

# The Quebecois must choose

short, it would condemn the people to the defensive, to withdrawal and fear. It would in fact guarantee what it pretended to fight: repression. Worse yet, it would condemn the entire population to lose any form of initiative, to undergo passively the counter-attack of those in power and to depend upon the good-will of the authorities.

The army of the established power should not be provoked in the name of the people when one does not oneself have an army in which a people can recognize itself, be consciously integrated, and by a collective fight be led toward the conquest of political power and the realization of its social objectives. And for such a people's army to organize, develop, and conquer, the people must first objectively have no other choice but to take up arms, must be conscious of it, and must have developed within themselves a political and military leadership fully capable of assuming the heavy historical responsibility of guiding the entire people toward certain victory.

## THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

In *Revolutionary warfare: methods* (1961), Che Guevara stresses that it should never be excluded a priori that a revolutionary change in a given society can be started by an electoral process. All the better, it should be added, if this change can be achieved totally by this process. Armed struggle as a revolutionary strategy and mode of mass political action cannot be initiated or developed if the masses think they can achieve their aspirations by a given electoral process. The revolutionary is he who can find a strategy and tactics adequate for the existing objective situation and who is capable of foreseeing those that will be appropriate when a change in the objective situation radically modifies the balance of forces facing each other and, at the same time, imposes new modes of action upon the masses, be it to take hold of political power or to defend what they have already conquered.

In the present situation it would be an impardonable error for the partisans of a real social revolution in Quebec to underestimate or, worse, to deny what the Quebec people can gain by the strategy which has been defined by the Parti Quebecois and which, for the first time in Quebec, allowed broad sectors of the population to participate directly in a process aiming for the conquest of power and by this collective practice to understand the mechanisms, implications, limits, dangers and possibilities of it: briefly, to become aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their means of action, and of the importance of their unity and solidarity in the face of what threatens them indistinctly and seeks to divide them to better dominate and exploit them.

Who will deny the merit of Rene Levesque's assertion that in Quebec 'the struggle for national emancipation must be carried on in the classic disorder of a social revolution' and that we must consequently find the means of leading the national liberation struggle and the social liberation struggle 'while not forgetting that without national freedom we shall have neither the maturity nor the instruments needed to carry through any social, economic or cultural renovation which is not illusory or truncated?' (Le Devoir, 29-11-71).

If it is not in the interest of the majority of Quebecois that the trade

unions now set up a second mass party which would distinguish itself from the PQ only by its phraseology and which, moreover, by its opposition to the PQ would constitute a brake to the political and social emancipation of the Quebec collectivity and to the historical process that is taking place, is it in the interest of the Quebec people that the FLQ continue the action undertaken since 1963 which served as a detonator in October 1970 to the crisis we all know of?

Is it in the interest of the Quebec people that the armed agitation of the FLQ as practised in Quebec for the past eight years, continue to affirm itself mythically as armed struggle when in reality it has none of the fundamental characteristics of a real armed struggle, and objective conditions do not permit and do not require the development of such a struggle in the current scheme of things?

The answer is a categorical no.

## WHY THE FLQ SHOULD NOT EXIST

The intellectual conviction that an armed confrontation will be inevitable one day or another (even if it is based upon a very profound analysis of the total situation) can justify recourse to armed agitation a method of revolutionary political action in the present situation, modified by the October crisis. If ever it was justified in the past, as a revealer of a condition of domination and of a resolute will to get out of it, armed agitation, just like the unarmed agitation of those who confuse the breaking of a window with a conscientious, positive, and mobilizing political action, is today counter-revolutionary.

Now that the balance of forces appears to us such as it is objectively, armed agitation, far more than a simple political error or a simple 'aberration' has become an ideal means of 'trapping' and of sabotaging the development of the liberation struggle:

1) by denying the objectively liberating character of the electoral process that the Parti Quebecois practises (and not as it is practised by the parties of the dominating class) at this stage of the liberation struggle;

2) by removing the mass struggle content from the armed struggle that the Quebec people may one day be constrained by the adversary to join in collectively to defend their freedom, and by caricaturing their mode of

political action, which becomes indispensable for a people or a majority only when the peaceful processes of the conquest of power are forbidden by dictatorship, military occupation, and total repression;

3) by denying the necessity for the masses to exhaust all democratic means before passing to an armed method of political action, to a guerrilla strategy which requires of them the greatest sacrifices at the same time as a very high degree of political consciousness and combativity (see on this subject the first pages of *Guerrilla warfare* by Che Guevara, hardly suspected of opportunism!)

4) by hiding the character of prolonged struggle of any liberation process by a romantic presentation of a possibility or an imaginary outlook of revolution or of short-term victory;

5) by dividing the efforts of those who are fighting the same enemies and who can hope to conquer only by constantly strengthening their unity;

6) by substituting any longer strategic vision with the incoherence of an agitation practised for itself and for the 'kicks' it gives the delinquent who lies dormant in each of us;

7) finally, and crowning the rest with an incalculable irresponsibility, by furnishing the established authorities the chance they seek to promulgate the War Measures Act so as to apply a strategy of force (of armed force) against the Quebec liberation movement as a whole, through the expedient of a decisive counter-offensive ostensibly led against the FLQ 'revolutionary war', if possible before the Parti Quebecois acquires the legitimacy which would render it politically invulnerable not only through the widespread electoral support it could gather from the Quebec masses these next years, but also and above all by the conscious integration of these masses to a daily struggle on all fronts: political, economic, social and cultural.

For all these reasons, which are founded neither upon opportunism nor upon sentimentalism and still less upon fear of action, but only upon an objective analysis of a concrete situation, there is no need to fear the clear and vigorous affirmation that the FLQ, 'symbol' rather than liberation organization and guerrilla 'myth' rather than popular resistance, no longer has any reason to exist today.

## NATURE OF ARMED STRUGGLE

No one has, or has ever had any real power of decision within the FLQ, since the FLQ has always been only a gathering of groups or cells having little or no communication between them and having in common only the choice of the three letters FLQ. There were in the sixties efforts to build an FLQ organization. They all failed, not because of the FLQers themselves, but because of the objective conditions which, while favouring armed agitation, did not allow and still do not allow the setting off, implantation and development of that form of mass struggle that armed struggle is.

The confusion between armed struggle (which is a mass struggle requiring a certain number of conditions which do not currently exist in Quebec for its birth and development) and armed agitation has led to these abortive efforts to structure the FLQ and all these contradictions painfully fought by those within FLQ who, while rejecting anarchism and individual terrorism, have long believed that an armed struggle could develop from a highly structured 'core' of revolutionaries, independently of the particular objective conditions that this path to armed struggle imposes

when, by other means, it has no chance of developing or of achieving its political and social objectives or even of existing.

It took them a long time, a very long time, to realize, at the very heart of their practices and of their contradictions, that an armed struggle can only be a mass struggle conducted by means other than electoralism when the latter cannot function normally or cannot function at all, when the masses can gain nothing from it, when they are fully aware of this and when they have nothing to lose and everything to gain by engaging in a revolutionary war. We are not yet at that stage in Quebec and no FLQer, I think, would say the contrary.

But every FLQer has often believed, on the other hand, that although Quebec was not in a revolutionary situation, an organization of armed struggle could, all the same, form and implant itself while expecting that the situation, once it became revolutionary, would mechanically allow it to develop. They were forgetting that an organization is not only born from the revolutionary will of those who dedicate themselves to the task of building it but above all from a real need of the masses in a given situation and not in just any situation.

And that is why there has never been an FLQ organization as such, but only cells or little groups, limited in number, personnel and means, without organic links between them, without a directing 'core' and without real strategy. Cells or groups, products of the Quebec soil and products of the first stage of the liberation struggle, from 1962 to 1968 (year of creation of the Parti Quebecois), during which the first phase of the rapid development of the political consciousness of the Quebec masses expressed itself chiefly in and by agitation.

Since 1968, this continual development of political consciousness has overtaken the stage of agitation to engage in that of mass organization within a structured party, the Parti Quebecois, which has become today (but not necessarily for eternity) the main political expression of the Quebec masses and at the same time its strategic political force. It is thus to the PQ that comes, at this stage of the struggle and perhaps for several years, the responsibility of political leadership of the mass struggle for the interests and aspirations of the masses which have created it and without whose support it could neither develop nor last as a mass party.

