



## The 1963 manifesto

# 'A Message to the nation'

The Front de Liberation du Quebec has an action filled 10-year history. The group of revolutionary youth was started in 1960 by George Sheesters, a Universite de Montreal student who felt that the "time had come to sow in the province a spirit of independence."

The small group emerged from under the government of former Premier Maurice Duplessis, and there was a strong taste among university radicals for a state of liberation.

Too often they had seen French Canadian workers engaged in bitter, bloodshed battles with the police force of the province over the rights to strike for better wages and living conditions.

A number of sporadic bombings in the posh English suburb of Westmount sparked fear among the Montreal ruling classes but the revolutionary group then lacked training, discipline and money, and as a result, many of their attempts proved abortive.

Soon, however, the FLQ invoked strict disciplinary measures on those members of the group and the group became much more selective in its recruiting campaign.

What followed in the next four years were holdups of large banks, financial houses owned by English Canadians or Americans and large department stores, all of which have helped finance the organization against the English ruling class.

With the inflow of discipline, a firm revolutionary ideology and more financial backing, the FLQ has been able to extend its operations into cells technically free from each other with members not knowing the members of others. This cell network has made the work of the federal authorities an "almost unsurmountable task."

The terrorist activities of the FLQ first catapulted into the headlines in June, 1963, when eight FLQ members were arrested in connection with a wave of bombings which occurred that spring in and around Montreal, aimed at targets of federal institutions symbolizing exploitation of Quebec people.

Along with the bombings, the FLQ circulated to news media mimeographed statements with the slogan "Independence or Death", claiming responsibility for the bombings. They also circulated a highly rhetorical manifesto crystallizing the historical background of the struggle for independence in Quebec and pleading for a national revolution to free the province from Anglo-American domination and exploitation.

There have been other FLQ manifestos since then, including last week's which the terrorists demanded read over Radio-Canada last week to fulfill one of the minor demands for the return of the kidnapped hostages.

But that manifesto is detailed, specific and filled with local references which we feel would be lost on most readers outside the province of Quebec.

The 1963 manifesto is more general, and offers a capsule summary of the aims and aspirations of the FLQ, as well as some insight into the lengths to which they would be prepared to go to relieve their frustrations.

What follows is the complete text of the 1963 document:

### THE FLQ MANIFESTO

Patriots,

Ever since the second world war, the various enslaved peoples of the world have been shattering their bonds to acquire the freedom which is theirs by right. Most of these people have overcome their oppressors, and can today live in freedom.

Like so many others before us, the people of Quebec have reached the end of their patience with the arrogant domination of Anglo-Saxon colonialism.

In Quebec, as in all colonized countries, the oppressor fiercely denies his imperialism and has the support of the so-called national elite which is more interested in protecting its own entrenched economic interests than in serving the vital interests of its nation. This servile group persistently denies obvious facts and raises up endless problems, aimed at distracting the hard-pressed population's attention away from the only vital problem: INDEPENDENCE.

Despite all this, the workers' eyes are daily becoming more attuned to reality: Quebec is a colony!

We are a colonized people, politically, socially, and economically. Politically, because we do not have any hold on the political instruments necessary for survival. Ottawa's colonial government has full powers in the following fields: economic policy, foreign trade, defence, bank credit, immigration, the criminal courts, etc. Moreover, any provincial legislation may be repealed by Ottawa if it so decides.

The federal government undividedly stands behind the interests of the Anglo-Saxon imperialists who both constitutionally and in practice play an overwhelming part in ruling the country. The government therefore serves to maintain and indeed to intensify the inferior position of Quebecers. Whenever a conflict arises between Anglo-Saxon and Quebec interests, it is Quebec's interests that must yield. In the military field, we had conscription; demographically, the pressure has always been towards anglicization; internationally, priority has in all our diplomatic dealings invariably been given to the English-speaking. Hence, the Ottawa government has always, without exception, favored Anglo-Saxon interests to the detriment of Quebec. At times, even force was used. Quebec blood then flowed for the greater glory and profit of colonial financiers. Quebec is thus certainly a colony in the political sense.

It is also economically a colony. A single statement will serve to prove it: over 80 per cent of our economy is controlled by foreign interests. We provide the labor, they bank the profits.

Socially, too, Quebec is a colony. We represent 80 per cent of the population, and yet the English language prevails in many fields. French is gradually relegated to the realm of folklore, while English becomes the people's working language. The Anglo-Saxons' contempt for our people is as high as ever. Expressions such as "Speak White!", "Stupid French Canadians", and others of the same ilk are common in Quebec itself, thousands of people who can speak nothing but English are unashamed to exhibit this in public. The colonizers see us as inferior beings, and have no compunction about letting us know that they do.

Here is the historical background of the problem: On 8 September 1760 Monsieur de Vaudreuil, Governor of New France, signed Montreal's capitulation, thereby sealing its fate. Shortly thereafter England was to take official possession of the French colony and of the 60,000 French Canadians living in it. This was the beginning of a long story of Anglo-Saxon domination over Quebec. Ours was a rich country, and London's capitalists were already counting future gains. In order to establish undisputed Anglo-Saxon supremacy over Quebec, the 60,000 French settlers had at all costs to be anglicized, by one means or another. It seemed easy enough at the time, for what did this handful of men represent beside the crushing power that was then England? But, suddenly, the American Revolution broke out. For a time it became important to go easy on the French Canadians. Yet the efforts at anglicization were not thereby set aside. One day, the English Canadians went too far; and the 1837 rebellion flared up. It was drowned in blood. Then came the Durham report. Since it was proving impossible, said Lord Durham, to absorb the French Canadians by force, let us go about it in other ways: slow assimilation takes longer, but it is just as effective. Union having proved a failure, Confederation was devised - assimilation's perfect tool - its very name embodying a falsehood. Since then, all of Quebec's efforts to get recognition for its people's basic rights have been thwarted by colonialism.

What if today, in 1963, there are over five million of us? Assimilation continues to make its insidious inroads. While in 1940 our numerical strength came close to 40 per cent of the Canadian population, today we only represent 28 per cent of the total. This, we are told, is the only thing that counts. Time plays into their hands, and well do they know it.

The colonizers have, however, overlooked one factor, an important one. Its force is now becoming evident. Patriots' eyes have opened to the fact that they are being colonized, exploited, dominated. They have also become aware that only immediate and total action can break their chains. They know this has to be action in which there is no room for petty personal gain, for the corrupt outlook which seeks utopian compromises at any cost, or for national inferiority complexes. Such weaknesses have to be thrown overboard.

Quebec patriots have, over the centuries, had their fill of fighting for trifles, of squandering their vital energies upon the winning of illusory gains that forever need to be reconquered.

Only think of our jobless people by the hundred thousands; of the grinding poverty of our Gaspé fishermen; of the many farmers all across Quebec whose annual income barely reaches \$1,000; of the young people in thousands who are too poor to continue their studies; of the thousands who cannot afford the simple medical care; of the misery of our miners; of the widespread insecurity of job-holders! This is what colonialism has brought us.

Quebec is also suffering from the unjust and paradoxical situation which can best be illustrated by a look at two neighboring communities: Saint-Henri and Westmount. Here, we find the typical poverty and overcrowding of a French district; there we see an English minority living in shameful luxury. Our progressive economic enslavement, and an ever fuller foreign control, will not be arrested by provisional, short-sighted solutions. Patriots say NO to COLONIALISM, NO to EXPLOITATION.

However, a situation cannot merely be rejected; it also needs to be corrected. Our situation amounts to a national emergency. It is now that