

The October Crisis

Appendix Q

“The Saga of Carole de Vault”

The saga of Carole de Vault is a striking example of “truth being stranger than fiction”. Her text “The Informer: Confessions of an Ex-Terrorist” by Carole de Vault with William Johnson, 1982 Fleet Books, Toronto (hereafter “Carole de Vault, 1982”) should be required reading by anyone commenting on the October Crisis, while Pierre Duchesne’s biography of Parizeau, “Jacques Parizeau, tome 1, La Croisé,” Québec Amérique, Montreal, 2001 (hereafter “Pierre Duchesne, 2001”) casts even more light on de Vault and confirms much of her narrative. The Keable Report and the Duchaine Report (Rapport sur les événements d’octobre 1970 by Jean-François Duchaine, deuxième édition, 1981 - hereafter “Rapport Duchaine, 1981”) give a backhand compliment to de Vault, by taking great pains not to investigate her, mentioning her as little as possible.

[There appear to be various spellings of Carole de Vault’s name. “de Vault”, however, is used in her text “The Informer: Confessions of an Ex-Terrorist” (Carole de Vault, 1982)]

In 1970 de Vault was a twenty-five-year-old student at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). As a member of the Parti Québécois, she had worked on the 29 April

1970 election campaign of Jacques Parizeau in the constituency of Ahuntsic. Parizeau was defeated, but the defeat was close and it was one of the five elections chosen by the PQ to be formally contested. To the surprise of the PQ Ahuntsic constituency association, Parizeau chose de Vault to lead the contestation; although a “star” she had not been one of his chief organizers. De Vault was infatuated with the debonair, intelligent, erudite Parizeau and soon thereafter they became intimate until the end of December 1970. Years later Parizeau said the affair was not as long and intense as de Vault claimed. (Pierre Duchesne, 2001 at pp. 546-548). De Vault, in her book in 1980, said that “...he was the first real love of my life. I was still very naïve”. She added that for Parizeau it was “...probably part of a passing adventure....” (Carole de Vault, 1982 at p. 86)

In July 1970, Parizeau, a very respected economist and adviser to Quebec premiers, was hired by the giant oil company “Caloil” as a consultant to advise on an application before the National Energy Board in Ottawa. Parizeau convinced Caloil to hire de Vault as a publicist. One of her tasks was to assist a commissionaire in the deposit of parcels of money in a number of banks throughout the City. She, the commissionaire and a chauffeur would drive around Montreal and de Vault would sit in the car with the driver and keep watch over the money not yet deposited, while the commissionaire was in each bank.

On 31 October 1970, de Vault was recruited into the FLQ by Robert Comeau, a twenty-four-year-old professor at UQAM, who decided with de Vault’s help, to finance the FLQ by robbing the Caloil car during its rounds. De Vault soon realized that a robbery could implicate Parizeau. Very anxious therefore to avoid a hold-up, she tried to discuss the problem with Parizeau, but could not reach him and therefore went to his

wife, Alice, and told her the story. Mrs. Parizeau was also concerned that the theft could lead to her husband and advised Carole to go to the police. Early the next morning, on 6 November 1970, de Vault went to the Montreal police and told them of the coming robbery.

When she returned to Caloil around 11:30 am, she met Parizeau, whose wife had told him everything. He asked what she had done and agreed with her decision to go to the police. (Pierre Duchesne, 2001 at p. 551).

At first the police did not take de Vault seriously, but eventually de Vault met Detective Julien Giguère, of the Montreal Police, who “turned her around” and she became an informer. Giguère was her “controller” and she was given the number “945-171” and the code name “Poupette”.

The police decided to let the robbery proceed, but there was a series of fiascos worthy of Monty Python’s Flying Circus. The police laid a trap for the robber, but the car was an hour late, and the FLQ had given up. On the next occasion, the robbery fell through, because no one had thought of Remembrance Day (11 November) and the banks were closed. Three days later, in another attempt, Luc Gosselin, a young FLQ member, did meet the car at the right place and at the right moment. He opened the car door, but grabbed de Vault’s handbag, instead of the briefcase. Whilst fleeing, Gosselin was, of course, captured by the police, who had surrounded the area. Gosselin was bundled off to police headquarters, where what happened to him is not clear. (Rapport Duchaine, 1981, at pp. 162-163).

Unknown to de Vault or Parizeau, the police had bugged her apartment and her telephone in the middle of November 1970 and recorded Parizeau on tape when he

phoned or visited until the end of December 1970. “According to Detective Giguère, ‘that would have been sufficient to arrest him (Parizeau) during the period of the application of the War Measures Act, but as he was not the type of person who was going to act in any way, it was not worthwhile. He was of no use to us. What he could have told us, we already knew.’” (Pierre Duchesne, 2001 at pp. 552-553).

The account of Carole de Vault on Parizeau and the so-called “provisional government” is very revealing. She describes how, on what she believes was the evening of 13 October 1970, Parizeau came to her apartment and asked for a drink and she got him his favourite scotch, Chivas Regal.

Parizeau: “You know, Carole, the Bourassa government is no longer capable of making decisions.” (Carole de Vault, 1982 at p. 94)

She sat at his feet on the floor and he sat on the couch and told her that some persons were “ready to take over from the government, to set up what he called either a parallel government or a provisional government. You know, your apartment will be historic, because you will be able to say that the parallel government began here.” (ibid.)

He made telephone calls to Claude Ryan of *Le Devoir* and Marcel Pepin (president of the CNTU) without success. He left an hour later at 8:00 p.m.

Duchesne noted that after the robbery episode, Parizeau started to have doubts about de Vault, although he did not believe she worked for the police. He broke off the relationship at the end of December 1970, but did not discover that she had continued to be an informer until 1980, when she testified publicly before the Keable Commission. (Pierre Duchesne, 2001 at p. 552). According to Duchesne, “Jacques Parizeau described

those few months with Carole de Vault as ‘the most perilous period in his life’’. (Pierre Duchesne, 2001 at p. 546).

The importance of Carole de Vault’s testimony

De Vault continued on as an informer and FLQ member from 31 October 1970 to the end of 1974 when, as she put it, “the FLQ was dead”. (Carole de Vault, 1982 at p. 240).

All FLQ members and sympathizers, in their writings and the Duchaine and Keable enquiries, are very careful not to give any details of the Crisis which might lead to Parti Québécois involvement. They especially dance a tightrope in avoiding de Vault’s 1970 participation, which would only lead to the PQ and to Parizeau. De Vault’s book is important in any study of the FLQ, because it is so frank and tells first-hand the story of a student, of an involved Parti Québécois member, of an FLQ member, of a police informer and of the workings of the Keable Commission. No matter what she was doing from 1963 to 1980, she was extremely active, while the reports of her experiences are in a detail, frankness and intimacy, unlike anyone else’s.

De Vault’s reasons for informing

De Vault’s three reasons for continuing being an informer after the Crisis, from 1971 to 1974, if naïve, are informative and appear to be accurate.

Firstly the “romanticism” of the situation. All the FLQ members from January 1971 on were romantics with double lives. De Vault had even more - “a double secret life”. She was an FLQ member and participated in their activities such as stealing real dynamite and keeping it in her apartment. She was also a “spy”. The post-1970 FLQ

members were “naïve adolescents”, who “...played at revolution” and she was “...playing a game too.” (Carole de Vault, 1982 at p. 196).

Secondly the pay. De Vault was paid for information, receiving \$30.00 each time she met her controller, which was about twice per week. She once got a lump sum of \$15,000.00. (Carole de Vault, 1982 at p. 196; Pierre Duchesne, 2001 at p. 552).

To counter terror. If “a new flare-up of terrorism” was to take place, she “...seriously wanted to counter the FLQ.” She added that “No one went to jail on my account.” (Carole de Vault, 1982 at p. 196).

Enter William Johnson

The saga does not end there. Whilst taking off her skates at the open air rink at the Château Frontenac in Quebec City, during the period of the Keable Commission Enquiry, she met journalist William Johnson, who became her confidant and helped her to reestablish her life. “It was the beginning of a relationship that brought me back to life. He helped me to face my nightmares. He encouraged me to start writing a book about my experiences,” (Carole de Vault, 1982 at p. 277.)

Together they wrote “The Informer, Confessions of an Ex-terrorist”, published in French in 1981 (“Toute ma vérité: Les confessions de l’agent S.A.T. 945-171”) and in English in 1982. It is intriguing reading. William Johnson, incidentally, became president of Alliance Quebec in 1998 and continued on as such until 2000.

When de Vault’s book was published, Jacques Parizeau was appalled. In 1999 he said “... I was taken in like an imbecile. It is clear that the police used me like a child.” (Pierre Duchesne, 2001 at p. 554)

[For the record, I have disagreed strenuously with the views of Johnson on the use of French and English in Quebec and Canada, and he with mine].

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