

A Radical Interpretation of the War Measures Act

Editorial

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[...]

The first question that one should be able to answer is twofold: why did the political representatives of the Anglo-canadian, Quebec and Montreal bourgeoisie throw themselves in this unprecedented and generalised repression, and who was targeted by this repression?

One cannot seriously claim that the origin of the repression was rooted in the kidnappings perpetrated in October 1970 by the FLQ, that this is the cause of it; nor can one sustain that the War Measures Act, the coming of the army into Quebec, the searches and the arrests can be explained by an ordinary panic from the bourgeoisie confronted by the actions of the FLQ..

The FLQ was not the cause of the repression. One must be clear about that. The text published in this book aim particularly at demonstrating how the Anglo-canadian and Quebec bourgeoisies were brought to deploy their repressive measures against the working class if they were to maintain their position as the relay-class for American capital. How could they satisfy the increasingly strong demands of the workers and, at the same time, maintain a level of profitability, that is to say a Canadian and Quebec capitalism dependant on American capital. To defend its class interest, the bourgeoisie struck against the workers and attempted to stop their increasing demands.

In the past ten years in Quebec, not only has repression been carried out by the police but by others as well. There has been no lack of emergency laws to break strikes; attempts have been made to integrate directly unions into the State (sectorial negotiations for example), bans on demonstrations have been many (the "regulation" of October 1969 in Montreal). The rising tide of repression is also exemplified by the creation of the antiriot squad, the breaking-up of the Company of Young Canadians, the integration of the police forces under the lovely principle of rationalisation.

The FLQ kidnappings did not create this repression. We will see that they were merely the occasion, the springboard used to accelerate it.

By the same token, at the core, the FLQ was not the main target of the bourgeois state. Neither was the Quebec "left", socialist-sovereignist or nationalist, contrary to what is often claimed, the objective aimed at by the bourgeoisie. The left was only the physical pretext, the immediate prey: by striking it, and through it, other objectives of class repression were contemplated. In a world of classes, it is between the classes that antagonism is felt. On this fact we base our analysis.

The workers of Quebec do not have a political organisation. However, it is noteworthy that they are engaged, at several levels (as consumers, in trade unions, in municipal politics, in the field of information), into such a process of organisation. Even if these were merely the first signs of such an organisation of the working class, they have been noticed by the bourgeoisie, long before the petty left did so, and it decided to strike it with a big blow. The only strategy of the bourgeoisie, at the height of the October crisis was to prevent, while there was still time, workers from politically taking into their own hands their fate, and to do house-cleaning of all of the exploiters.

The bourgeoisie did not strike at the political organisation of the workers, nor on their revolutionary scouts. Such organisations did not exist. However, it fired on anyone and everyone that presently supports the independence of Quebec and the unity of the workers against the parties and the bourgeois state.

Thus, it struck against the working class everywhere where this class is forcing the door open, or takes a step against the system of profit and private interests.

A blow was delivered against FRAP, not as the constituted party of the workers, but as an organisation that aimed at creating such a party and where the workers would, sooner or later, gain their class autonomy.

Other groups, other militants, teachers, journalists, students were also hit. Never was this because they formed a socialist or nationalist left that had to be destroyed. Always it was because these groups and activists, salaried people from the petty bourgeoisie or the working class, supported the demands and the aspirations of the workers.

The Parti Québécois was not hit. Democratic party? In fact, a party which, as we indicated above, makes theirs the objectives that the Quebec and the Anglo-canadian bourgeoisie can support.

The Parti Québécois was opposed to the War Measures Act? It is the content of this opposition that is the most significant. In moments of crisis, the hard liners of the bourgeois parties have always estimated that they needed to "make an example"; the "negotiating" wing of such parties has always been troubled by the means used. The PQ offered itself as a negotiating wing.

The Parti Québécois was not hit, a fact that many of its members having been arrested and detained does not contradict. This mostly happened in the rest of the province. In the regions of Quebec, a significant number of the members of the PQ belong to democratic and trade union organisations, such as ACEF, or central committees, an occupy key posts in the defence of the interests of the workers. As such, they were hit. In their case, as well as for many péquites of Montreal, it is clear that they would leave the PQ if a national political workers' organisation was created.

It is of the utmost importance to understand that the Parti Québécois was not a target in the repression that took place last October. This forces us to refute certain interpretations that claim that the crisis demonstrated that even the independence PQ-style was unacceptable for the Canadian bourgeoisie.

The objective of the PQ - the reorganisation of power-sharing- is fundamentally acceptable (even if presently rejected) to the bourgeoisie. However, what is not acceptable is political independence, to the extent that if it is to mean anything it will lead to a dominating position for the Quebec working class. [...]

From this point of view, the "democratic nationalism" of the PQ is not a threat. It can flourish in the shadow of the Anglo-canadian and American capital.

The frontal attack of the bourgeoisie is on this Independence that now begins to resemble the independence of the working class facing the bourgeois state.

[...]