

SOVEREIGNTY AND SEPARATION

In 1966, Jean Lesage lost the provincial election to the Union Nationale, largely because many people in rural Québec believed Lesage's government was changing the province too quickly. Yet other people believed Lesage was not moving quickly enough. Québécois nationalists believed that to be *Maîtres chez nous* meant attaining Québec sovereignty. People in the **sovereignty movement** ranged in their ideas from wanting more powers for Québec in Canadian federalism to wanting the complete separation of Québec from Canada.

In 1968, two political parties that supported sovereignty for Québec joined together to form the Parti Québécois (PQ). The PQ was led by one of Lesage's former cabinet ministers, René Lévesque. Lévesque supported **sovereignty-association**. Sovereignty-association called for Québec to maintain economic connections with Canada but to become independent in all other respects. Other PQ supporters—*séparatistes*—wanted Québec to be completely independent from Canada. In November 1968, the PQ's membership stood at 16 000. In early 1970, membership had grown to 80 000. The PQ did not win the 1970 and 1973 elections, but it did receive a significant percentage of the popular vote: 23 percent in 1970 and then 30 percent in 1973. After the 1973 election, the PQ became the Official Opposition.



Figure 14-9 In 1967, on an official visit to Canada, French President Charles de Gaulle greeted an enthusiastic crowd in Montréal. He addressed the gathering: "Here tonight and all along the route I found myself in an atmosphere like that of the Liberation [of France from Nazi occupation in 1945] . . . *Vive Montréal! Vive le Québec! Vive le Québec libre!*" The crowd exploded with cheers and applause—de Gaulle had repeated a separatist slogan. While *séparatistes* cheered, however, the rest of Canada was outraged. Prime Minister Pearson issued a formal statement that Canadians were a free people and did not need liberation, and de Gaulle cut his visit short.

TRUDEAU'S VIEWS ON SOVEREIGNTY

Many Québécois disagreed with the PQ's views, including Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who became Canada's prime minister in 1968. Trudeau believed that the form of federalism created by the Fathers of Confederation was more than enough to ensure cultural protection for Québécois. Though he supported constitutional changes to guarantee language and education rights for individual francophones and anglophones across Canada, Trudeau believed that the form of nationalism promoted by Lévesque was dangerous—the kind of thinking that caused wars. Furthermore, Trudeau argued that Lévesque's path would violate individual and minority rights.

HP Read the caption for Figure 14-9. Why do you think the Montréal crowd was so excited by de Gaulle's speech? Why would other Canadians, including Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, be upset and concerned?

VOICES

Open up the borders, our people are being asphyxiated to death.

—Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau,
commenting on René Lévesque's form
of Québec nationalism

THE FLQ

The FLQ, the Front de Libération du Québec, was formed in 1961. Its goal was to achieve Québec independence by any means necessary, including the use of violence. The FLQ did not support the Québec government's efforts toward sovereignty because it believed the government was not moving strongly or quickly enough. The FLQ hoped to disrupt Québec society enough that people would overthrow the government and establish a workers' society based on Québécois culture and language.

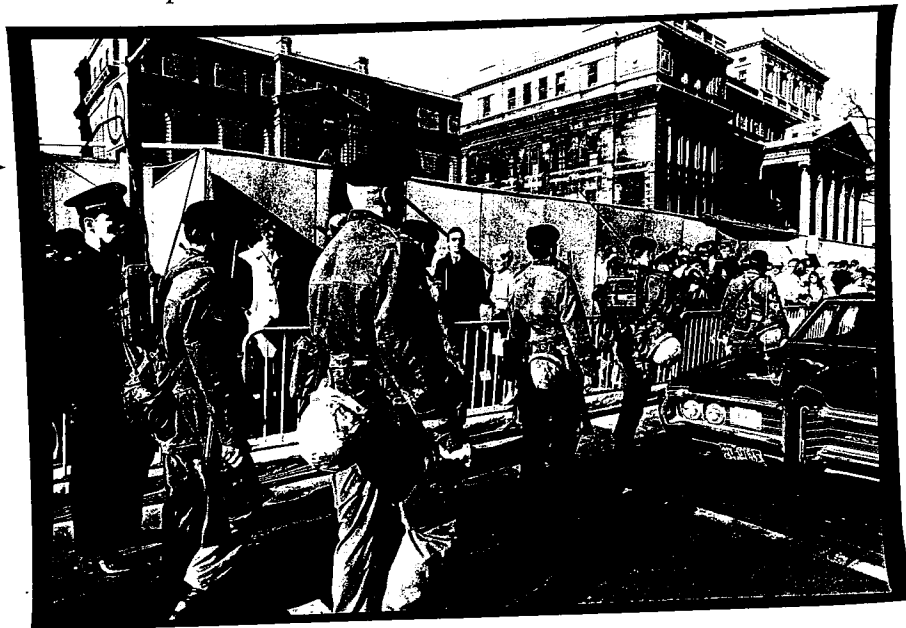
By 1970, the FLQ had been involved in over 200 violent acts, including bombings, robberies, and kidnappings. Five people had died and many others had been injured in the incidents. On October 5, 1970, the FLQ abducted James Cross, the deputy British trade minister in Canada. A major manhunt was launched in the province, with more than 1000 police raids taking place over three days. The FLQ then kidnapped the Québec provincial labour minister, Pierre Laporte, on October 10.

The FLQ's demands were communicated in a manifesto—a statement of intention. The FLQ demanded that its manifesto be broadcast on national radio and threatened to kill Cross and Laporte unless twenty-three FLQ prisoners were released.

THE OCTOBER CRISIS

The FLQ's actions prompted what is known today as the October Crisis. By October 15, more than 6000 troops were stationed in Montréal. On October 16, at the request of Robert Bourassa's provincial government, the federal government declared a state of insurrection—a rebellion. The federal government then invoked the *War Measures Act* for the first time ever while Canada was not at war. Under the *War Measures Act*, the FLQ was banned and many of the rights of Canadians were suspended. Suspended rights included freedom of assembly and the right to a lawyer and a speedy trial. The suspension of rights included all Canadians, although arrests occurred only in Québec. The day after the *War Measures Act* was instituted, the FLQ assassinated Pierre Laporte.

Figure 14-10 Soldiers patrolled Montréal streets after the *War Measures Act* was invoked. Over 450 people were arrested without being charged. Under the *War Measures Act*, having attended even one FLQ meeting was grounds for arrest. Most of those arrested were eventually released without being charged of a crime or even being told why they were under suspicion.



VOICES

We have had enough of promises of work and prosperity . . . When in fact we will always be the diligent servants and bootlickers of the big shots . . . we will be slaves until Québécois, all of us, have used every means, including dynamite and guns, to drive out these big bosses of the economy and of politics . . .

—Excerpt from the FLQ Manifesto read on Radio-Canada, October 8, 1970
(translated from French)



Go to the *Shaping Canada* web site for a link to the full list of FLQ demands from October 1970.

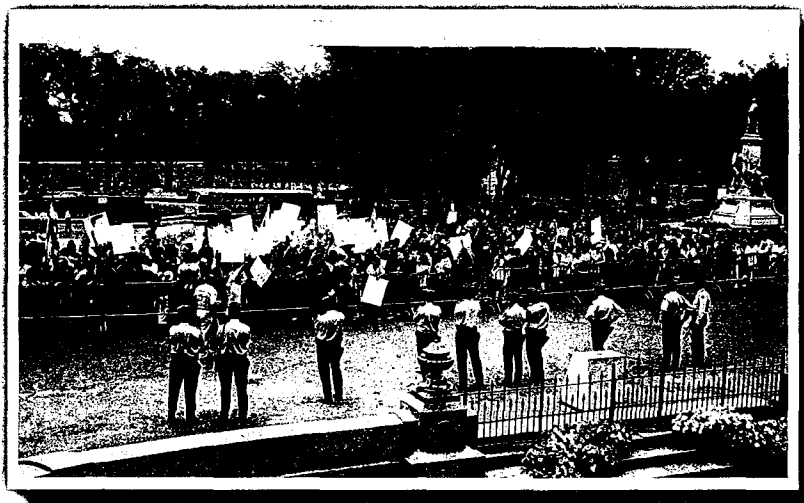
...SHAPING CANADA TODAY...

After the October Crisis, Prime Minister Trudeau promised to refine and limit the *War Measures Act* so that, if invoked again, it would not necessarily apply to all Canadians. However, by the time of the Liberal Party's defeat in 1984, the act had not been modified. In 1988, a more detailed and limited law, the *Emergencies Act*, was passed by Brian Mulroney's Conservative government.

← CHECKBACK

You learned about the federal government's *Official Languages Act* in Chapter 12.

Figure 14-12 Bill 22 was highly controversial. Here several hundred demonstrators at the Parliament buildings protest Bill 22 on July 24, 1974. Why would demonstrators protest the proposed Québec law to the federal government? Who do you think the protestors might have been and why did they believe they had a stake in the issue?



AFTERMATH OF THE OCTOBER CRISIS

In December 1970, Pierre Laporte's killers were arrested. Paul Rose and Francis Simard received life sentences for murder, and Bernard Lortie was sentenced to twenty years in jail for kidnapping. Jacques Rose was convicted of being an accessory after the fact and sentenced to eight years in jail.

Two months after being kidnapped, James Cross was released as part of a deal that allowed five kidnapers to leave Canada for Cuba. In later years, the exiled FLQ members returned to Canada, where they were convicted of kidnapping and sentenced to jail. A sixth kidnapper was arrested in Montréal in 1980, when he was also convicted of kidnapping.

After the crisis, investigations into the FLQ revealed that it was not as large and as organized as many had feared. Rather, investigators uncovered an informal group made of small cells that organized their activities independently. During the October Crisis, the FLQ had only about thirty-five members, and by 1971, the group had disbanded.

LANGUAGE LAWS

Robert Bourassa's government was criticized for its handling of the October Crisis. Bourassa feared Québécois might turn to the PQ, so he looked for ways to keep voters aligned with his party. He knew many Québécois were concerned about the declining use of French in their province and in Canada. While the *Official Languages Act* attempted to deal with francophone concerns at the federal level, many Québécois believed that more should be done in their province. A significant issue concerned the language immigrants chose to learn after moving to Québec. Given the choice, most chose English, not French. Québec's birth rate had dropped during and after the Quiet Revolution, so immigration was an important way of maintaining Québec's population. Many Québécois wanted to ensure their province's population would remain primarily francophone.

In 1974, Bourassa's government passed Bill 22, the *Official Language Act*, which attempted to strengthen previous provincial language laws. The act required all public institutions, such as courts, to conduct business in French, and all contracts to be written in French. Businesses

were required to adopt a French name, to advertise primarily in French, and to work toward carrying on day-to-day tasks in French. Children of immigrants were required to attend French-language schools. However, the act allowed some flexibility. Québec's 600 000 anglophone residents could continue to attend English-language schools, and contracts could be written in English if both parties agreed.