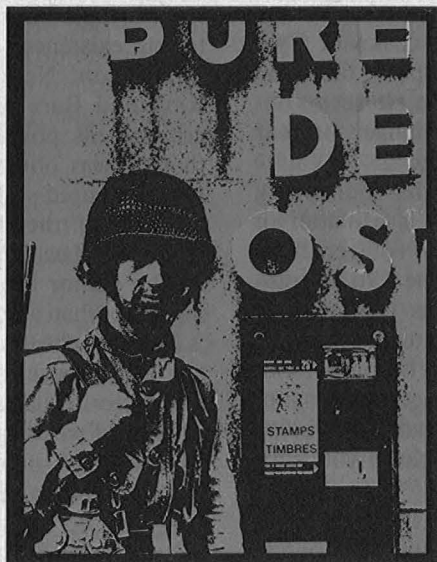


# Saturday Night



## IN OUR WEEKS OF ANGUISH

*A journal of October, by Peter Desbarats*

*In October, Canadians lived through three of the most frightening and ominous weeks in their history. During this period they were simultaneously informed and ignorant: informed, because there was more mass communication than during any previous crisis; ignorant,*

*because so many facts were hidden or unknowable and because rumours rushed through the national system like infections. This diary of the plague month tells how one citizen — broadcaster, journalist, Montrealer, Canadian — experienced the Great Crisis of 1970.*

**Monday, Oct. 5:** One of those awful days when I have to get up at 6 a.m. to fly to a meeting in Toronto. The morning is incredibly bright even if I'm not. Shortly after take-off in the DC-8 I can see the entire triangle of land between the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Rivers, from Montreal to Cornwall and almost up to Ottawa. On the lunchtime flight back to Montreal I meet Richard Comber of the NDP executive in Quebec and we talk

about the Ontario NDP leadership convention. We discuss the chances of FRAP (*Front d'Action Politique*) in the upcoming Montreal civic election and why the NDP is supporting FRAP. At the airport, I phone the CBC *Hourglass* office in the city to see if I'll be needed in the studio this afternoon. One of the researchers tells me about the Cross kidnapping shortly after 8 a.m. I think to myself, "He was taken from the house at gun-



**"The FLQ manifesto is . . . a fairly good catalogue of outstanding social and working class problems"**

point just as we were climbing over the Lake of Two Mountains." When something terrible happens, the thing that strikes you is the isolation of people. It seems incredible that in a moment of extreme danger or fear for someone, you should not feel *something*.

On the whole, my first reaction to the kidnapping is fairly calm. I don't know whether this is a matter of temperament or the result of eight years of recurring crises in Quebec. I have always felt that the 1963 bombings in Westmount inoculated some of us against later panic. We were scared at first because the terrorist attack was so indiscriminate. Since then, it's become more focused and better organized. More dangerous, I suppose, but still there seems to be less chance of being killed by the FLQ by mistake, merely because you happen to be standing beside a mailbox.

**Tuesday, Oct. 6:** The arguments start to break out at our daily *Hourglass* programme meeting at 11 a.m. Most of us, myself included, are responding to the situation with a fairly standard law-and-order attitude. One of our producers, who suggests that the government should meet the demands of the kidnappers, is fiercely attacked by the rest on the grounds that this will do nothing but invite further kidnappings.

One of the CBC producers and I have been working for months on a film history of separatism in the 1960s. The deadline is the end of October. CBC Toronto calls today and demands that the show be ready for telecasting next Tuesday. We argue that it isn't technically feasible and that, in any case, our show cannot run in the context of the Cross kidnapping. Our history is mainly about the political development of separatism and we have made a special effort to place terrorism in a correct relation to this. We feel that this balance in the programme will be distorted by the proximity of the Cross kidnapping. CBC Toronto disagrees. They say that the FLQ kidnapping has created renewed concern about separatism in English Canada, that we have a documentary about separatism, *ergo*, it must be shown as soon as possible. Toronto doesn't yet understand that this is more than just another FLQ bomb. They're still thinking of it as a "good story," as if it were some sort of super-duper bank robbery.

**Thursday, Oct. 8:** Compromise with Toronto. We will get the separatism show ready for telecasting a week from next Tuesday. I begin to write the Cross kidnapping into the script. On the daily *Hourglass* show, we use a film of a press conference last night by Robert Lemieux, the FLQ lawyer. Fairly strong adverse reaction from our viewers. I remember my last meeting with Lemieux, in a cheap restaurant in Old Montreal, when I was working on a story for SATURDAY NIGHT about the jailed FLQ writer Pierre Vallières. It had been an interesting session. Both Lemieux and I had reacted against our middle-class upbringing in west-end Montreal, but in different ways. My own "rebellion" was of longer duration and

highly personal. His was fresher and extremely political. We discovered that our marital histories were similar up to a point. It was clear that the accidental opportunity to become the lawyer for several FLQ members, a few years ago, had rescued Lemieux unexpectedly from the tedium of a routine marriage and a junior job in a huge "Anglo" law firm. It had given meaning and flavour to his existence. Now he was living in a cheap room in the Lord Nelson Hotel, down by the waterfront, the Raymond Burr of the separatist movement. You could criticize his political convictions but you couldn't deny that he was obviously getting a hell of a bang out of it all, compared with most lawyers in their twenties. At the end of the interview he had given me a copy of Vallières' *Les Nègres Blancs d'Amérique*, autographed by the author in prison. I put it away at home, wondering idly what a Louis Riel signature is worth now.

Tonight the FLQ manifesto is read over Radio-Canada in response to the kidnappers' demands. Apart from the rhetoric, it's a fairly good catalogue of outstanding social and working class problems.

**Friday, Oct. 9:** After the *Hourglass* show I go to a party in Old Montreal for the company of *It Ain't Easy*, latest "sex-oriented" film of a local company called Cinepix. I film interviews with several of the Cinepix people and have a few drinks. Arthur Voronka, producer of the film, dismays me during the interview by referring to me as a member of the cultural establishment. This has never happened before. I'm shaken up a second time, later in the party, when I discover that the young woman who is telling me all about her poetry is seventeen years of age, exactly twenty years younger than myself. There is no discussion of the kidnapping at all at the party. I leave at 11 p.m. and take a cab to a smaller, quieter gathering, mainly of people I know, for an expatriate sculptor home to arrange an exhibition. Here the kidnapping is discussed. The only French-Canadian among us is the most vehement in condemning it.

**Sunday, Oct. 11:** Wake up early and turn on the radio to receive the news of the kidnapping of Quebec cabinet minister Pierre Laporte. Laporte is a more vivid figure to me than Cross, whom I could just dimly remember meeting at some press function. I had interviewed Laporte many times. In 1964, I had picked him out as the likely successor to Jean Lesage (another wrong guess). He was often helpful in providing me with background information about the party. As an ex-journalist, he always knew what you were looking for. Earlier this year, at the Quebec Liberal leadership convention, I felt that events had conspired unfairly, from his point of view, to remove him from contention. All the years of hard work in the party meant nothing when the "establishment" decided to go along with the youth and family connections of Bourassa.

Even the kidnapping has an aura of pre-destined bad luck: he was standing unprotected in a field near his home, playing touch football with some young relatives, when the kidnappers came for him. I go to the office and work all day on the script for the "Separatism" documentary. Family Thanksgiving dinner at night in my mother's apartment, almost spoiled by a fierce argument with my twenty-two-year-old sister who claims to

**"It's animal-like, this feeling that if you just freeze, no one will notice you..."**

be sympathetic toward the FLQ. I accuse her of being inhuman for the sake of appearing hip. Also of stupidity. Rarely do I show this much anger — an indication that I'm not as calm underneath it all as I might like to think.

**Monday, Oct. 12:** The Laporte kidnapping is having a strong effect on everyone. It seems evident that this isn't like the old FLQ. It's much better organized and highly intelligent. During the day I finish the script for the "Separatism" documentary. I conclude the section on terrorism in Quebec with the observation that the FLQ has helped the growth of separatism in Quebec, is now stronger than ever, and poses a particular threat to the efforts of the Parti Québécois to achieve independence through the electoral system. I wonder if I would have reached the same conclusions only a few weeks ago? Probably not.

On the *Hourglass* show this evening we hold a discussion with a group in the studio, trying to re-create the type of conversation now heard all over Montreal. Paul Doucet, a young Dominican priest who now works as a freelance broadcaster, confesses during the show that if an FLQ member comes to him for help this evening, he isn't certain that he will turn him in. In fact, he thinks that he wouldn't. Phil Cutler, one of the best labour lawyers in the city, claims during the discussion that the FLQ has been blackmailing unions in Quebec for a long time. He says that people are shocked by the kidnappings only because they don't realize how the FLQ has been terrorizing certain elements in Quebec society. He doesn't present any examples, but his tone is forceful, vehement. After the show we receive many telephone calls congratulating Cutler and attacking Doucet.

**Tuesday, Oct. 13:** In the morning, I film segments for the "Separatism" documentary. The first location is the north-end Paul Sauvé Arena, where the Parti Québécois held its rally on election night last April 29. Now the arena is empty. There's a light coating of frost on the cement floor and a thin, cold haze above it. They are getting ready to lay down the first ice for the hockey season. I can feel the cold working its way through the soles of my boots as I stand on the cement to deliver two minutes of commentary into the camera. I long ago lost my sense of amazement at the unreality of this kind of journalism. Then we drive to City Hall. Overnight the area had been sealed off by the police but now it seems normal. We film the next bit, where I'm talking about the de Gaulle visit, on the lawn of the old Chateau de Ramezay across the street from the City Hall. The Chateau was the headquarters of American conquerors here in the eighteenth century. What a mish-mash of history! Claude Ryan, the director of *Le Devoir*, goes by on his way to lunch as we're filming. He calls out, "Tell the truth."

It's sunny and warm and it's impossible to believe at this moment that the lives of two men are in jeopardy.

It's hard to make the familiar surroundings jibe with a sense of impending doom. I now begin to understand how Europeans could go about their normal business in the summer of 1939 and how Jews could sit still even as the net was coming down on their heads. It's animal-like, this feeling that if you *freeze*, no one will notice you. There is an instinctive tendency to just sit and hope that the next blow misses you, or doesn't happen at all.

From the City Hall we go to Redpath Crescent to film the last bit in front of the Cross home. The street is empty except for a single policeman in front of the house and a parked car with a reporter and photographer from the *Montreal Star*. Now and then, a curtain moves in a window of the house and I can see a woman's face peering at us. Mrs. Cross? Her daughter? The policeman eyes us, then goes to a call box and reports. A florist's truck stops in front of the Cross house and a driver gets out, carrying the usual long box. The policeman opens it, lifts the flowers, shakes them and closes the box again. The driver goes up to the front door to deliver his mutilated bundle of ripped paper and trailing ribbon. I finish my commentary and the film crew packs up.

On the way down the hill, we pass a police cruiser coming up, probably in answer to the constable's call. Not very fast. On the show this evening we bring back the same group as yesterday. This time it doesn't work. Someone starts to compare Quebec nationalism with "Black Is Beautiful." Merrill Denison, a local historian, grumbles into his beard, "Are we talking politics or aesthetics?" A sociology professor from McGill claims that his class is surprisingly sympathetic toward the FLQ.

The audience at home is growing impatient with the group in the studio. Most callers say that they aren't representative. I receive many calls from people of European background offering to come on the programme and "tell the truth." They're frightened, and they want protection from the government, not theories from the intellectuals. One woman even tells me that a Hitler would be better than all this. On the late news tonight there is a film of troops taking up positions in Ottawa. Some of us laugh at it: the usual over-reaction of English Canada.

**Wednesday, Oct. 14:** This morning I'm interviewed on film by a correspondent for the Swedish broadcasting system. He wants to know how large the FLQ is and whether it has support among the masses. I try to give him my usual ten-minute capsule history of French-English relations since 1759. I've done this so many times since 1960 that by now it's almost too smooth.

At the programme meeting at noon, we decide to invite the McGill sociologist and his students to the studio this evening. We know that a majority of French-speaking students are sympathetic to the FLQ, and we suspect that this is true of many young English-speaking Quebecers. But the students can't make it tonight. At the last minute, we decide to run an interview that I had taped before the crisis (we're all now calling it *the crisis*) with Willie Houle, the national head of the postal workers' union. At the end of the interview, Houle confesses that his ambition is to write a book about "real people." "You writers and professors are too pessimistic," he says. "There are some happy people in the world today. Go into a tavern sometime." I go home instead, and for the



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first time since it all began I can't get to sleep. I lie awake until after 3 a.m., not worrying about anything in particular but feeling terribly depressed. Even an injection of about fifty pages of C. P. Snow doesn't help.

**Thursday, Oct. 19:** We put the McGill students on the show tonight and they say that they agree "theoretically" with the FLQ. The CBC switchboard logs more than fifty calls of complaint. I take a few of the calls after the show. Many of the viewers caught a trace of American accent when the professor spoke. I explain that he's an American who has been teaching in Canada for the past ten years. Doesn't matter. He becomes the scapegoat for many of the callers. Corrupting the minds of the young. (The students almost didn't get on the air. At

the last moment, we were told that a CBC directive from Toronto would prevent us from discussing the FLQ kidnappings on the show. We quickly patched together another line-up from items on film and tape, but received word to go ahead with the students about five minutes before air time.)

After the live show with the students, I tape an interview with Farley Mowat about sex in Siberia. (Our planned interview about Russia went down the drain a few days ago when Prime Minister Trudeau cancelled his trip to Russia.) I will have to edit the tape because Farley keeps saying B.S. and goddamn. Go back to the Ritz with Farley, where we have supper and a party. Farley says the FLQ doesn't matter. We're all doomed anyway. Living against nature. I discover, for a change, that I enjoy all this ecological talk: not as real as the FLQ. We all drink a lot and I have no trouble sleeping this night.

**Friday, Oct. 16:** For the first time since I became a journalist, I am working under a rigid set of directives. Internal policy within the CBC today, at least as far as we understand it, is that we can explain the War Measures Act, which the government put into effect early this morning, but we are not allowed to discuss its political implications. But at least we can still go on the air "live." On the French side, our counterpart show, *Format 30*, is now required to tape at 5:30 p.m., ninety minutes before broadcast time, so that the show can be carefully screened before it goes out.

This evening we do a lucid explanation of the War Measures Act with two law professors from McGill. One of them, known to me as a strong advocate of civil liberties, surprises me by supporting the government's decision in all but a few details. Support for the government in English-speaking Montreal seems to be about one hundred and ten per cent today. The soldiers are suddenly very much in evidence. There are four patrolling the CBC building on Dorchester Boulevard. A lawyer friend of mine says, "When I came out of the house this morning, there were two soldiers standing in front of a house a little way down the street. I haven't a clue who lives there, but I discovered that I liked the idea of the soldiers being there." CBC Toronto decides to postpone our "Separatism" documentary indefinitely. The producer who has been working on it sixteen hours a day for two weeks decides to go out and get drunk. My own day is complete when I read that the president of the CBC, George Davidson, has told reporters that he blames the CBC for feeding the tense atmosphere in Montreal.

**Saturday, Oct. 17:** I try to forget about it all for one day. We visit the Group of Seven show at the Montreal Museum. Lonely pine trees on the shores of Ontario lakes and the cool streamlining of Harris' Arctic coasts. It's Paradise Lost. For another nostalgic session we skip the usual Hungarian espresso cafés for a late lunch at Murray's. Toasted chicken salad sandwiches and plain ordinary coffee. Back to the womb.

**Sunday, Oct. 18:** A few minutes before 9 a.m., I get up and turn on the radio. CJAD is playing classical music and no commercials. That always means bad news. In a few minutes the announcer reports the death of Pierre Laporte the previous night. They found his body in the

**"Already the presence of soldiers in the city, unbelievable only a few days ago, is almost normal"**

trunk of a car near the airport at St. Hubert, the military field where they've been landing all the soldiers. That's the first reaction: "My God, right in the lap of the army. They can do anything they want to." And the car is the same one that Laporte was kidnapped in.

The police are beginning to look unbelievably inept, but that doesn't surprise anyone who knows what has been going on in the Montreal police force for the past ten years. In straight crime-solving statistics, it's the most inefficient big-city force in Canada, relatively honest (after Mayor Drapeau's crime-busting in the 1950s) but dumb and sometimes of doubtful loyalty.

At noon, we go to a friend's house for brunch. We are: journalist, artist, architect and electronics manufacturer, all with wives. At first we discuss the news reluctantly. The artist made the mistake of switching on the TV shortly after midnight and couldn't pry himself away from the set until after three in the morning. The first horrifying reports had indicated, incorrectly, that the body of Cross had also been found. In the early afternoon, a criminal lawyer joins the group and he obviously wants to talk about it. Everyone starts to speak at once. It lasts for several hours. We are all trying to comfort ourselves. We're trying to exorcise our fear by sharing it. It helps, but everyone is exhausted by the end of the session. The main feeling is that the security imposed by the War Measures Act is a temporary thing. The future seems foreboding. We walk home in the late afternoon through upper Westmount. The youngsters are playing football in the park between goalposts painted in the Westmount colours, but there are soldiers in battledress before many of the homes.

**Monday, Oct. 19:** The shock of Laporte's death seems to stun the city. It's still impossible to believe. But already the presence of soldiers in the city, unbelievable only a few days ago, is accepted as almost normal. You drive through the city at night and suddenly you see one, almost invisible, beneath a tree on someone's front lawn. No wonder that crime in the city has dropped to almost nothing. The streets have never been safer. Or more empty. You begin to hear stories of people who haven't been out of the house for two weeks now. On the news this evening, one of the television reporters is shown interviewing neighbours near the house in suburban St. Hubert where Laporte was kept for a week. "Didn't you notice anything strange?" asks the reporter. A young French-Canadian woman answers in accented English, "Well, the blinds were down all the time, and last summer the windows were always shut." Reporter: "Did you ever see anyone going in?" The woman says that she saw many men going into the house and, sometimes, a girl. Didn't she think that this was strange? "I thought it was some sort of . . . you know . . . brothel," says the woman.

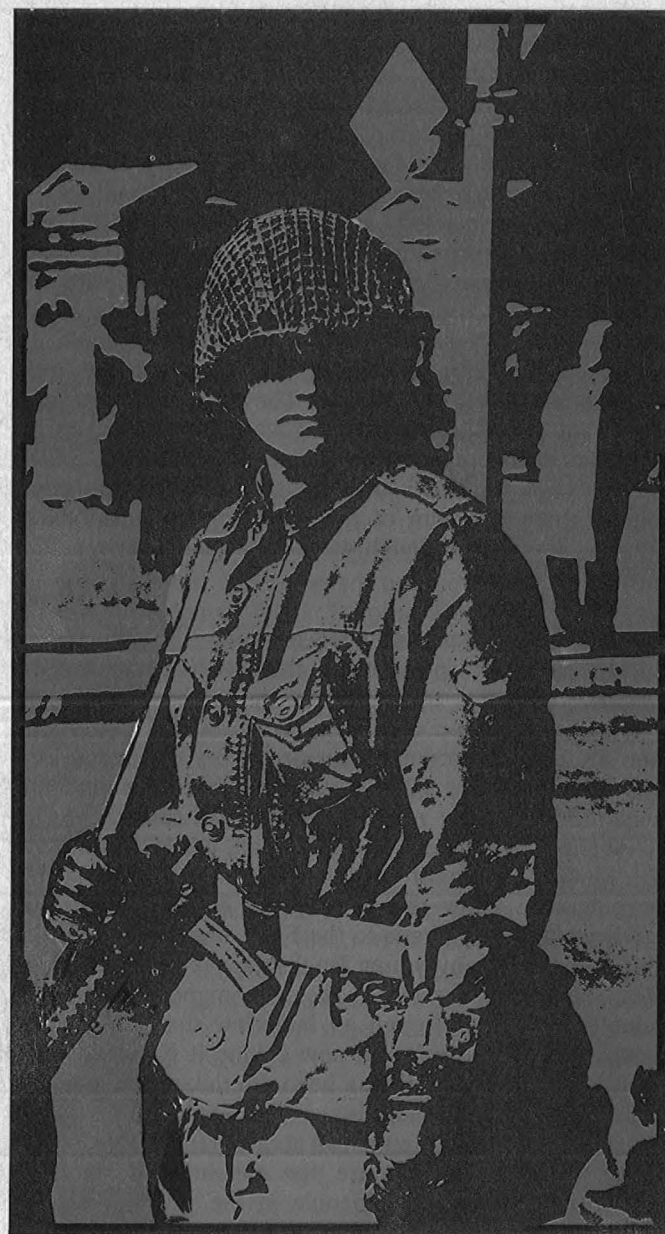
**Tuesday, Oct. 20:** I only have time for a soup-and-sandwich lunch at a hamburger joint across the street

from the CBC building. Two black musicians are eating at the counter. Afro dress and hair style. One of them sees an army truck depositing four fresh soldiers in front of the CBC. "Hey, man," he says, nudging his friend, "look at that: Vietnam." In the afternoon I interview architect Moshe Safdie at Habitat 67. He's just written a book about it. We film the interview on one of the upper balconies of Habitat with the city in the background. It's an unusually beautiful October afternoon, so warm that we take off our coats while waiting for the camera crew to load up. In the background, huge military helicopters are ferrying federal cabinet ministers from the airport to Champ de Mars behind the City Hall. They're being taken to the Laporte funeral. In the interview, we talk about the heady days of 1967, when Expo was going to change everything. Later, Safdie says that he has just returned from Israel. Headlines there gave a terrifying account of what was going on here. The spurious story of the woman in Hull who claimed that she was tortured by an FLQ cell aimed at women and children received huge coverage in Israel. "Going back and forth like this is getting to be too difficult," says Safdie, who now has Habitat-type projects in Puerto Rico and Israel. "A few days in Puerto Rico isn't a problem but it's usually a few weeks in Israel and a lot can happen in Montreal in two weeks. I never know what I'm going to come back to."

Today everyone is spreading detailed, ghastly rumours about tortures suffered by Laporte before his death. Every conceivable mutilation is mentioned and always on the best authority: a brother-in-law who works at the morgue, or something like that.

**Wednesday, Oct. 21:** As we gather for our regular *Hourglass* programme meeting at 11 a.m., there is a rumour that the police have visited the apartment of one of our researchers the previous evening. He was away at the time and, hearing about the raid, spent the night at a friend's place. However, he shows up at the meeting at noon. A few minutes after he arrives, there is a phone call for him. He returns to say that the RCMP want to meet him in ten minutes at a street corner about two blocks from the office. For the first time, the new powers of the police become tangible to us. There doesn't seem to be much point in calling a lawyer. We discuss waiting for the RCMP to come up to the office to claim him, but the gesture seems pointless. Nick decides eventually that he'll respond to the RCMP "invitation." We all make something of a game of it, but there is an undercurrent of fear. Two of the girls on our staff accompany him (after deciding that it looks less official than an all-male delegation). They return about ten minutes later to say that two plainclothes detectives were waiting for Nick in an unmarked car. They told Barbara and Margaret that Nick would be allowed to phone us in the afternoon. (He wasn't, but the police themselves called and asked someone to bring down some of Nick's clothes.) Most of us are not very worried about Nick (he has many contacts among the Left, but his credentials as a journalist are indisputable) but there is this feeling of utter helplessness. You don't know what's happening to him and there's no way to find out.

On the show this evening, I interview Rod Dewar, ex-host of the most popular English-language morning radio show in the city. On Monday, his employer at CJAD



Errol Young



"... all eagerly swallowing the good guys-bad guys propaganda dispensed by government."

interpreted the War Measures Act to mean that any criticism of the government could be construed as indirect support of the FLQ and therefore was illegal. After fifteen years with the same station (some sort of record in Canadian radio), Dewar quit. He says that listener reaction to his editorializing (which pretty well mirrored the NDP line in Ottawa) had been angrily unfavourable, by a ratio of nine to one. Small "I" liberalism is definitely out of fashion.

After the show, at an opening of an exhibition of sculpture by an old friend, I meet Tom Buckley, writer for the New York *Times* magazine. It's hard to find out what he thinks. He tends to scoff at the average North American's fear of violence and social chaos and is shocked when I tell him that one of our researchers has been picked up by the police. But he is equally disapproving when I explain that the researcher was a "committed" journalist. A local taxi driver tells me this evening that people are afraid to take LaSalle cabs since Cross was kidnapped in a car bearing a LaSalle dome light. He claims that patrons of the Playboy Club are ignoring a LaSalle stand at the front door and calling for Diamond taxis to pick them up at the back. The autopsy report on Laporte is released today and contradicts all the torture rumours. Many people refuse to believe the official report.

**Thursday, Oct. 22:** The morning paper contains Jean Marchand's incredible statement in Vancouver about FRAP being a "front" organization for the FLQ. This has to be one of the most obvious smears in Canadian history — and three days before the civic election here! I walk in the rain to McGill to interview Charles Taylor of the NDP for the *Take Thirty* show in Toronto. Taylor performs as requested: a clear exposition of the difference between separatists and terrorists for viewers in English Canada. It's the sort of thing you keep pushing at people these days on radio and television, because they're all eagerly swallowing the dangerously simple good guys-bad guys propaganda being dispensed by all levels of government. Too many people are being led to believe that "effective" action by the government is at last going to solve "the problem." But if you analyze this action, what have you got? Not much more than hundreds of arrests of people who already are being released from jail, in many cases, without having been questioned at any length. That's going to solve the Quebec problem? Along with unsubstantiated rumours about dark plots and secret conspiracies? For my own show, I interview Taylor about the Marchand statement. Taylor has been working for FRAP in the east end of Montreal, knows the organization well. He scoffs at Marchand's claim. Does this mean that Charles Taylor is a "front" for the FLQ? The whole world seems to be going crazy.

After the interview, the camera crew moves into one of the McGill auditoriums to cover a teach-in on the War Measures Act. The students refuse to permit us to film them. All up-tight about possible arrest if they speak

their minds too freely and can later be identified from the film.

On the show this evening I do the toughest interview I have ever done with Mayor Drapeau. He arrives in the studio at 6:30 p.m., accompanied by four or five police and plainclothes bodyguards. During the weather and sports news, he tells me that he has been up since 5 a.m., making the rounds of every radio and television station in the city. He looks tired but completely in control. He knows exactly what he has to do. When I ask him about Marchand's interference in Montreal politics, he says that Marchand has the right to speak his own mind. It's an astounding answer from a man who has scrupulously refrained from involving himself in politics at any level but his own. However, he sticks to it. You can't budge him.

He also does a masterful job of butchering FRAP all over again, and I can't stop him. FRAP has given him just enough ammunition. Its inability to respond to the crisis in an organized, disciplined way has left it at the mercy of Drapeau's instinctively deadly attack. I go so far as to accuse Drapeau of indulging in guilt by association (and that's pretty far, with him) but he's ready with more stories, all of them accurate about known members of the FLQ addressing FRAP campaign meetings. After the interview, he shakes hands with me. He knows what I've tried to do but he also knows that he's won, so it doesn't matter. In the make-up room, he talks on the phone to a CBC open-line programme, on the air at that moment, then rushes off to a French-language television station. I'm left in the studio to answer calls from viewers' complaining, with a few exceptions, about my hostility toward the mayor. A number of viewers tell me that they've had suspicions about me before but now they know I'm a separatist in disguise. The news room calls to say that there's been a threat against my life. But the caller sounded drunk so there's probably nothing to it.

**Friday, Oct. 23:** During the morning I receive a call from a man who identifies himself as a member of the "silent minority" in English-speaking Quebec. Voice of encouragement. I also receive a business call from a friend in Winnipeg who asks, at the end of our conversation, "Was there really going to be an insurrection in Montreal?" I tell him that I haven't seen any evidence of it yet. During the lunch hour I notice that there are several dozen soldiers in battledress surrounding the navy's downtown headquarters on Drummond Street. Someone quips, "The navy's discovered Cross and now they won't give him up to the army."

I go to the library of the Montreal *Star* to do research for the election-night telecast Sunday. One of the senior editors says, "At least all this is going to make it harder for us to adopt that insufferable moral posture in front of other countries." For some reason or other, it's now become possible today to make a few jokes and light-hearted observations about the whole thing. I don't know why. The situation is still pretty tense. But it's as if people are having to let go a bit. Three people on the *Hourglass* staff make a point of remarking how well they slept last night. I'm getting a fearful cold. Maybe this is my own way of slowing down.

**Saturday, Oct. 24:** This is the worst cold in years. I take it easy. During the afternoon I walk downtown,

"The drastic surgery . . . might be more than Quebec's delicate constitution can stand."

stop at the liquor store to replenish my supply. On the way out I meet a friend who eyes my large armful appreciatively. "Whenever there's a crisis, I feel flush," I explain. Actually, it's not all that funny. The "vulture" aspect of journalism — feeding on the tragedies of society — is something that bothers me more and more. But not this afternoon. I go to the Pam-Pam on Stanley Street for sardines on rye toast and cappuccino. There's a feeling in the city that life is returning to normal. Going back home, on Sherbrooke Street, a car with New York license plates pulls up and a beautiful full-lipped girl, black hair and freckles, ask for directions to "Bock" Avenue. It turns out to be Park Avenue. Then she decides that she and her friends really want to go to Cote des Neiges. I give her directions and then, as she drives off, kick myself for not asking for a drive up the hill. Put it down to slow reflexes due to head cold.

A few minutes later I meet a woman who works as a public relations officer for a large distillery. She is struggling up the hill beneath a load of Saturday shopping. I add one of her parcels to my own and we pant up the hill together. She seems to think that Quebec will finally return to its senses after all this. I tell her that we are witnessing the French-Canadian re-conquest of Quebec, that it's inevitable and that the only thing in doubt is the style and form of the operation. I tell her that the future of Quebec and Canada depends on the enlightened self-interest of *Québécois*, in which I still have a lot of faith. She looks as if she sees my logic and dislikes me intensely for it. Later on I hear that Nick is out of jail, just in time to head for his favourite tavern to enjoy the hockey game on television.

**Sunday, Oct. 25:** The cold reaches a peak overnight. This morning, I wonder if I'll be able to do the election telecast at night. But by noon I know that it's going to be all right. If only I can stop coughing. In the late afternoon I go through my usual pre-TV routine — shave, shower and "suining up" — and take a taxi to a book-launching party that Edgar Cohen is giving himself to celebrate his biography of Ninon de Lanclos, famed courtesan of seventeenth-century France. (Cohen is a semi-retired businessman, Leonard's cousin, who now employs his talents, at least part of the time, in writing and studying law at McGill.) Everyone is talking about a misprint in *The Gazette* which said that Cohen is working on a second book, also a biography of "another prominent lay." The party attracts several hundred people, everyone from Rabbi Stern to some of Cohen's fellow law students, who spend most of their time ogling his two beautiful daughters. I find myself taking my usual visual delight in Montreal Jewish womanhood . . . groomed, glittering, aggressive.

People at the party ask me if there is news of election-day trouble, but the question is almost a matter of form. A good deal of the nervousness of the past two weeks has already disappeared. I leave the party about six and take a taxi to City Hall. The driver, French-speaking,

moans about business even more plaintively than usual. Apparently it has dropped to near-zero; that's why he's working on Sunday. I have to leave the taxi at the barricade, a block from City Hall, and walk the rest of the way across Champ de Mars. I can see a soldier with binoculars inside the building, apparently watching me. At the door, I show my special pass. The police search my briefcase thoroughly. Upstairs, in the Hall of Honour, there is a fairly large crowd of journalists and police. The public isn't allowed.

One of the more exotic candidates for mayor, a "doctor of natural medicine," has somehow infiltrated and is giving interviews to all the reporters, who don't have anyone else to interview. The police suddenly pounce on him and hustle him from the hall. He wasn't wearing an identity card. But he comes back a few minutes later, straightening his tie and looking for more journalists with tape recorders. It soon becomes evident that Drapeau has a landslide. At 10:30 p.m., we interrupt our telecast for the Mayor's speech. He sounds more and more like de Gaulle. The people have answered . . . the people understand . . . the people don't follow false prophets . . .

For the first time that I can remember, the people are absent from City Hall on an election night. I think back to 1960, when a victorious Drapeau was carried into this same hall on the shoulders of the crowd, weeping with emotion. Now we need soldiers to protect the freedom of the masses . . .

The streets outside City Hall are empty. I know that most people think it's only a temporary aberration . . . a few weeks, at most. But I wonder. I don't think it's at all certain that French-speaking society in Quebec is withstanding successfully the stress of its sudden acceleration to the tempo of twentieth-century life. There seems so little to build on, sometimes nothing much more than the old veneration of strength and authority. Can Quebec build a new society on *that*?

**Monday, Oct. 26:** Three weeks since Cross was kidnapped. In the afternoon the BBC asks for an interview for *The World Tonight* — a nightly news show. I go to the studio in the CBC building about three. The first question comes over the line from London: "Do you think Cross is still alive?" I tell him that most people in Montreal now believe that Cross must be dead. Nothing has been heard from him for six days. The last question in the five-minute interview is the hardest: Do I think that the events of recent weeks will lead to an increase of extremism in Quebec? This is a question I can't answer now. The government has achieved its short-term objectives, I tell the interviewer in London. The terrorists are frightened and the majority of Canadians in Quebec and elsewhere are solidly behind the government's show of force. But in the long run? More than a hundred of the people who were detained by the police are now out of prison and spreading stories about the apparent futility of the police action. People are demanding to know more about the "apprehended insurrection" which so disrupted the normal political life of the country. I'm beginning to wonder if the drastic surgery by Trudeau, Drapeau and (half-heartedly) Bourassa might be more than Quebec's delicate democratic constitution can stand. In the long run, the results of the government's policy are, to a frightening degree, unpredictable. ★



# Poem for the End of the Revolution

DAVID HELWIG

The revolution is over  
and never began, though  
Winstanley dug up the commons  
and Nechayev (Agent 2771  
of the World Revolutionary  
Alliance — which didn't exist)  
killed the informer Ivanov  
in the name of a future  
which would not come  
for we never knew  
what time was, at least  
not well enough.

(Alone on a moving bus  
riding to Montreal,  
the city of soldiers,  
riding through a landscape  
of rocks, rivers and the warm  
colours of a dying year,  
I thought of the hands  
that closed the throat  
of Pierre Laporte  
and in the name of freedom.)

Marx said: "Time is  
a locked spiral, and freedom  
is knowing you were never free."

(As the bus drove into Cornwall,  
the houses were so heavy  
with the dust of life  
that it seemed to me  
I'd lived in every one.

And I found myself  
looking at the windows,  
the bare trees, grey sky,  
here at the edge  
of a strange town, remembering  
what it was like  
to be the child  
of ordinary people  
on an ordinary afternoon.)

And Tolstoy laboured  
for a revolution too pure  
to be touched by the hands of men.  
He said: "Time is not real,  
only love, only the Kingdom of God  
is real. And I am getting old  
and they will not give me peace."

(As we sat and talked  
high over Montreal,  
a woman's voice  
from fifteen floors below  
screamed wildly, angrily,  
but all we could hear  
were the letters FLQ.

My friend said  
that if he spoke French  
he would join  
Le Parti Québécois,  
but as it was  
he only wanted a divorce,  
a difficult matter  
since his lawyer  
was now in jail.)

The revolution goes round  
and round. A dance,  
the double dance  
of politicians and killers,  
dancing our history  
into melodrama.

(The next day I arrived  
in Fredericton where  
there was no-one  
I had ever loved.)

The question is, what  
was the question we could  
never quite remember?  
It had something to do  
with the past, the future;  
we say history, we say  
the revolution, we say  
what is beyond our being  
that will hold in itself  
childhood and death, work  
and what we've loved.

We, you, I, them,  
is, will be, was.

The revolution never began  
and is never over.