

THE  
STRATEGY  
OF THE  
REGIME

One of the political implications of popular agitation today is an enormous potential for rupture. That is not enough, however, to set off a real revolution but leads to confrontations which those at all levels of power will oppose with increasingly tough repression. If the Parti Quebecois did not exist and if it did not make the effort to channel this growing discontent toward a precise objective (independence and in-depth transformation of economic and social structures) capable of mobilizing the immense majority of Quebecois, the counter-offensive would already have had tragic and harmful consequences for the development of the liberation struggle (which is a revolutionary struggle) and thus for all Quebec workers. The risks of general demobilization and of a return to the Great Darkness (the Duplessis era-tr.) would then be considerable. This could be a decisive victory for Canadian colonialism and American imperialism.

That is why those in power are more and more openly seeking a confrontation which, they hope, will furnish the occasion to crush the Quebec people by force by destroying the organizations they have created to liberate themselves: the PQ, the trade unions, citizens' committees, etc. The October 1970 crisis gave those in power a 'general repetition' of this classical scenario, at a moment when the organization which had through its action set off the crisis had no means of sustaining a long offensive against the power-holders nor to offer the Quebec people the strategy and the areas which would have helped it resist oppression, and still less the method of revolutionary action which would have helped it reach its goals: the conquest of power and the construction of a new society.

Had it not been for the joint action of the Parti Quebecois, the trade unions and all of Quebec's progressive forces, the 'permanent danger of reaction and back-tracking which is always floating over a society in transition' (Rene Levesque, *Le Devoir*, 29-11-71) would have become concrete and the FLQ would have had to assume before history the odious responsibility of having offered the exploiters of the Quebec people the dreamed-of opportunity to strike it a blow which might be fatal.

The irreparable has fortunately not taken place, because those in power were taken by surprise, took too much time to react, and did not really succeed in resolving the contradictions which exist between the different levels of decision-making and within each of these levels. But the crisis will nonetheless have furnished them the chance not only to 'frighten people' but also and above all to resolve some of its own contradictions by achieving, around the central State, the sacred union of exploiters against the Quebec population.

If ever the FLQ were to offer the power-holders a new chance to promulgate the War Measures Act against Quebec, all levels of power would this time be prepared, while the FLQ for its part could once again have no control over the process it would have set off. It would, as in October 1970, have to rely upon the PQ and the trade unions to resist the repression exercised against everyone. In

# 'armed aggression', Vallieres rejects



introduction by n auf de maur  
last post news

MONTREAL — Pierre Vallieres, Quebec's leading ideologue of revolutionary violence, has made a dramatic decision to abandon the FLQ and "armed agitation".

The move has been generally well received by Quebec's opposition forces, and reflects the growing desire for unity of the left. His announcement, delivered in a long analysis published by the Montreal daily *Le Devoir*, comes at a time when progressive groups — labour unions, citizens' committees, students and unemployed — are beginning to band together, pledged to work for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism.

Vallieres' designation of the Parti Quebecois as the "party of the masses" and the only alternative to the present system, raised some eyebrows in the radical left. But others, notable trade unionists, say Vallieres is merely hastening the creation of a veritable coalition "front populaire" needed to liberate Quebec. The PQ, they say, seems the only viable institution to contain that coalition.

The analysis actually one chapter of a soon to be published essay entitled "The urgency to choose" states Vallieres' belief that FLQ violence can now only serve to bring on repression against other groups and organizations which are the actual opposition forces.

"In Quebec", he says, "there can be no doubt that armed agitation has nothing to do with armed struggle, which is mass struggle."

The FLQ, a splinter group lacking cohesiveness, means of control and, worse, mass support (as opposed to popular sympathy) has no junction, Vallieres says, since Quebec is not in a revolutionary situation. This situation doesn't exist since all the other means liberation, particularly the electoral struggle of the PQ, have yet to be exhausted.

Since October 1970, the 'FLQ menace' has become a political argument which more and more easily justifies clubbings, search warrants, bugging, promulgation of anti-demonstration by laws, exceptional laws, grand army manoeuvres throughout Quebec, rumours of plots, conspiracies, imaginary selective assassinations, frame up political trials, etc."

The authorities, he says, use this repressive process not so much against the FLQ but against those it knows to be the real threat: the PQ, the unions and citizens' groups, The War Measures Act of last year was directed against these organizations.

Within hours of *Le Devoir's* appearance on the street, all copies had been snapped up and the great debate on the merits or demerits of Vallieres' arguments had begun. It should be remembered that Vallieres was an intellectual and a political force in Quebec even before he embarked on a FLQ course in 1966. In the late fifties and early sixties he had been an associate of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Gerard

Pelletier, Michel Chartrand and others arguing the future of Canada.

When his analysis appeared on December 13, many on the radical left were deeply incredulous, and they still are. Some people refuse to believe the document is authentic.

Vallieres, who has spent four of the past five years behind bars, failed to show up for trial last September, and announced through an FLQ communique soon after that he had gone underground. At the time, there was speculation among radicals that he had been kidnapped by a police group, similar to the Brazilian police's "death squad."

Some disillusioned radicals, mostly far out CEGEP students, believe that the document is forgery or that Vallieres was somehow forced to write it. But those who know Vallieres dismiss such theories.

Charles Gagnon, Vallieres' long time revolutionary associate and prison partner, agreed with the argument against "armed agitation" but denounced the call to rally behind the Parti Quebecois.

"Pierre Vallieres," he said, "doesn't know anything about the class struggle... his position is objectively reactionary."

Far from rallying behind a "bourgeois party", claimed Gagnon, the working class must build a new, revolutionary, but legal party.

Vallieres' argument in favour of the PQ is intended to prevent the opposition forces in the province from dividing themselves along "national and social" fronts.

Any such separation, he says, "constitutes in reality a division within the same mass struggle, and would compromise its chances for success and reinforce the present regime."

The desire for unity, something Quebec's opposition forces have always lacked, is so strong that it appears most revolutionaries will come to accept Vallieres' new position while the rest of the left welcomes it.

Within days of the statement, the Louis Riel cell of the FLQ issued a communique renouncing its own use of violence and hailing Vallieres as "the thinker of the Quebec revolution."

Reaction from the Parti Quebecois, naturally, was more restrained.

PQ leader Rene Levesque praised Vallieres for his "courageous gesture" and "lucid reflection", adding that he hoped it would help to bring about a more peaceful climate, amenable to democratic change.

*Le Devoir* publisher Claude Ryan, who printed the document on almost three full pages, said Vallieres' self-criticism also contains certain lessons for the authorities.

"If the call of Vallieres is heard," he wrote, "the established power will no longer be able to fall back on a phantom to justify its own abuses and impotence. It will finally have to face up to its real adversaries, in democratic debate."