

## **James Cross**

Taped memoir of (a) his experiences as Senior Trade Commissioner and head of the British Government office in Montreal in 1968-70 and his kidnapping in 1970 by a terrorist group, the FLQ; (b) the work of the Trade Commissioner Service (pp 22-28).

Annex A, Security, p 20

Annex B, War Measures Act, p 21

### J A M E S C R O S S

I am James Cross commonly known as Jasper and these tapes record the events during my period as Senior Trade Commissioner and head of the British Government office in Montreal. I arrived in Montreal in February 1968. While my post was primarily one of economic affairs and commercial promotion it was clear from the point of my arrival that politics was going to form a major part of my concerns. The situation in Quebec at the time was extremely interesting. Since the conquest in 1759 the French Canadians who formed the vast majority of the population in Quebec had maintained an uneasy relationship with the rest of Canada. The Quebec Act of 1774 had guaranteed them their language and religion (a concession unusual in the middle of the eighteenth century). Immigration from France stopped immediately after the conquest and the French Canadians found themselves surrounded by an increasing number of non French speakers, firstly people from the British Isles and then as the nineteenth century progressed immigrants from central and Eastern Europe. They reacted in the first instance by the highest birth rate ever known in a white people but gradually the balance of power shifted more firmly to the non francophones in Canada. Many attempts were made particularly at Confederation to retain some balance towards the French Canadians but these were gradually overtaken by the pressure of economic events. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that all the leaders of French Canada had left at the conquest and the population grew in on itself with the church and the land as its sole support. Thus French Canada did not take part in the great economic advances which swept North America from the middle of the nineteenth

century onwards. For bright young French Canadians the only outlets were the law and the church.

In French Canada and particularly in Quebec there developed almost a colonial regime in which the political masters delivered the vote to national political parties in return for patronage and the economic advances were left to the non French. This trend was exacerbated from the middle 1930's onwards when the vast expansion of economic activity resulting from the Second World War brought increased manufacturing and development of natural resources to Canada mainly with American money. As a result the dominant economic forces in Quebec became either US dominated or English Canadian controlled and the French Canadians found themselves as the low men on the totem pole. It used to be said that in any large building in Montreal the proportion of French Canadians decreased as you rose to the top floors where there would be found a statutory French Canadian perhaps as Personnel Director.

In addition to the inevitable economic trends the Quebec situation was made worse by the dominance of the Union Nationale under Duplessis from the 1930's onwards. He ran a traditional old style political system with patronage as his main weapon and preserved the traditional French Canadian values.

All this changed with the election of the Liberal Party under John Lesage in 1959. What became known as the quiet revolution took place. The whole of Quebec society the law education business was opened up to the forces of the modern world; in the economic sphere this meant a great advance in opportunities for French Canadians using state owned businesses like Hydro Quebec as the spear head. But as so often when restrictions are lifted there is a general expectation which will not necessarily be met by democratic means. Thus from 1962 onwards there emerged a revolutionary terrorist movement in Quebec called the FLQ. Their objective was to break the "colonial" hold on Quebec by violence. They were mostly associated with students or unemployed teachers in Montreal but curiously enough two of their leaders were foreigners, one from Belgium and one from Hungary. They made themselves known through a series of terrorist incidents throughout the 1960s with raids on banks, attacks on arms stores, bombings of federal building particularly military armouries. Several people were

killed. The police and the security forces reacted fairly rapidly and a number of the active terrorists were arrested and sentenced to long periods of imprisonment. In Canada generally the demands of the French Canadians for parity in the Canadian political system were recognised as a valid claim and through the 1960's there were a number of attempts mainly through the Committee on Bi-Culturalism to try and produce a system whereby French Canadians could feel happy working right across Canada. This however was far too slow for the extremists who were not interested in participation and wanted an independent and anti capitalist Quebec.

My first introduction to the violence that was to come was at the St John Baptiste Day Parade in 1968. This is the Quebec National day and is usually marked by processions and floats through the streets of Montreal. On the reviewing stand that day was Pierre Trudeau who had just been elected leader of the Liberal Party and who was a convinced and vocal Federalist. American Consul Harrison Burgess and I attended with our wives. Both of us were to meet terrorism again within two years. The Parade was marked by demonstrations against Trudeau ending with bottles being thrown at the reviewing platform.

Over the next couple of years there were a series of terrorist incidents the most important being the bombing of the Montreal Stock Exchange. In the summer of 1970 I went on leave in England and returned in mid summer. I learned then that there had been an attempt to kidnap Harrison Burgess our American Consul but that the police had raided a farm house near Montreal captured the intended kidnappers and seized a quantity of documents including the demands that they intended to submit. These included the release of a large number of so called 'political' prisoners, the payment of a ransom and the reinstatement of certain workers who had been dismissed under a privatisation contract. (The same demands were to emerge a few months later with the addition of a demand for the name of the informer who had given the group away.)

Though Harrison Burgess was protected by police there was no general warning

to consular officials in Montreal that any further incidents were expected. In fact, when the new American Consul, General Topping, arrived later that summer no special protection was given to his house. (See Annex A).

October 5th was a typical bright Montreal Autumn day. My wife and I were facing a busy week with a number of important engagements including a visit from the President of the Confederation of British Industries for whom we were organising certain functions and we were discussing the week ahead as I walked between the bedroom and the bathroom dressing. I then heard a ring of the doorbell and was surprised that anybody would arrive that early in the morning. My wife suggested that it was probably Hydro Quebec come to read the meter so I took no further notice. I then heard raised voices but did not pay much attention as our maid was inclined to speak loudly sometimes to her small child. The next thing I knew was as I was walking back towards the bathroom dressed only in shirt and underpants. A man came through from the opposite side holding a gun and said, 'Get down on the floor or you'll be fucking dead'. I backed into the bedroom lay on the floor and he then made me turn over onto my face and puts handcuffs on me. Our Dalmatian dog was sitting on the bed beside my wife and started to growl and he told her that if she let the dog move he would shoot it. He then called out another man who came up the stairs into the bedroom carrying a sub machine gun and shepherding the maid and her daughter in front of them. The first man then took me into the dressing room beyond the bathroom put my trousers on and shoes and slipped a jacket over my shoulders. He then led me back through the bedroom. My wife said "you must let me say goodbye to my husband" and came over and kissed me goodbye. They tore the phones out of the sockets beside the bed and told my wife that she must not phone anybody for an hour. I was then taken downstairs where there was a third man also armed. We went out through the front door and there was a taxi sitting outside the house. The only other person I could see was a gardener collecting leaves on the far side of the road. I was pushed into the taxi and shoved down between the front and back seats and a rug thrown over my head. Then we drove for about five to ten minutes and stopped in what was clearly some sort of garage or workshop. I was taken out, made to stand against the wall with my eyes closed and a gas mask with the eye

pieces painted black was placed over my head. I was then taken back and pushed into another car in the same position between the seats and we drove for possibly fifteen to twenty minutes. We finally drew up in what was clearly the garage of a house. I was taken out, led upstairs the handcuffs were transferred from behind my back to the front and I was put lying down on a mattress in a room where I was to spend the next fifty nine days. My gas mask was removed and a hood placed on my head. I asked them what their intentions were and they said I would have to wait and see. Later that morning they read me their manifesto which included the demands for the release of political prisoners etc. as had been demanded for Harrison Burgess. If these demands were not met I would be executed within forty eight hours. On hearing this I said, "In that case I must compose myself for death." During the whole day the radio was on most of the time and they were listening avidly to the various reports coming in. Sometime later in the day following a call to a radio station, messages from the kidnappers were found at the University of Montreal. These listed seven demands to be met "In order to preserve the life of the representative of the ancient racist and colonialist British system". It gave the authorities until noon on Wednesday i.e. forty eight hours to submit. That afternoon the Quebec Justice Minister made a statement outlying the ransom demands. These, as I have mentioned, were similar to those for Harrison Burgess early in the summer including the release of twenty three "political prisoners", the provision of an aircraft for their transportation to Cuba or Algeria, five hundred thousand dollars in gold bars, the reinstatement of some postal drivers who had been dismissed as a result of privatisation, the name of the informer who had helped the police apprehend the earlier cell, the publication of the full text of the FLQ manifesto and the cessation of all police activities.

The next few days presented a picture of some confusion; I think it took authorities in both Quebec and Ottawa a little longer to recognise the seriousness of the demands and in the first instance it appeared that the Quebec Government were taking the lead with Prime Minister Trudeau refusing to answer questions on the subject. In spite of this the premier Bourassa announced that he was carrying on with a business promotion visit to New York on the Thursday and Friday. On the Tuesday evening a message was delivered to a radio station which contained a

personal letter from me to my wife and repeating the demands that the FLQ requests be met in full otherwise, "we will not hesitate to do away with J Cross." On Wednesday there was a further communication from the FLQ including one from me dictated of course by them, asking that their demands should be met. There was still no clear response from either Quebec or Federal Governments. On Thursday the first step was taken when the FLQ manifesto, a crude polemic attacking every institution in Canada and Quebec and abuse for politicians such as Trudeau and Bourassa was read by a po-faced announcer on Radio Canada's television network. On Friday 9th the Minister of Justice asked for my kidnappers to provide proof that I was still alive and well and a letter containing the message which I had been asked to sign was delivered to a radio station. Saturday the tenth, Choquette the Justice Minister of Quebec came on television and radio just before 6:00pm and said that the kidnappers' demands would not be met but they offered to provide them with safe conduct to a foreign country in return for my release. He also promised to examine the cases of those "political" prisoners to see if parole or remission of sentence would be justified.

During the whole of this week my condition had been static. After the first day or two I was allowed to sit in an armchair for most of the day but still handcuffed. My hood was adjusted so that I could watch television during part of the day although I never saw my captors. Arrangements were made for me to be provided with some pills for my blood pressure for which my wife had appealed on television. The television and radio were on constantly and members of the group were frequently going out to bring back newspapers which they read avidly for news of their exploits.

After Mr Choquette had made his statement I asked them what they were going to do with me . They replied that they were going to hold me for a few days "pour baver la police", to taunt the police. In a few minutes the news came on radio that Pierre Laporte the Minister of Labour and Deputy Prime Minister of the Quebec Government had been kidnapped. He had been playing football outside his house with a young nephew when four men drove up in a car, bundled him into it and drove off. This changed the whole situation for whereas I was a virtually unknown foreign diplomat, Pierre Laporte had been a major figure in Quebec politics for the past twenty years. All attention was now focussed on

his fate.

The next week was then concentrated on the cell holding Pierre Laporte. On the Sunday there were three communications from the cell including in the evening a long letter from Laporte to Bourassa drawing attention to the number of people who were depending on him and urging that the kidnappers' demands be met. It's well to point out here that all public messages by either Laporte or me were dictated by the kidnappers and accepted as the only means of communication with the outside world. On the Monday morning a letter from me was discovered and the Government then proceeded to open negotiations through an intermediary named Demers. The next few days saw an astonishing rise in support for the FLQ's demands coming not only from old FLQ militants but also from students and the trade unions. On Wednesday 14th a message from my cell was found indicating that contact had been made between the two and that their joint demands were that the prisoners should be sent to Cuba or Algeria and thereafter Cross and Laporte would be freed. The same day there came an appeal from a number of leading Quebec figures including publishers and labour leaders. While offering their support to the provincial Government they clearly favoured an exchange of prisoners for the hostages. On Thursday 15th Trudeau met with opposition leaders to seek a solution to the situation. He got no general support and on that evening troops were called out in support of the forces of law and order in Quebec. At this point they were only carrying out guard duties and protection in support of the police. That evening there was a rally at the Paul Sauvé Arena. This was originally organised by the opposition party in the civic elections but was taken over by a large number of FLQ supporters including LaMieux the lawyer negotiating for the FLQ, Michel Chartrand a leading nationalist labour leader and several well known FLQ supporters. I was watching the event on television and it did seem at that point as if a very large number of people in Montreal were supporting the aims and objectives of the FLQ. In the early hours of Friday morning (the 16th) the government passed the War Measures Act which, for the first time in peace-time, imposed a state of war in Canada. Immediately a large number of FLQ sympathisers and supporters were rounded up together with a number of other people whose connection with the movement was to say the least slight. Friday evening Trudeau came on television

and said that the Government would not give in to these demonstrations and attempts by a small group to force its will on the majority by violence. We were listening to this on television and immediately after he'd finished I heard the woman in the group (presumably Louise Cassett Trudel) say, "Laporte est mort", Laporte is dead. (For details of the events leading up to the War Measures Act see Annex B).

The following day was reasonably quiet with no great activity that I could see. Then in the late evening watching television, news came in that there was something strange happening at St Hubert Airport to the east of Montreal. Shortly afterwards one began to see the television cameras arriving on the scene. In the early hours of the morning the trunk of a car which was parked there was broken open to reveal the body of Pierre Laporte. It was then revealed that a telephone call to a radio station earlier in the evening had given this news. Thus the journalists arrived almost as soon as the police. The rest of that evening or early morning was chaotic. Shortly after the announcement that Laporte's body had been found there was an announcement that my body had been found at Rawdon near Quebec. This was naturally an appalling piece of news since I feared that my wife might be watching. I wanted to get up and shake the television set and scream "I'm not dead! I'm not dead!". Finally I think even my captors took pity on me and gave me some aspirin or something to calm me down. The following morning they allowed me to write a letter to my wife.

Before we continue the rest of the story I might describe the conditions under which I was held during the first week. As I mentioned I began by being handcuffed then after a day or so these were changed that two handcuffs linked together with cloth to avoid them fraying my wrists were attached. I was allowed to sit in an arm chair for most of the day and watch television or listen to the radio or read news papers. While these conditions were not terrible onerous it was clear that there were other measures to be taken if I should prove recalcitrant. For example, there were bolts fitted to the floor which could be used to chain me down and there were all the implements for gagging and other methods of restraint. Accordingly I decided that the only way to survive

was to go along with the kidnappers and obey their orders.

The next six weeks were into a fairly steady routine. The first few days there was the drama of Pierre Laporte's funeral and the surrounding interest and excitement. Also reports of the various police raids and arrests of those suspected of FLQ sympathies. Mayor Drapeau fought his municipal election and swept the opposition (suspected of FLQ sympathy) from the field. My own position sank into one of inertia. The kidnappers refused to discuss their next moves with me but one evening I heard a number of them talking in another room and one returned to give my guard the news. I could not hear the full gist of his statement but I clearly heard the word 'indefinitely'. The routine was that I usually got up about 10 in the morning, was allowed to wash and go to the lavatory, sometimes to shave although the woman in the party was reluctant to allow me to do so. Then I returned to sit in the chair facing the television set and spent the rest of the day there. I would either read, watch television when they had it on, listen to the radio or play innumerable games of Patience. Another means of occupying my mind was to go over holidays or things I had done in the past, for example, I began to retrace in my mind the walk of about three quarters of a mile which I used to take to school as a small boy. In the beginning I could barely remember the details, but after a few weeks I could probably have described every blade of grass on the route. Food usually consisted of toast and coffee in the morning, two pieces of toast, one with peanut butter. In the evening there was some sort of a mess, sometimes soup sometimes a Chinese meal or some sort of mess up. The food was not very adequate and in fact I lost 22lbs in my eight weeks incarceration. After the excitements and dramas of the first two weeks in captivity culminating in the terrible night when Laporte's body was found the remaining six weeks were very much a period of stagnation. I followed the same routine getting up late watching television, reading or playing patience during the day and going to bed very late at night after the last television programme had finished. My selection of reading was a curious mixture, on the one hand there were the revolutionary manuals such as Valliere's on the wrongs of the French Canadians, 'The Wretched of the Earth' by Franz Fanon the Algerian psychologist who was a guru of the Algerian revolution and a few miscellaneous works on the revolutionaries of the

1960's. On the other hand there was a very good selection of early Agatha Christies in French and it was surprising how good many of them were to read again. One curious book they supplied me with was an early work by Jules Verne about the French Canadian patriots of 1837. I believe that, in addition, to his science fiction work he also went through an anti-British period when he wrote works about British imperialism in Canada, India and Ireland.

In the first two weeks I had been interested in their political ideas and their objectives and we had had a certain amount of discussion but after La Porte's death I felt that I no longer wanted to pursue these subjects and we really sank into our two solitudes. The great problem throughout was that I never knew what was going on behind me and it would have been a disaster for me to have turned my head and seen any of my captors. This was sometimes very difficult to avoid if a sudden noise happened behind me or somebody spoke to me. The only major events of those weeks were first an occasion when they sat me on a box (supposedly containing dynamite) took certain pictures of me which were later released to the press together with a letter from me (dictated of course by them) and a letter to my wife. It caused rather an unpleasant incident with my captors because they had spelt the words prisoners in English with two N's (as in French) and I had not corrected it. The press took this up as suggesting that I was trying to pass some sort of code message. As, of course, I was being held in north Montreal it could have been an attempt to convey information but, of course, I had no idea where I was. Following press commentary on this they were quite hostile to me for a couple of days, practically the only occasion on which any really nasty incidents arose.

I'd already adjusted my mind to getting through the period up to Christmas and was beginning to think that I might possibly have to last through the whole winter. At the beginning of December there seemed to be a little more activity around with people coming and going and discussions about the amount of money they had which suggested that they were finding it difficult to keep going.

The 2nd December was a day much as usual. I noticed that there did not seem to be so many people around but this was not unusual as they sometimes left

for a few hours. This evening they came and put handcuffs on me which was the first time this had happened for a number of weeks. I asked what had happened and they told me that the police knew where I was and had arrested two of their comrades who had gone out during the day and not returned. Later that evening all the lights in the apartment went off and at that I was taken from my chair, led into the passageway between the rooms and handcuffed to a door handle. In this extremely uncomfortable position where I could neither sit nor stand I spent the rest of the night. They clearly expected an attack during the night and on one occasion began to compose a message of defiance to be thrown out of the window. When they had finished drafting this somebody said, "We must add our slogan 'nous vaincrons'" meaning 'we shall win'. At that absurdity of three men defying the whole of the Canadian security services we all burst out laughing. Dawn came. I was allowed to stand up and move around the corridor. They remained on the alert. At some time in the morning the negotiator appointed by the Federal Government, Mr Mergler, a lawyer who had represented FLQ members in the past, came and knocked on the door. There was considerable dismantling as they had wired the door with explosives against attack. He came in and as his first question asked me the name of the bull terrier we had when living in Delhi. This had been agreed by my wife as a codeword. Interestingly enough the full title of the story from which the name is drawn is "Garm a hostage". Then followed two hours of negotiation. The government proposal was that we should all go to the EXPO site where a building had been designated as the Cuban consulate for the day. I would remain there under the supervision of the Cuban Consul while the kidnapers and their families were flown to Cuba. As soon as they arrived in Cuba I would be released. They were extremely suspicious of all this and suggested that as soon as they got outside the building they would be mowed down. Mr Mergler and I pointed out that they could hardly do this if I was among them. Finally they agreed and towards 1:00pm we went down into the basement and climbed into the battered old car in which I presume I had arrived two months before. The back of the car was covered in newspaper to prevent a shot being taken. I got in the back with Lanctot and Carbonneau the taxi driver and Seguin were in the front. Carbonneau was extremely nervous and as we drove out of the garage scraped the wing of the car. When we got outside into the bright sunlight it was an astonishing sight with hundreds of police and soldiers

lining the streets. Mergler climbed into the front of the car and we started this terrific ride behind police outsiders across Montreal. The back door of the car was shaky and at time as we went round corners I was worried that Lanctot would fall out so I hung on to him. Finally we crossed the long bridge to the Expo site, pulled up outside the then designated Cuban Consulate. Bill Ashford, my information colleague, was there waiting for me and we went into the building. I turned to one side, my kidnappers to the other and I never saw them again.

I had to remain in the Consulate then until about midnight. I first talked to my wife in Switzerland and then to the High Commissioner in Ottawa. I spoke later to Mr Trudeau and to Mr Bourassa the Prime Minister of Quebec. Food arrived, unfortunately nobody had thought to provide any drink, a great deprivation after two months without alcohol. At 6:00 the kidnappers left; their families having been collected at the airport and then Mr Charquette (the Minister of Justice) arrived, then my daughter came, then later in the evening Mr Bourassa the Prime Minister. I stayed there until midnight when I was driven to the Jewish General Hospital (my GP was a consultant there) where I was weighed, tested and spent a peaceful night. The following day I had further tests, then a long session with the police recording my impressions of the kidnappers and went to the office to see the staff. On Saturday morning early we drove to the airport and I made a short speech before flying to England together with my daughter. On the plane I gave a long description of the whole affair to Jim Davy - one of Mr Trudeau's aids but alas he had failed to switch his tape recorder on. When we landed at London my wife came on board to meet us and we descended to meet the press. After a brief interview we went by car to Dorney Wood, the Foreign Secretary's country residence where we spent a quiet weekend. This then is the main gist of the story but it may be helpful if I fill in some background points.

### **1.The intellectual background of the FLQ**

The kidnappers claimed to be Marxist/Anarchist but I could find no trace of deep intellectual thought of either of these movements. I think their two main inspirations were the sense of oppression felt by many French Canadians and expressed in Valliere's book 'The White Niggers of America'. Secondly, the influence

of the Algerian psychologist Fanon. Fanon's philosophy is that a colonised people can only achieve independence through the blood of the conquerors. Not a very pleasing prospect when you are described as one of the conquering race. There was a certain amount of influence from the various movements of the 1960's which swept the United States, such as the SDS, Black Panthers but I do not think they had any strong intellectual connections. There was later evidence I believe that the French government were offering some sort of subsidies.

## **2. Survival**

The questions I've frequently been asked is how one manages to survive such circumstances. My only answer is that I do not think that anyone knows until they have been through the experience itself. My own technique was that in the first forty eight hours when I heard the manifesto and the statement that I would be executed within forty eight hours if the demands were not met was to decide what my extinction meant. I thought through what the disappearance of Jasper Cross from the world would mean and declared that, although I'm not a religious man this was not the end of things and there would be some future existence. This, I think, was an important point of reference because whenever things went bad in the future I was always able to come back to this baseline and achieve peace of mind by regarding it.

## **3. Relations with the kidnapers**

Another question which is frequently raised is the 'Stockholm Syndrome' where the victim becomes associated or identifies with the objectives of the kidnapers. I can only say that I felt no such sympathy. I hated the lot of them and would have cheerfully killed them if the opportunity arose. This does not mean that I could not maintain friendly relations on the surface. I was operating on two levels. One, my real thoughts and two, a superficial correspondence with them. It is impossible to live for eight weeks completely cut off from people with whom you are sharing a room. I always believe that it was important to avoid reaching a stage where I felt oppressed and angered by them. This applied too to the question of asking little favours of them. I would never ask for anything which I thought would be refused. In fact, when I was not allowed to

do things such as shave I felt badly for a day or two. This point also applies to the question of communication with the outside world. Others have asked how I could write the material which I did about the treatment of FLQ prisoners outside. My view was that I wrote whatever was dictated to me because it was the only means of communication available to me. It gave my family the knowledge that I was still alive and there was always a danger or a hope that they would make a mistake in delivering these communications and could be traced to their hideout.

#### **4. Strength of the FLQ**

At the time of the of the imposition of the War Measures Act there were a number of wild statements about the strength of the FLQ and the resources they possessed. It now seems clear that like many terrorist organisations there was a small group of hardline operatives with a number of supporters. The probable estimate is that there were perhaps fifty active terrorists in Montreal in 1970, split into perhaps 8-10 cells. The operation was there would be a general discussion of a plan of action. A cell would then be given a "mandat" to carry this out. Thereafter communication with other cells would be broken to preserve security except that there were a number of people designated to act as communication representatives and, if necessary, to provide money. This system made the police operation difficult. In my own case they knew from very early on that Lanctot was involved and that he had a pregnant wife. Therefore, by following up their previous address and discovering where furniture from that had been moved they managed to track down one of her close friends. By keeping an eye on this person which involved a great deal of surveillance about Montreal they managed to find out the whereabouts of Jaques and Louise Cassette-Trudel. They followed them back to the house but, of course, at this stage they were not sure if I was in the building. A period of observation of a week to ten days then followed until the police decided that they could wait no longer and arrested the Cassette-Trudels when they were out of the house on December 2nd. In the case of the Laporte kidnapers one of them was arrested in early November in an apartment in Montreal. The others were finally tracked down in an underground bunker of a farmhouse south of Montreal towards the end of December.

## **5. Mad ideas**

As in all cases like this, police were bombarded with crazy people of every sort with ideas as to where I could be found. They read all sorts of things into my letters (which, of course, I did not intend). My wife and I exchanged the endearment 'Pooh' as in Winnie-the-Pooh and that set a whole load of policemen onto reading the A.A. Milne books in the hope that a clue would emerge. Clairvoyants wrote in with detailed descriptions as to where I should be found. One of them claimed that I was in a building in East Montreal which turned out to be a deep freeze store. One reference in one of my letters to 'pet' led to a raid on an innocuous pet shop in Westmont. Perhaps the most elaborate operation concerned certain radio signals which were picked up. Radio location was applied and the premises raided to discover that it was merely a radio shop which had left a transmitter on.

## **Tape Two of Three**

The following tape by Jasper Cross - former Consul General in Montreal refers to the letter from Malcolm McBain of 30th November 1995. The answers to his questions are as follows.

### **2. Canada's Importance**

On Canada's importance the main concern of the UK with Canada in the 1960's arose from the old Commonwealth links. Canada was still important as a trading partner and we had large British investment in the country but interest in the United Kingdom was switching to our effort to get into Europe and I think there was little concern about Canada.

### **3. Quebec's Importance**

Quebec was the home of one of the two founding races of Canada. It contained almost one quarter of the Canadian population at that time. Quebec was a major producer of raw materials and hydroelectricity, much of it exported to the United States.

### **4. Experience**

At the time I was a Board of Trade civil servant. Following the amalgamation of the Trade Commissioner Service with the FCO the Board of Trade still had a line on

a few overseas commercial posts of which Montreal was one. I was forty six on appointment.

## **5. Preparation**

The main preparation was an intensive immersion course in French at the Diplomatic Service Language School. There was little other briefing. From my previous Canadian experience and my recent Board of Trade job dealing with export fairs and exhibitions I was in fairly close contact with Canada and had, in fact, been there the previous May. I did have a brief chat with the North American department of the FCO but suspect that I knew more about Quebec than they did.

## **6. Arrival**

We arrived via New York (it was winter). I went to Ottawa within a few days to see the main people in the High Commission, High Commissioner, Deputy High Commissioner.

## **7. Reporting**

Political reporting went to Ottawa for onward transmission. Commercial reporting was generally to the Board of Trade although sometimes on major issues we would go via the Deputy High Commissioner in Ottawa.

## **8. Accreditation**

In every Commonwealth country there was no fixed system of accreditation except notification of ones appointment to the federal and provincial governments. My remit was the whole of the province of Quebec, however, we had an information officer (really a consul) in Quebec City and there was a certain amount of sensitivity about my involvement with the government of Quebec lest I diminish his role. The Quebec government attached a great importance to the representatives in Quebec City having as high a status as possible. As I've said above Quebec was a major industrial and mining producer. Montreal was at that stage one of the dominant American commercial cities with wide interests not only through Canada but also internationally. In part it was a major airline centre with the

headquarters of ICAO and IATA. Quebec was primarily a political and administrative capital but I made occasional visits there to call on the appropriate ministers and officials.

### **9. The consular corps of Montreal**

This body met as a group only at monthly lunches and at occasional general receptions, for example, for city officials. Nearly all the major countries (US, France, Italy, USSR) were represented by Consulates General or Consulates. A number of others were represented by honorary consuls, usually people concerned with the shipping industry. The French consulate general dealt mainly with their citizens together with a good deal of promotion of French language and culture. Their role was somewhat diminished by the presence of a 'minister plenipotentiary' in Quebec City who dealt with French political interest in Quebec including support for separatist groups. The French also had a commercial counsellor who as usual was not on speaking terms with the Consul General. The United States Consulate General had a general political role and also maintained contact with a large number of American controlled companies in Quebec. They also had a vast amount of consular work with people wanting to emigrate to the United States (usually European immigrants who were using Canada as a staging post).

### **10. The British Government Office**

Staff when I arrived comprised of one grade three, one grade four, one grade five (information and consular) one grade six, two grade seven and a total staff of about thirty. In addition, to deal with normal consular and information work in the province of Quebec we also acted as the distributing post for commercial enquiries for the whole of Canada. My main role was the direction of the commercial work although inevitably I got involved in normal representational duties plus publicity eg speeches to rotary clubs etc.

### **11. Political nature of the job**

I realized from my reading before I went to Montreal that observing the political scene was to be one of the major parts of my responsibilities. This became even clearer when I started to make my rounds of the leading businessmen

in the city and it was clear that the main preoccupation at the time was with the political future of Quebec. I should explain that a Union Nationale government had just taken power and the signs of a move towards demanding some form of sovereignty for Quebec were already in the air.

## **12. Conditions**

For most of our time there we had at least one living in servant. The office provided a car and driver for official functions only. Allowances were generally very good. Certainly enough to maintain a reasonable style of existence. The flag was hardly ever flown because the Union Jack had political implications in Quebec. I think the only time I flew it was when we went to the funeral service for the late Premier Daniel Johnson.

## **13. Kidnappers' attitude towards me**

I had been in the post two and a quarter years before the kidnapping. The FLQ found out about my Irish background when we watched some television programme about the disturbances then going on in Northern Ireland. I do not think they knew of my background already although they could easily have found out by research on articles at the time of my arrival. I do not know whether it made any difference to their treatment of me. I suspect they thought even less of me for being an 'imperialist lackey'.

## **14. Barbara (Mrs Barbara Cross)**

Barbara remained in the house for three weeks after my kidnapping. It was then thought too stressful for her to be there at a time when there were frequent hoax calls from people claiming that they knew where I was. She then went to Switzerland to stay with Mr and Mrs Midgley (Eric Midgley was our Ambassador in Switzerland at the time) and she remained there until my release. My allowances continued until the end of the month in which I was released when I was speedily returned to the Board of Trade. Bill Ashford the information officer together with my daughter who was living in Montreal at the time saw to the packing of our belongings and the sale of the car within a month after my departure.

## **15. Kidnappers**

I do not know what happened to the kidnappers in Cuba. After a couple of years they moved to Paris where they embarked on a series of menial jobs. They returned to Montreal in the late seventies and were given very light prison sentences most of which was then suspended.

## **16. The story of the ordeal**

This has always been a subject of intense interest in Montreal and indeed in Canada generally. The reason is that the subject separation has been a live issue ever since 1970 leading up to the referendum in October 1995. A major topic of controversy has been the decision of the Trudeau government to introduce the War Measures Act and arrest and hold a number of people without trial in October 1970. In particular at every anniversary (five, ten, twenty, twenty five years) there has been a series of newspaper articles or television programmes on the events. I have frequently been asked to contribute to these. (See Annex B for the story as now revealed in the Canadian Cabinet Papers).

## **17. Story**

When I returned to London I discovered that very large offers were being made for my story, some up to £100,000. The Foreign Office which had done very little to aid me in my captivity had been very effective in blocking any gain by me and had already consulted the Civil Service department and the Cabinet Office and a firm veto was in place.

## **18. Subsequent Visits**

I have been back to Montreal on three occasions. In 1981 we visited it as private citizens and simply saw friends and old colleagues. In 1990 we went there as guests of two Canadian television companies for whom I did programmes. In 1995 we went back to Montreal at the invitation of the family of Pierre Laporte, the Quebec minister who was murdered at the same time as my kidnapping, to attend a twenty fifth anniversary memorial mass for him.

## **19. Interest shown in my story.**

See answers to (16) above.

### **ANNEX A**

#### **SECURITY**

A paper on 'Current Threats to National Order - S & I 10' was discussed by the Canadian Cabinet Committee on Security and Intelligence on 19/12/69. The paper looked at two main issues. Firstly, it considered the general law and order situation, in particular in Quebec in the light of such events as the Montreal Police strike and recent labour disputes. It then went on to look at the long term question of Canadian National Objectives - in particular the Separatist threat.

It recommended:

a/ a review of the intelligence resources available and

b/ deeper consideration of the causes of threats to the 'order, unity and integrity of the nation'.

There was rather inconclusive discussion at the committee. All agreed on the need for more information but it was suggested that the RCMP was hampered by being regarded as an alien force in Quebec. The RCMP also asked for clear directives as to how far they could go in investigating separatism.

It was finally agreed that the RCMP should seek closer cooperation with the Quebec and Montreal police forces and that Ministers would consider further the broad question of national unity. In the first half of 1970 there were three attempts in Montreal against foreign representatives; the Israeli and Greek consuls in the spring and the American consul Harrison Burgess in June. In the last case the police raided the hideout where the plotters were and discovered the whole scenario (one to be replicated exactly in my own case in October.)

On April 13 1970 the Security Service (then a branch of the RCMP) told the Cabinet Office that regular meetings were being held with the Quebec and Montreal police forces to decide "procedures to be followed in the event that a person such as a diplomat is kidnapped and held in order to secure the release of a convicted terrorist." In addition, in June 1970 the RCMP established a permanent liaison group with links to the Department of External Affairs "to be immediately available in the event of a crisis concerning foreign diplomatic personnel." RCMP assessments

of the worsening situation in Quebec were seen and considered at various levels of the Federal government at different periods prior to October 1970. **None of this was known by me or, to the best of my knowledge, by any of my colleagues at the British High Commission in Ottawa.**

## **ANNEX B**

### **WAR MEASURES ACT**

During the first week of the October crisis there was little or no discussion of extra measures to deal with the problem. The main emphasis was on finding out what the kidnapers wanted and deciding how best to handle their demands. The only firm decision was to allow the FLQ manifesto to be broadcast. By October 12th (Monday) after Laporte's kidnapping the Security Committee looked at the problem. The PM was not in favour of invoking the War Measures Act but was prepared to consider special legislation but "neither course to be considered until all other avenues under the law had been exhausted."

On October 14th (Wednesday) it was reported that the Quebec Government was seeking authority for raids and would be asking for the support of the armed forces. The RCMP Commissioner said that a broad sweep of suspects linked to preventive detention was not likely to lead to finding the kidnapers and he did not recommend special powers. A further cabinet meeting that evening considered two developments:

- 1: The call by the Levesque/Ryan group to the Government to comply with the FLQ demands.
- 2: A report from M. Saulnier (Chairman of Metro Montreal) that the Taxi Liberation Movement intended to hold a demonstration that evening which might turn into violence.

The Department of Justice reported that the Quebec Authorities were thinking of arresting 200/500 in the first sweep and 900 in all. The RCMP Commissioner's view was that there were in all about 180 suspects: - 68 hard-core FLQ, 48 Maoists and 2 further groups of about 35 each.

Thursday October 15th was the key day for decisions on the War Measures Act.

At 9.00 a.m Cabinet Meeting Jean Marchand (who had been in Montreal the previous day) presented a very alarming picture of the situation there. He said that that the FLQ had two tons of dynamite and the means to explode it by radio control. Only a failure of equipment had prevented an explosion in Montreal the previous day. There was concern about the ability of the Bourassa Government to hold the situation. It was in the midst of an emergency session of the legislature to force medical specialists back to work. It was finally agreed that if the Quebec government so requested the War Measures Act should be invoked in the early hours of Friday October 16th.

The PM consulted opposition leaders and reported later that Messrs Douglas (NDP) and Caouette (Creditists) agreed but Mr Stanfield (Conservative) could not make his mind up. A meeting of the Quebec Cabinet at 6.00pm that evening agreed to ask for federal help and the War Measures Act was duly invoked.

### **Tape Three of Three**

#### **Discussing the Trade Commissioner Service in Commonwealth countries between 1950 - 1970.**

I will start by giving a brief introduction of my own career. After school and university in Dublin where I studied economics and political science I joined the British army and served in England, Palestine, Egypt. While I was still in the army I took the reconstruction examination for the home civil service and was released to become an assistant principal in the Board of Trade in February 1947. After a series of posts in the Board of Trade in London, including a year as private secretary to the Parliamentary Secretary I elected to join the Trade Commissioner Service in 1953. My service included New Delhi (1953-56), Halifax Nova-Scotia (1957-60), Winnipeg Manitoba (1960-62). From 1962 -1966 I was senior Trade Commissioner at Kuala Lumpur covering the present territories of Malaysia and Singapore. I then returned to the Board of Trade to work on the export side but was seconded to the Trade Commissioner Service as senior Trade Commissioner in Montreal from 1968-70.

I will start by a brief background to the establishment of the Trade Commissioner Service. At the turn of the century there was great interest in Britain led by Joseph Chamberlain in the idea of building up the British Empire as a trading

organisation. This was partly inspired by Chamberlain's imperialist dream but also by the need to compete with the rapidly increasing German industrial power. At an industrial conference in 1906 it was agreed that in order to promote Empire trade Britain would establish Trade Commissions in most of the countries of the Empire. Within the next couple of years Senior Trade Commissioners were appointed in Ottawa, Cape Town, and Canberra and by 1914 there were a network of Trade Commissions across the Empire supported by unpaid trade correspondents (usually local commissioners of customs) in the smaller countries. Our prime interest was to promote British trade in colonies but they did have a secondary role in operating on behalf of those imperial countries who did not have their own representatives in a particular part of the world.

Most of this activity ceased with the beginning of the First World War. During the war there was a heated discussion in Britain about the future organisation of government culminating in the Haldane Commission of 1918. The Board of Trade and the Foreign Office had conflicting views about how commercial diplomatic work should be organised abroad. The Board of Trade wished to retain control without getting involved in the actual mechanics. Finally, the compromise was reached of establishing a Department of Overseas Trade. This was a joint Foreign Office /Board of Trade department with a junior minister who reported to both the Foreign Secretary and the President of the Board of Trade. It ran a commercial information service at home, and abroad responsibility was divided between commercial diplomatic officers in foreign countries and the Trade Commissioners in the remaining Commonwealth countries and the colonies.

This organisation persisted until the great Foreign Office reorganisation of 1944 which amalgamated the three wings of the Foreign Service; political, consular and commercial. There was some doubt as to the future organisation of commercial work in Commonwealth countries and finally the solution reached was that the 'home' side of the Department of Overseas Trade should be amalgamated in the Board of Trade. In Commonwealth countries the Commonwealth Relations Office (the old Dominions Office) was responsible for all work except economic and commercial. This residue was the responsibility of Trade Commissioners who were servants of the Board of

Trade and reported to them. (It was not a happy relationship and caused much friction between the two organisations, particularly when difficult personalities filled corresponding posts in the field). In the 1960's the strains of the bifurcation became obvious and with the amalgamation of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office it was decided to amalgamate all overseas services into one diplomatic service. The bulk of the Trade Commissioners then serving were transferred to the new service but a few like myself returned to the Board of Trade.

**The following notes on a personal basis reflect my view on the operation of the Trade Commissioner Service in the 1950's and 1960's.**

Our first role was that of commercial information. We were in the business of providing potential importers in the country to which we were serving with as much information about United Kingdom developments and products which would encourage them to buy from Britain. The basis of our knowledge was the personal experience we had gained of British industry over the years, backed up by structured tours of companies when visiting the United Kingdom, reading of the British press, supporting material from BIS etc. The second role was to report to the United Kingdom on developments in the country to which we were serving. Prior to 1950 this had been formalised by the production of annual economic reports on the developments in the country containing a wealth of background and statistics. It was found that these were much too general to serve the needs of the British exporter and, in fact, were probably used more by our foreign competitors than by our own customers. They were then replaced by monthly economic reports on short term trends. In addition we embarked on a programme of market surveys looking at particular products in response to the demands of British industries expressed through their trade associations. In all countries a special task was to look out for possible developments of major projects - new dams, new industrial developments and report these to the United Kingdom so that our firms could get in on the ground floor before the programmes were set. From the mid 1950's onwards, overseas aid became a major element in this and frequently we would try and offer consultants to prepare reports on possible developments with the hope that some of the business would come our way. Trade Commissioners did regular tours of their areas to keep in touch with the developments and meet

people outside the major cities. This, properly done, could be extremely useful as frequently one could get from quite minor but highly qualified officials in branch plants information which the head office was reluctant to reveal. At this period a great deal of the routine work of Trade Commissioner posts was concerned with the agency system - a large number of British companies operated through agents and a great part of our task was to try to find new agents with the right contacts and keep an eye on those who were already holding British products. This was a much more complex task than might appear since it might depend on local knowledge. For example, in the province of Quebec one had to know that the major distributor of religious goods was a nephew of the Archbishop. Status reports on agents looking for goods and reports on their ability were sent back to the Board of Trade who distributed them through their export services organisations. A great deal of the help we were able to give British industry falls under no particular heading other than that of general assistance. You could regard the Trade Commissioner Service as a 'fleet in being' - on the spot, ready to respond to any demands. One of the major issues that came up in my time included what would in the old days have been called the 'establishment business', namely the right of British companies to operate freely in a country.

Sometimes this depended on local legislation and as many of the newly emerging countries were developing their own legal system one became heavily involved. For example, both in India and Malaya I was concerned with the introduction of new company legislation and new insurance legislation. I recall, rather wryly in the light of later events, the struggle for the right of Lloyds to continue as an uncontrolled insurance operation. There was also the question of British firms having the right to maintain their own staff in the country and get work permits for expats. At a time when developing countries ran into commercial difficulties, particularly in India we were heavily involved with such questions as import control and the imposition of customs regulations which might affect British products. For example, in Malaya we found that new regulations on foot-and-mouth disease would have prevented the import of British beef. Our case against the ban was somewhat weakened when we discovered that the technical advice had been given by the veterinary department of the British Ministry of Agriculture.

Another major issue which was important to India in the 1950's and began to show its head in Malaysia and Singapore in the 1960's was that of local manufacture. It was always a clash here between the desire of British companies to go on manufacturing in Britain and sending the finished product to their old imperial markets and the natural aim of developing countries to build up their own industries. The Trade Commissioners were in a particularly difficult situation because we could see that, unless people made the effort to manufacture locally, they would find themselves in due course excluded from the market. However, we did find ourselves accused of being too pro-Indian, pro-Malay, or pro-Singapore when we tried to explain this view to British companies. It is sad to think that I spent quite a lot of time in the 1960's trying to persuade the then British Motor Corporation to take some steps to establish at least local assembly in Malaya. Today the Proton car, a Japanese model built in Malaysia, is selling well in Britain.

There were a whole host of other problems which came across one's desk. A few of them included the question of fraud and copying of trade marks. I recall on one occasion visiting a little shop in a bazaar in New Delhi to find within a quite small room an assembly line for bicycles at the end of which was a tray containing the names of all the leading British makes - Rudge, Raleigh, BSA which were being applied indiscriminately to the finished products. We had a role in financial advice although ECGD who were prime leaders in this got most of their information from the banks but on occasion when things went wrong we had to get ourselves involved.

### **British Missions**

This became important in the 1960's as a means of government help to British exporters. The system was that if a chamber of commerce or trade association organised a collective trip to a foreign country the British government would refund part of the cost. Therefore, the local post became involved in planning programmes in advance, arranging for the visitors to meet businessmen in whom they might be interested and almost always provide entertainment for them. The value of these depended very much on the quality of the organisers. A well organised mission could produce good results whereas some

of them were merely looking for a cheap trip. For much of the 1960's this was organised through the British National Exports Council.

### **Reflections**

I have suggested some of the things we did. Now I would like to turn to our actual operations and background and how we achieved these ends. Our first role was to be well-informed about the United Kingdom. This meant keeping up with the guidance from London (sometimes rather slow), the British newspapers and economic press (Financial Times, Economist), the leading trade journals which might have an interest on our area and, as I mentioned above, our discussions with British business on our tours of the United Kingdom. Our job, apart from watching the natural flow of information through press, television etc was to maintain a wide range of contacts which covered each aspect of economic life in which, in our role as 'fleet in being', we might be asked to be involved. This, not any passion for entertainment, determined our involvement with the local community. It was obvious that we should know the leaders of the main businesses so that in case of difficulty they could be approached on a personal basis but it was also very important to have a wide range of general contacts eg lawyers, architects, consulting engineers. These are people who by the very nature of their occupation cover a wide range of activities and can always be very useful in gaining information.

### **Recruitment**

In the early days the Trade Commissioner Service drew its members from a very wide range of occupations. A number were recruited directly from business. Ainscough, who was Trade Commissioner in India for twenty five years, had been a local businessman. After the First World War Russian specialists Bruce Lockhart and Peters were recruited to the Commercial Diplomatic Service. Between the wars there was a regular recruitment system on the lines of the consular service to staff both the Trade Commissioner and Commercial Diplomatic Service. The Department of Overseas Trade at home made an effort to recruit a number of people from quite a range of backgrounds outside the usual government services - including some engineers and scientists. Immediately after the Second World War there was a certain crisis of personnel. Naturally some of

the older hands continued to serve out their time but the Board of Trade which took over control never really worked out a proper personnel policy. In the end the gap was filled by the recruitment of a number of people from the Indian civil service some of whom reached the top jobs in the Trade Commissioner Service. From then on the Board of Trade operated by fits and starts in its staffing policy. Frequently the senior jobs were filled by officers from home eager to relieve promotion blockage at key points in the department. Sometimes when promotion was difficult it was possible to recruit competent officers but the fundamental question of attaching a small overseas service to a large home department which was itself constantly changing was never really resolved. There was also the problem that no one at home was taking an overall view of both the work and the staffing of the service.

## **REVIEW**

One would need to seek a wide range of opinions on the effectiveness of the Trade Commissioner Service in the post war world. My own experience suggests that we threw too many resources into our operations in the old Commonwealth - Canada, Australia etc, where trade was relatively free. The constant cry for exports after 1945 meant that the constant reaction was to appoint more staff to promote exports without considering whether British industry had either the capacity or the will to fulfil demands. In fact, probably our most effective operation was in the newly independent Third World countries where experienced staff were able to preserve some of the old British influence and helped to guide our manufacturers in the new world of import restrictions, controls and local manufacture. It is a reflection of the trend of British policy in this century that the Trade Commissioner Service, born in the flush of imperial supremacy at the beginning of the century, should end as Britain was turning its attention from the Commonwealth towards Europe.