CHAPTER IX : THE EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY LEFT

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Just who are these *gauchistes* who dog the steps of trade union organizers and popular group leaders? What is this *go-gauche* which is derided but no longer dismissed by Quebec's editorialists. [1] And why the great interest in the subject in Quebec ? After all English Canada and the U.S. are not without their own so-called "crazies" in political sects of one allegiance or the other, all placing themselves on the ultra-Left. The difference is that Quebec's *gauchistes* cannot be dismissed as a lunatic fringe simply parroting poor translations of foreign slogans. They are too strong and too well entrenched.

No one in Quebec talks anymore, as was the fashion in the early 1970s, of *groupuscules.* Instead, knowledgeable observers today speak in hushed tones, for instance, of *La Ligue,* instantly recognizable as the Canadian Communist League (Marxist-Leninist), the strongest of the current Maoist or "M-L" groups. While foreign influence remains a factor, what makes Quebec stand out is the fact that most of such groups are also rooted in the political and social ferment it experienced in the late sixties and early seventies far more deeply than elsewhere in North America.

It is important to look at the *gauchistes* in the light of the historical development of groups and events falling under the heading of extra-parliamentary politics, a sometimes mysterious and closed world. But this is not an exercise in political voyeurism, nor an excuse to spread rumours about what goes on behind

[1] See, for example, "La 'Go-Gauche' se fait démasquer," *La Presse,* éditorial, December 11, 1976, p. A4.

closed doors nor to indulge in red-baiting.[1] The point is that any analysis of current Quebec politics ignores the extra-parliamentary Left only at the risk of distorting what it professes to describe and explain. The numerous references to the *gauchistes* in the discussion of trade union politics have already shown this to be the case.

In the 1960s political extremism in Quebec was associated most of all with the letters FLQ. In early March 1963, the letters first appeared on walls of several armouries hit with small Molotov cocktails. Soon afterwards, Montreal newspapers received communiqués from the Quebec Liberation Front. In a language reminiscent of Algeria's FLN, the communiqués spoke of an "occupation", of "collaborators", of "English colonialism", and of "commandos committed to "independence or death".[2] Bombings and attempted bombings continued into that spring, killing a caretaker named Wilfred O'Neil and maiming police demolition expert Walter Léja. A series of arrests in July crippled the FLQ though action did not entirely cease.

In early 1964 another series of actions, mainly armed robberies of armouries and the like, were carried on by an offshoot of the original group calling itself the ALQ, *Armée de libération du Québec*. In April, five men were arrested and convicted, and the stolen equipment and weapons recovered. Another offshoot, the ARQ, was broken up after attempting a robbery in the summer of 1964.

The next two years saw fewer FLQ acts of violence but some isolated incidents meant that it continued to exist. James Stewart, who wrote about the FLQ for the *Montreal Star*, suggests that at this time the group "was organizing on a much wider basis and developing its line... through the secret journal *La Cognée*".[3] In this same period, another group emerged to spread propaganda among workers and students, taking a similar national liberation perspective. This was the short-lived MLP, *Mouvement de libération populaire*, an instrument of political action organized by the group which published the radical journal *Parti pris* (1963-1968). Despite its small circulation of 3,000, *Parti pris'* exciting, if sometimes naive and

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[1] In May-June 1977, *La Presse* published a series of twelve detailed and presumably accurate articles on "L'Extrême gauche", by Jacques Benoit. A few weeks later *La Presse* made the series available in book format under the same title. Though not particularly sympathetic to most of the groups examined, Benoit's treatment seems designedly even-handed. While some have accused Benoit of red-baiting, we would suggest that the only basis for such a charge lies in the fact that a mass circulation daily saw fit to publish the series and give it wide publicity. Benoit's articles serve as a point of reference for major sections of this chapter. Though he provided new information in only a few cases, he did usefully confirm much that was generally known or merely suspected within circles of people active around the organizations of the extra-parliamentary Left.

[2] James Stewart, *The FLQ : Seven Years of Terrorism* (Richmond Hill : Simon and Schuster, in co-operation with the *Montreal Star*, 1970), p. 10.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 29.

romantic, combination of Marxism, existentialism, and ultra-nationalism, was a major intellectual influence on radical Left development during this period. One target of this influence, as well as being a source of radical unrest in their own right, were the student organizations at the French language universities united in the now long-defunct General Union of Quebec Students (UGEQ). Syndicalist, socialist, and nationalist ideas circulated through the various structures of UGEQ through the late 1960s.

Spring and summer of 1966 saw renewed FLQ bombings and burglaries. Factories hit by strikes were popular targets, and at one of these, La Grenade Shoes, a secretary, Thérèse Morin, was accidentally killed. Subsequent arrests netted several alleged terrorists, most notably Pierre Vallières and Charles Gagnon, two revolutionary Marxist intellectuals who, as finally came out after three years of jailings, trials, and appeals, were convicted only because their writings may have inspired those who carried out the acts. Vallières and Gagnon were the first leaders of real stature produced by the FLQ. Their jailing created an important rallying cry for the extra-parliamentary Left and protests extended far beyond the FLQ.

The final years of the decade saw another renewal of FLQ violence beginning in October 1969. Bombs struck, among other sites, Montreal City Hall, the Liberal Reform club, the National Revenue Building, Eaton's, Domtar, and, most spectacularly, the stock exchange. But, except for the latter incident, FLQ actions seemed less significant and received less attention than other not as spectacular but more popularly based actions taking place in the streets. In September 1968, the newly opened junior colleges (CEGEPs) were closed by a wave of strikes, occupations, and marches to protest deplorable conditions and lack of student participation in decisions co-ordinated by the short-lived *Mouvement syndical politique.* At about the same time, attacks on English schooling in St. Leonard and later at McGill University started with the emergence of the single-issue *Ligue pour l'intégration scolaire* (LIS) and the Marxist *Front de libération populaire* (FLP). This latter organization, composed of radical RIN members who refused to join the *Parti québécois,* was instrumental in forming the *Mouvement du liberation du taxi.* The MLT sought to defend the interests of cab drivers especially in a series of demonstrations against Murray Hill, the company which monopolized airport taxi service, culminating in the burning of a bus owned by Murray Hill on the night of the Montreal police strike in the fall of 1969. There was also an extensive series of less spectacular but nonetheless significant protest activities among citizens' and workers' committees in disparate localities and districts.

Among the more important of these groups and actions in working class districts in the Montreal area were the social animation projects in St-Henri, the Citizens' Committees of Mercier and Milton-Parc, and the St-Jacques and Pointe St-Charles community medical clinics. *Projet St-Henri* launched struggles in the Little Burgundy community against urban renewal, the location of a nearby

hospital, and increased public transit fares. In Mercier, a highly visible campaign of demonstrations and hunger strikes called *Opération alarme* was launched to protest student unemployment. The Milton-Parc Citizens' Committee waged a five-year campaign which delayed but failed to stop the neighbourhood's demolition to accommodate the building of Cité Concordia, a massive project of high-rise apartment buildings plus a hotel and commercial towers. The St-Jacques and Pointe St-Charles clinics were important scenes of political organizing and education on public health questions, at different times confronting municipal and provincial authorities and the pharmaceutical industry.

Although independent of each other and operating at different levels of politicization, most of these popular and political organizations were frequently cross-fertilized by common activities, by individuals who went from one group to another, and by certain publications, such as *Le Quartier latin*, the former University of Montreal student paper which re-emerged as an independent monthly. Practically all these groups used two imprecisely defined words to sum up their goals-socialism and independence.

The Cross-Laporte kidnappings of October 1970 brought the FLQ international notoriety and also spelled its demise. The kidnappings precipitated swift and widespread government repression and the entire Left nationalist movement from the PQ to the FLQ suffered a setback. For the former the setback was temporary ; for the latter it was fatal. Revolutionary commitment to a socialist Quebec did not die ; it continued to flourish in the 1970s, but the FLQ and its urban guerrilla tactics were universally rejected as counter-productive.

Although news reports still carry occasional rumours of renewed FLQ activity, the FLQ today belongs to the world of myth and legend. In fact, even during its active years the FLQ was above all else, a symbol under which loosely knit small groups conducted highly fragmented campaigns. Only at the end was the FLQ able to project a clear position to the people of Quebec : its 1970 manifesto which, at the demand of James Cross' kidnappers was read over radio and television, certainly struck a responsive chord with its ringing denunciation of the existing order and its clarion call for Quebec workers to take control of their economic institutions. [1]

The kidnappings and their aftermath affected another important event in the evolution of Quebec's extra-parliamentary Left. Spring of 1970 had seen the founding of the *Front d'action politique* (FRAP), which brought together militants from among the various popular and political Montreal area groups. After a wide ranging discussion of their experience in the various social animation-oriented projects and citizens' and workers' committees, the founders of FRAP decided to

[1] The Manifesto is reprinted in many places such as B. Finnigan and C. Gonick (eds.), *Making it : The Canadian Dream* (Toronto : McClelland and Stewart, 1972), pp. 395-403.

combine efforts to oppose Jean Drapeau's dictatorial administration in the municipal elections due in October. FRAP-affiliated political action committees (CAPS) existed in a few districts and were set up in several others.

Undoubtedly, FRAP at this time represented the hopes of an extra-parliamentary Left for the first time assembled in any real numbers. Unfortunately, it also showed up the divisions and tensions within this group. While always there beneath the surface, the divisions erupted in the face of FLQ kidnappings which took place only a month before the election. Over the objections of its president, Paul Cliche, and others around him, FRAP came out publicly in support of the aims of the FLQ as proclaimed in its manifesto. (There is good reason to believe that RCMP-planted *agents provocateurs* played a part in these and subsequent FRAP decisions.) When Pierre Laporte was found dead, the hysteria generated by this act guaranteed FRAP's demise. Two of its city council candidates, Henri Bellemare and Jean Roy, were among the hundreds arrested in the wake of this event, and Drapeau had no difficulty associating his electoral opponents with FLQ kidnappings and murder. Not only did FRAP disintegrate as an organization within six months of the election, but the whole idea of an open and decentralized democratic socialist electoral challenge to the established order suffered a resounding defeat.

In the relatively quiet two years following the October crisis the extra-parliamentary Left's order of the day was "self-criticism". All vestiges of false consciousness had to be stripped away ; only then could the errors which had caused the setbacks be understood and transcended. This self-criticism centred mainly on the citizens committees (CAPS) in working class St. Jacques and Maisonneuve, which had constituted the most radical and solidly-based elements within FRAP. The outcome of their deliberations may be seen in issues of the semi-clandestine journal *Mobilisation* (formerly published by the FLP) and the *Agence de presse libre du Québec* (APLQ) *Bulletin*, both published by groups associated with CAP St-Jacques and CAP Maisonneuve. These generally concluded that the problem lay in the predominance of "spontaneist" social democratic tendencies within FRAP, tendencies resulting from its petit bourgeois orientation and trade union bureaucrat and social animator leadership. How then to transcend this weakness ? One may discern at least three widely shared imperatives that emerged as answers. First, greater determination and total dedication – no more political dilettantism ; secondly, long and careful collective study of the key works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin (in a few cases, Trotsky), and Mao ; and thirdly, implantation into the working class, which meant that militants were expected to give up petit bourgeois intellectual lifestyles and go to work in the factories. [1]

[1] See, for example, "The Autonomous Left in Quebec", *Solidaire*, no. 5 (September 1973), for a portrayal of the various positions that followed the demise of FRAP.

The discussions, actions, and publications then associated with the two CAPS constituted the prime internal impetus which presaged Quebec's present *gauchiste* configuration. The second major source was external – a series of internationally affiliated organizations which in most cases had originated in English Canada and then begun to recruit members in Quebec, usually succeeding first in the English-speaking milieu around McGill University. The eldest of these was the relatively moderate Trotskyist Fourth International affiliate, the *Ligue socialiste ouvrière* (LSO, or LSA in English), which was first organized in Quebec in 1964 and soon became distinguished by its early support for unilingualism and independence. In 1972 the LSO split, with its most militant and revolutionary elements forming the Revolutionary Marxist Group (GMR) which also affiliated with the Fourth International. In August 1977, these two groups reunited as the *Ligue ouvrière révolutionnaire* (LOR). Trotskyists, to simplify somewhat, are so called because they consider Trotsky Marx' and Lenin's legitimate heir, and not Stalin and Mao Tse-tung (as do the Maoist or Marxist-Leninist "M-L" groups).

The first and most extreme ("way out" might be more appropriate in this case) of the Maoist groups was the CPC (M-L), which was established in Quebec in early 1970. The CPC (M-L) soon distinguished itself by violence (especially directed at others on the left – for example, its violent attack on anti-Vietnam war demonstrators in Ottawa in February 1970) and by often blind adherence to rather crude slogans shouted to adoring followers by its leader-founder Hardial Bains. Filling in the picture are three more recently created groups : *le Groupe socialiste des travailleurs du Québec* (GSTQ), a little-known but important Trotskyist organization founded in 1973 ; *En Lutte*, a Maoist offshoot of a newspaper with the same name first published in 1972 by a group which included Charles Gagnon ; and *La Ligue communiste* (LC (M-L) C), the newest of all six groups (September 1975) and yet the most powerful. Not coincidentally, these three organizations originated in Quebec and remain far stronger there than elsewhere in Canada.

These three also constitute Quebec's most important extra-parliamentary political actors today, especially in the trade unions. The obvious self-destructiveness of the CPC (M-L), which became particularly evident during a purposeless bloody riot with the police in Montreal on May 20, 1971, could not help but cause significant defections and soon eroded the group's importance. [1] Its last major stronghold, the new Quebec students' association (ANEQ), was lost to it in early 1976 when its sympathizers there lost out to *Péquiste* elements. The now combined LSO and GMR are still relatively weak in number of adherents and these are mainly students. Of the Trotskyist groups, the GSTQ is somewhat more significant, having an apparent influence in certain trade unions, though this is due

[1] Jacques Benoit, *L'Extrême gauche* (Montréal : Éditions La Presse, 1977), p. 96.

more to a few strategically placed union officials, especially the teachers' unions, than to any real mass support.

Following the 1976 PQ victory, the GSTQ reversed its pro-federalist stand and moved in the direction of favouring Quebec independence. [1] Because its differences with the Fourth International groups are more general, dating back to a split in that organization in 1953, the GSTQ is not likely to join with the LOR despite the fact that their positions on Quebec are now similar. Whether acting together or alone, the "Trots" have not succeeded in efforts to get the unions to found a labour party, but their members have sometimes managed to convince unions, especially in the education sector, to take a harder line. Yet, except for a few actions, such as the unsuccessful fall 1975 fight against Montreal public transit fare increases, they remain virtually unknown outside trade union and education circles. When the Trotskyists attempted to enter provincial politics in 1976, their party, the *Regroupement des militants syndicaux* (RMS), fell flat on its face and dragged the provincial NDP, with which it ran in coalition, down with it. The RMS-NDP slate ran in twenty-one Montreal area ridings, capturing an average of just 150 votes. [2]

The fiercest opposition to Trotskyism has come from the Maoists, notably the *Ligue*, whose newspaper *La Forge* in May 1977 went so far as to characterize Trotskyists vermin to be exterminated. Such language is typical of the *Ligue* but not of *En Lutte* which has occasionally even worked with the GMR. The *Ligue* is characterized by a fierce, tough, uncompromising style which affects even its members' personal lives. With a highly disciplined membership and secret cellular organizational structure, the *Ligue* will brook no compromise. Once it has established a fine through internal discussion and deliberation, its members and sympathizers must follow it to the letter. Yet its style is no mere sloganeering as is the case with the obsessive CPC (M-L). Rather, strategy is well thought out and carefully applied. The normal procedure is that *Ligue* members are expected to speak up as members of unions, popular groups etc. They identify themselves as communists, pronounce the previously established correct line on the subject in question as the only possible expression of the workers' true interest, and denounce the incumbent leadership as witting or unwitting agents of the working class' oppressors. This pattern has been repeated in recent years in several hospital and some industrial unions, welfare recipients' rights' groups, day-care parents associations, consumer information and service centres, food co-ops, and popular education centres. Either the *Ligue's* attempt to take over is rebuffed or, with the exception of the trade unions the continued existence of which is not challenged, the organization once taken over is either transformed into an agitational instrument for the *Ligue* or dissolved outright. In either case it ceases to carry out

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1 *Ibid.*, p. 107.

2 André Bernard, *Québec : élections* 1976 (Montréal : Hurtubise/HMH, 1976), p. 108.

the activities for which it was formed. [1] Of course, such practices are common to a lesser or greater extent to all of the groups. None, however, demonstrate the *Ligue's* sustained determination.

The *Ligue's* present strategy of attempting to "liquidate" popular groups and organizations is the practical consequence of certain conclusions emerging from the reassessment and self-criticism of the early 1970s centred in CAP St-Jacques. Not only were the many fluid, often spontaneous, popular actions of the late 1960s found by them to be misdirected, they were also "counter-revolutionary", deceiving the working class into believing their interests could be served without a revolution led by a proletarian vanguard. Not all those who came out of the social animation and FRAP experience felt the same way ; but an important and determined group did. The fair success of the *Ligue* and to a lesser extent *En Lutte* in this strategy of "liquidating" popular groups and recruiting their most politicized members makes them the present heirs – however doubtful their legitimacy – to the extra-parliamentary political tradition of the late 1960s.

From the perspective taken here, a good reason to question the legitimacy of the *Ligue's* succession is clear in the group's position on Quebec nationalism. The *Ligue* came to oppose independence in principle because the Canadian working class must not be divided, but also because nothing should be done to weaken opposition to the Soviet Union which, according to Chinese foreign policy dictates, is the primary enemy. In fact, the *Ligue* has apparently chosen to unswervingly follow the Chinese domestic and international line.

The resolute pro-federalism of the *Ligue* represents a triumph of abstract ideology, but one which is understandable in terms of this group's origins. Among the chief organizations which merged to form the *Ligue* in 1975 was the resolutely bilingual and bicultural Quebec Revolutionary Student Movement (MREQ), itself formed originally in a split from the CPC (M-L) in 1972. Joining with it to form the *Ligue* were the St-Henri-based *Cellule ouvrière révolutionnaire* and the *Cellule militante ouvrière* which grew out of CAP St-Jacques. The *Ligue* soon attracted other groups and individuals with similar backgrounds, notably the group which had formerly put out the journal *Mobilisation*, the *Groupe d'action socialiste*, the staff of the *Librairie progressiste* (formerly affiliated with the CPC (M-L)) and individuals from the factory-based *Regroupement des comités de travailleurs* and from the *Agence de presse libre du Québec*. [2] The loss of the APLQ's *Bulletin*

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[1] Benoit details the incursions by *La Ligue* and *En Lutte* into such groups as the ADDS (welfare rights), ACEF (consumer protection), the Comptoirs alimentaires (Food Co-ops), SOS garderies (day care), the *Centre deformation populaire – CFP* (labour education), as well as into several unions such as those at hospitals Notre Dame and Hôtel Dieu. Some, as in the case Of ADDS, proved successful ; others such as the CFP, did not. *Op.cit., passim.*

[2] *Ibid.* See especially his brief notes identifying the composition and origin of the various groups, pp. 133-137.

which thereupon ceased publication was an especially important step in the Quebec extra-parliamentary Left's slide into rigid sectarianism.

Many of these individuals had been sympathetic to Quebec independence but, in rallying to the *Ligue*, they renounced their independentism. The whole process was one in which political conviction based on sentiment and personal political experience was uprooted and replaced gradually by a series of "lines" deduced from an ongoing global analysis of class relations and the role of nations within them. The same intellectual process recurs among people recruited as possible members through the *Ligue's* agitational activities. A first stage is participation in a group studying issues of *La Forge*. Graduates from this phase collectively study various classics by Marx, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao. Only then are the new converts eligible for membership. According to Jacques Benoit, this process takes a minimum of six months for workers but eighteen months for students and intellectuals. [1]

While the actual number of *Ligue* members and sympathizers is a carefully guarded secret – probably known only to members of the party's Central Committee (whose composition is even more stringently secret) – it can be roughly estimated. The number 1,500, which includes both members and sympathizers, seems reasonable, perhaps even slightly low. Approximately that many marched in orderly fashion under the *Ligue's* banner in Montreal on May Day 1977. While 1,500 is a small number, these people are politically conscious and experienced and subject to rigid discipline making them available around the clock. *Ligue* members' uncompromising attitudes carry over into all aspects of their activities. Former friends, colleagues, even family members, are treated as possible agents of the class enemy. The organization is everything. Adherents exist in most of Quebec's regions and important centres. They include students and intellectuals plus an impressive contingent of blue and white-collar workers. Despite Canada-wide pretensions, there are as yet few *Ligue* adherents to be found outside Quebec's frontiers.

Much of what has been said of the *Ligue* is true of *En Lutte* as well. Their organization, strategy, and tactics are so similar, in fact, that they often find themselves in direct competition for power and recruits within trade unions and popular organizations. There are few fundamental differences in their world views. Both observe the international scene from the Chinese perspective, though *En Lutte* is far less slavish in following the Peking line. Both are federal in orientation – *En Lutte* also has small chapters in several Canadian cities – and both are Leninist in structure and in their view of how socialism will be won. The instrument of this victory is the party, not the issue-oriented and democratic labour party which the Trotskyists currently propose as the agent of their transitional or

[1] *Ibid*., pp. 121-122.

short-term program, but a highly disciplined vanguard such as Lenin prescribed for Russia at the turn of the century. Unlike the CPC (M-L), both the *Ligue* and *En Lutte* proclaim themselves organizations attempting to help found such a party rather than constituting the party in itself, and both thus see its establishment as the immediate political task.

Still there are differences, though mainly in style more than anything else. *En Lutte* appears less doctrinaire, more capable of subtlety, and less caught up with secrecy and rigid discipline. It is more capable of operating in coalition with other groups inside popular organizations and appears less intent on overtly taking them over. Attempts to unite various Canadian groups with an ML perspective to begin the work of forming the party have been frustrated, according to *En Lutte*, by *Ligue* intransigence. Early 1977 issues of *En Lutte* accused the *Ligue* of torpedoing such initiatives because it sought hegemony over the party to be formed. *La Forge* responded by accusing *En Lutte* of opportunism : the *Ligue* was not prepared, it said, to found the party at the cost of diluting its line and thereby betraying the Canadian working class.

There is no question that the *Ligue* is, as of this writing, the strongest of the *gauchiste* formations, with two to three times as many members and supporters as its major rival, *En Lutte*, and with an unmistakable presence in all aspects of extra-parliamentary Quebec politics. Yet its inflexibility and insistence on total commitment, which were no doubt an original source of strength and accounted for its great success in recruitment, may very well inhibit further growth as the political consequences of such an approach become more plainly evident. This seems to be happening to some extent in the CNTU where long-time dedicated unionists are showing signs of being increasingly fed up with what they see as intimidation on the part of the *Ligue*. While the Maoists were able to beat back a motion indirectly condemning them at the CNTU's 1976 congress, by appealing to the strong sentiment against any form of red-baiting, the very discussion of the question indicates that they may expect greater internal opposition in the future, since their tactics are now far more widely recognized. There are, in fact, indications that the group's growth stalled in 1977.

And in general, Maoist formations have recently suffered a sharp decline in most Western European countries. [1] Due to its potential for greater flexibility in adjusting to the political reality in which it operates, *En Lutte* may possibly prove to be the more lasting political formation.

The national question, it would seem, poses the problem squarely. As best as can be made out, the M-L position flies in the face of reality – there is very little Canadian working class consciousness per se. Surely, there is little danger of

[1] David Plotke speaks of the "relative decline-and in some nations virtual disappearance – of orthodox 'Maoist' groups". *Socialist Revolution*, no. 35 (September-October 1977), p. 80.

"splitting the Canadian working class", since it has never been united. In Quebec, where worker solidarity is strongest, labour could lose a great deal through efforts to tie its political destiny to that of the working class throughout Canada. Since all admit that Quebec is indeed a nation, it should be interesting to observe the development of the *gauchiste* groups on this question. We have already noted the shift by the GSTQ. The *Ligue* appears to be sufficiently sheltered by dogmatism against the danger of having to alter its line to correspond to political reality. Perhaps this is not the case for *En Lutte.* We shall see.

Beyond the Trotskyist groups' support for Quebec independence, another important distinction between them and the Maoists is that they are willing to tolerate a greater degree of internal disagreement. The relative weakness of the Trotskyists is due primarily to what one may call their chronic sectarianism : they are persistently plagued by a style in which *groupuscule* needs always seem to come before those of the trade union or other working class or people's organizations in which they act. Because these needs are fully comprehensible only in terms of international Trotskyist affiliations, and intrigues and ideological debates known only to the groups' stalwarts, the outside observer automatically associates artificiality with their style of operation. Finally, especially as far as the GSTQ is concerned, the predominance of labour bureaucrats, particularly teachers and professors, adds to this air of unreality. Compared to the "Trots", the Maoists are equally sectarian, but theirs is more "up front" and total – they may often be called crazy but seldom petty. The strategic moderation of the "Trots", combined with their frequent obstinacy concerning essentially minor points derived from unstated principles and esoteric affiliations, accounts for their reputation as petty sectarians.

The serious weaknesses of all these groups certainly must limit their ultimate effectiveness, but their present political impact should not be underrated : they regularly monopolize the extra-parliamentary Left's political discourse. Many difficulties and uncertainties besetting the trade union movement, as well as doubts and disillusion presently in evidence in various popular organizations, result from failures to meet challenges posed by the *gauchistes.* This, in turn, retards the ability of non-sectarian militants to develop an in-depth socialist analysis of Quebec political reality which transcends prescribed texts and is grounded in Quebec's own richly varied political experience.

A similar apperception should help explain the *gauchistes'* success and growth in Quebec. We have described two related factors which are central to understanding Quebec politics : state middle class radicalization, and this group's importance to socio-political legitimation in education, information, entertainment, the arts, social services, etc. For more than a decade, radical socialist and independentist ideas were developed and communicated through such institutions. However rhetorically expressed, these ideas have had real effects upon those exposed to them – notably students, but also some workers who are politically

active in their places of work or in their communities. This general process of intellectual radicalization took place in the context of socialist terminology, concepts, modes of analyses, and overall goals which therefore became commonplace in much social, political, and economic discussion.

But where and how to apply, act upon, and live by the socialist precepts and perspectives thus acquired ? There was of course the PQ, but to many its limitations have rendered it unacceptable. Thus the field was wide open for the *gauchistes* whose clearly defined line, vociferous denunciation of the PQ, and ability to provide adherents with political tasks to which to devote their time and energy perfectly suited the needs of a large number of young Quebecers. Most successful of all has been the *Ligue communiste,* and it is not surprising, for example, that *Ligue* sympathizers control the University of Montreal student paper, still called *Le Quartier latin.*

Yet, for all the *gauchistes'* success, something is indeed missing on the Left in Quebec politics. An organizational focus is lacking in which the socialist project for Quebec could be discussed and elaborated in a non-dogmatic, non-sectarian manner. Such a focus would, presumably, come to treat some form of national independence for Quebec as unquestionably necessary, even inevitable. It would explicitly reject the idea of the trade unions as the leading political instrument for the achievement of socialism, instead exploring in depth the potential real contributions to the project that might be expected from trade union actions in the workplace and in the community. And it would begin to elaborate a strategy and consider the organizational instruments required. Thus, it would squarely pose the question of orientation toward the PQ. Should the PQ be given a clear field, should it be opposed, or should a coalition with it be sought and, if so, under what terms ? Finally, it would attempt to clarify the part to be played in this process by the various popular groups at the base. In this scenario left-wing *Péquistes,* non-sectarian socialists in the trade union movement and elsewhere, local activists, and even some *gauchiste* sympathizers prepared (if that is possible) to talk and act on a non-sectarian basis would come to identify a common position and develop complementary strategies through the evolution of shared theory and practice.

Such a grouping certainly does not now exist. With the intensity of energy going into the actions of the *gauchistes,* the PQ, and the trade unions, it is unlikely to come to fruition soon – if ever. One possible hopeful sign, though on a far more restricted front, involves the renewal of radical political action on the Montreal municipal scene.