

“Sous les balles des troupes fédérales”: Representing the Quebec City Riots
in Francophone Quebec (1919-2009)

Chris Young

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ABSTRACT

“Sous les balles des troupes fédérales:” Representing the Quebec City Riots in Francophone Quebec (1919-2009)

Chris Young

This thesis examines the various representations of the 1918 Quebec City anti-conscription riots over the course of the last hundred years in francophone Quebec. It argues that the riots had been largely ignored by Quebec’s professional and amateur historical communities until the Quiet Revolution. As the social and intellectual forces changed in the 1960s, some of the amateurs, the most important being Jean Provencher, re-discovered the story of the riots. Provencher’s *Québec: sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918* and his subsequent play *Québec, Printemps 1918*(1973) were written to honour the four victims who were deemed unfairly killed, as well as to commemorate those Quebecers who chose to fight for, what the author believed, was a worthy cause. Additionally, his work also meant to correct the perceived historical wrong of a tragic event that seemed to have been forgotten by Quebecers. Although he claimed his works were “objective”, Provencher wrote this history with a political message and accordingly selected, interpreted, and manipulated documents in order to strengthen his argument. Since then, Quebec’s francophone historians, mostly amateurs, have parroted Provencher’s works contributing very little that is new on the topic. Consequently, although the story of the riots is widely represented today in Quebec, it continues to be told through a tragic and simplistic narrative of victimization.

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For my parents

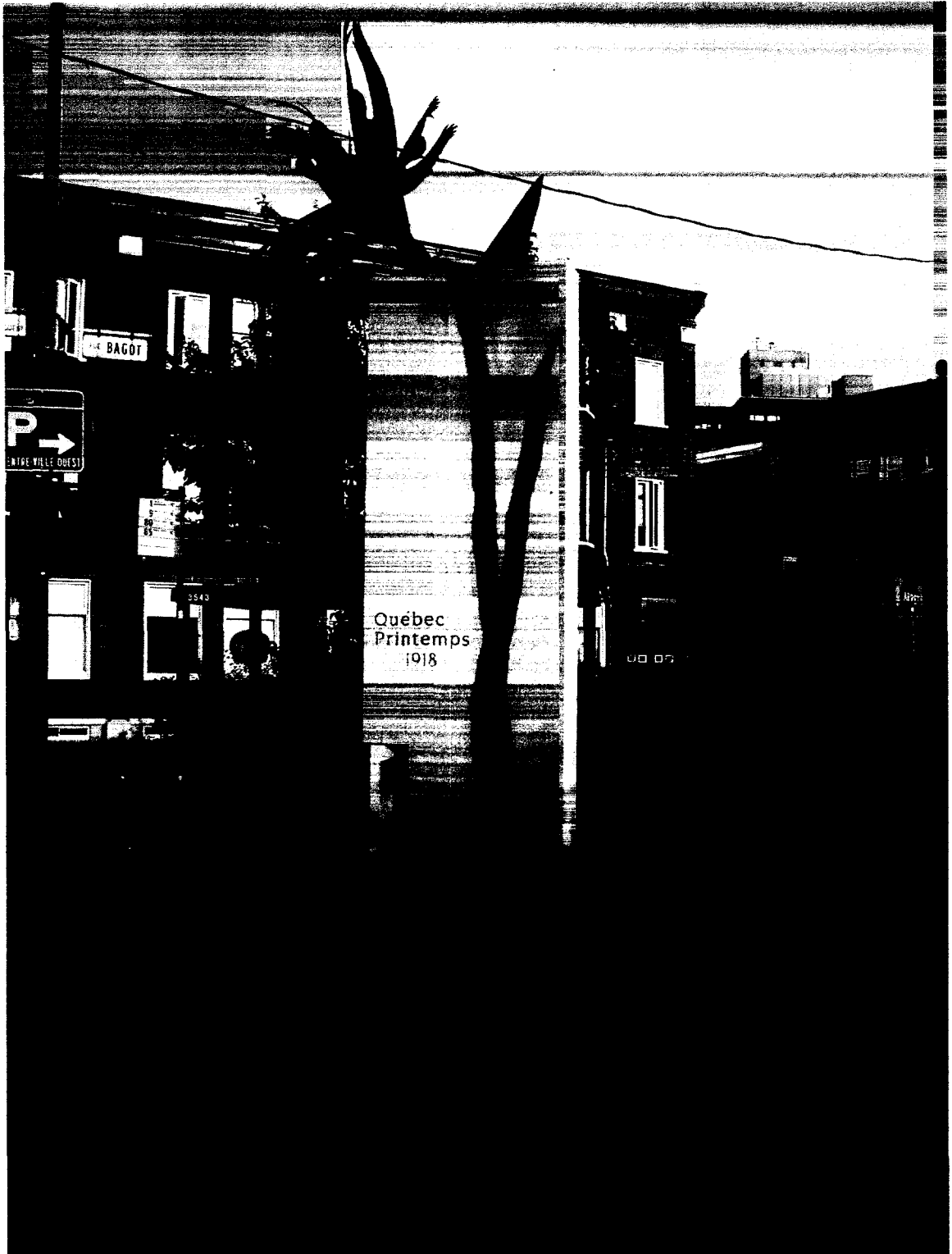


Fig.1 Québec, Printemps 1918

Preface

The idea for this project was loosely formulated on the Prairies, a few thousand kilometres west of Quebec. I was showing my grade eleven Canadian History class an episode from the CBC documentary *Canada: A People's History* which told the story of Canada's First World War conscription crisis and the 1918 Quebec City anti-conscription riots. The documentary's narrative of the riots, which ended with the Canadian army killing four Quebec civilians, was violent, bloody, tragic and sensational. Of course, as the documentarian would have known, these dramatic elements certainly made Canadian history profoundly more interesting for the students, and dare I say for the teacher as well.

With my curiosity piqued, I visited the University of Winnipeg library in order to read more on the topic. It was here, for the first time, that I encountered Jean Provencher's important work *Québec: sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918* (1971). The historian's story of the riots, much like *Canada: A People's History*, was one centered on the victimization of Quebecers at the hands of the Canadian army. After reading Provencher's captivating book, the only one entirely devoted to the subject, I was inspired to write my thesis about the Quebec City riots. Although, the project in the end evolved in many different ways, as all projects do, I decided to look at what happened during the riots based on an examination of the primary documents, as well as how the riots have been both forgotten and remembered mainly through the historiography, but also through other representations like documentaries and public commemoration.

To complete this study, I have reviewed newspapers, archival documents, academic and amateur works, textbooks, documentaries, plays, internet sites, historical

plaques and the Quebec City riots monument. My research has taken me to Ottawa's *Library and National Archives Canada*, as well as to Quebec City's *Bibliothèque et archives nationales du Québec* and to the *Archives de la ville de Québec*. However, most of my time has been spent in Montreal combing the shelves of the Concordia and McGill Libraries, and above all those of the *Bibliothèque nationale du Québec*. It was there, more than anywhere else, where I spent many an hour looking at works from 1919 to the present that might tell, in one form or another, the story of the Quebec City riots.

This study derives almost exclusively from sources produced by Quebec Francophones, a group I will refer to throughout the study by the word "Quebecers." Although there have been some works written by Anglophones dealing with the Quebec City riots, in particular a chapter in Elizabeth Armstrong's *The Crisis of Quebec 1914-1918* (1937), one of the project's goals is to focus on the memory of the riots in Quebec's francophone historical community. It is this diverse group of professional historians, with PhDs, and amateurs with a wide range of credentials, that has played a role in influencing how Quebecers have remembered the riots. Although I am not in a position to discuss to what extent Quebecers in general have appropriated this community's works on the riots, I am able to analyze the content of these representations and to show that these works are a reflection of the society in which the various historians have lived.

Introduction

At first sight, the three-road intersection in Quebec City's Saint-Sauveur neighborhood is as unassuming as any other. On one side there is a modest Vietnamese restaurant and a bicycle repair shop, on the other a small pub and a self-defence studio. The third side has a little park and a bus stop. Beside the bus stop, only a few feet from the busy road, there is a rather peculiar looking historical monument. It is approximately three and a half meters in height, with a narrow, rectangular, stone body with a metal stem through its middle. Above the body is a metal flower with petals of human form. The only inscription, on the monument's base, reads *Québec, Printemps 1918* (see figure 1). While many might be perplexed by the oddity, its strange location, and its ambiguous name, there is an explanatory plaque nearby that describes the unusual history of this intersection.

The commemorative intent of *Québec, Printemps 1918* is to remember the five-day anti-conscription riots that occurred in the province's capital city during the First World War. More specifically, according to the plaque, it recalls April 1st, 1918, when Quebecers, defending their principles while armed only with rocks, were tragically machine gunned down by an Anglophone Canadian army at the corners of Rue Saint-Joseph Ouest, Rue Bagot, and Rue Saint-Vallier. The plaque explains that the monument's flower form, with its human petals, represents both the spirit of spontaneous resistance as well as the fragility of human life as exemplified by the four Quebecers killed.

In the summer of 2006, I went to Quebec City to research the riots and to see the monument. After a long day in the archives, I jogged to the lower town through the Saint-

Sauveur district to visit *Québec, Printemps 1918*. I noticed a down-trodden elderly man at the intersection, sitting on a bench by the bus stop, between the monument and the explanatory plaque. As I read the historical plaque, the man, in a thick accent, quietly said to me, “Vous savez monsieur, pour longtemps cette histoire a été oublié.” I looked at him with surprise and he repeated himself, “Oui, pour longtemps, les Québécois ne se rappelaient pas de cette histoire des émeutes.” He told me that he grew up in the area, mumbled a few more unintelligible words, and staggered away. I stood there, stunned, reflecting on this serendipitous moment. In his simplicity, he conveyed a sentiment articulated particularly by Jean Provencher, the sole historian to have written extensively on the subject, that the Quebec City riots had been forgotten by Quebecers but through commemoration this injustice was slowly being resolved. Caught in the shadow of its metal head, I looked up at the awkward-looking flower and thought, “How has this story been remembered?”

Québec, Printemps 1918 provides a memory of the First World War that is foreign to most Anglophone Canadians. In English Canada, there is no lack of memory regarding the devastating international conflict, but it is usually linked to Europe and the Western Front experience. Many remember the 66,000 Canadians who sacrificed their lives for four-and-a-half years on the soggy battlefields of Flanders and the Somme. Some imagine the conditions these young men encountered while trying to survive in shell-torn trenches infested with rats, lice, mud and death. Others picture the soldiers going “over the top,” advancing through a No Man’s Land plagued with barbed wire and scattered craters while dodging German bullets and artillery shells. Certain mythic images continue to inspire: Ypres, “In Flanders’ Fields”, Billy Bishop, the Last Hundred

Days, and of course, Vimy. The war's memory is immortalized in the cenotaphs, monuments, and museums found in towns and cities across the country. At the same time, its memory is also preserved in Canadian books, plays, film and music.

Until very recently, my memory of the First World War was that of most Anglophone Canadians—that of the battlefield. In high school, my grade eleven Canadian history textbook, *Challenge and Survival: The History of Canada*¹, detailed the soldiers' experience during the war. The Quebec City riots were not mentioned. At the University of Winnipeg, I completed a four year honours degree in Canadian history without learning the story of the riots, and only briefly studying the conscription crisis. One summer, I worked as a tour guide at Vimy Ridge in northern France, where nine other university students and I explained the story of the Canadian experience during the war. Encouraged by Veterans' Affairs Canada, our narrative for the history of Vimy, and the war in general, was centered on principles of duty, sacrifice, nationalism, and increased independence from Great Britain. We also mentioned that the only French Canadian battalion to fight at Vimy was the Royal 22nd or the "Vandoos," and usually remarked that the battle was not internalized by Quebecers as the nation-building experience felt by most of Canada. However, even if this led to a cursory discussion about conscription, we never spoke about the violence in Quebec City. When I was at Vimy, this story was simply not conveyed at Canada's most-visited overseas First World War memorial.

When I first began researching the topic of memory and the First World War in francophone Quebec, I was astonished by the prevalence of the riots' story. Today, it is

¹ H.H Herstein et al., *Challenge & Survival: The History of Canada* (Scarborough, Ont: Prentice Hall of Canada, 1970).

everywhere. The story is found in textbooks, plays, radio broadcasts, documentaries and on the Internet. For someone who thought Vimy and the Last Hundred Days were the defining moments of the war experience, I was surprised to learn that many Quebecers' predominant memory is of the conscription crisis and its climactic moment, the Quebec City riots. Beatrice Richard, for one, writes, "Pour les Anglo-Canadiens, la bataille de Vimy constitue l'acte de naissance symbolique de la nation canadienne. Dans la mémoire des Canadiens français, c'est plutôt la crise de conscription, avec l'émeute sanglante du dimanche de Pâques 1918 qui constitue une épisode unificateur."² Currently, there are few francophone history textbooks that explain battlefield war stories. In some cases, the soldiers' overseas experience is replaced entirely by the conscription crisis and the riots. In such books the four killed are often mentioned and sometimes even profiled by name and occupation. On the other hand, the Royal 22nd battalion, and its 2,967 French Canadian soldiers killed overseas, receives scant attention; the soldiers' lives are almost never personalized. Students might learn about the anti-conscriptionist Armand Lavergne or Georges Demeule, the fourteen-year-old boy killed on April 1st, but will rarely learn about Jean Brillant, one of two French Canadian soldiers to win the Victoria Cross for bravery. Ultimately, one must question why some stories are privileged over others.

The complex dialectic of remembering and forgetting is fundamental to understanding memory. Pierre Nora explains that memory is in constant evolution, "unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived."³ The French theorist argues that, over time, societies remember, re-remember and forget in order to

² Béatrice Richard, 'La mémoire collective de la guerre au Québec : un espace de résistance politique', *Canadian Issues/Thèmes canadiens*, (2004): 2.

³ Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les lieux de mémoire,' *Representations*, 26 (1989): 8.

serve their present identity needs.⁴ He gives the example of Jeanne D'Arc. Nora explains that in an effort to unify diverse groups such as the church and the peasantry, by the late 19th century the French had reconstructed the heroine's symbol, making her the embodiment of French identity.⁵ Similarly, the Quebec City riots were for a long time forgotten, and then remembered, to satisfy the demands of the present. But one must question what these writers remembered and for what purpose.

In many cases, the memory of an event can be at odds with what appears to have actually happened. For example, Joyce Appleby explains that during the 19th century, Americans remembered their Revolution as being the logical end of a colonial experience in which the thirteen colonies had wanted to unite in order to establish a federal government that would protect their inherent rights.⁶ The historian points out that this was a "narrative of invention" in order to construct a self-identity for their young nation based on the 19th century ideal of democratic nationalism.⁷ She writes, "If the Declaration was made to appear as the natural end point of colonial developments, then the independence of the United States could be understood as the climax to a long and heroic sequence of events." Appleby argues that this memory contradicts historical evidence. She shows that the thirteen colonies had little in common, had no real interest in joining to form a country, and certainly would not have done so for the purpose of defending natural rights. Instead, she believes that Americans chose independence in an abrupt manner which marked an unexpected rupture from the colonial period.⁸ Nevertheless,

⁴ Ibid., 12.

⁵ Pierre Nora & David P. Jordan, eds. *Rethinking France: Les lieux de mémoire, Volume 1: The State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), XXIX.

⁶ Joyce Appleby et al. *Telling the Truth about History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 103.

⁷ Ibid., 104.

⁸ Ibid., 103.

Appleby demonstrates that in post-revolutionary America the events that likely inspired Americans to choose independence were much less important than a utilitarian memory that could suit subsequent generations.

Similarly, in Quebec, memory has played an integral role in the formation of identity among most Quebecers. Like the American example, many Quebecers have developed a collective memory of their past that often better explains their views of the present than what might have occurred in history. With “Je me Souviens” as their provincial motto, most Quebecers feel that they have a duty to remember their past, a past perceived as being full of defeats and impediments.⁹ Historian Jocelyn Létourneau writes, “It seems there is one thing that is impossible for Quebecers to forget, and that is their having been the victims of the ‘Other.’” The “Other” could be the enemy within, such as the Church, Maurice Duplessis, and Francophone federalists. It could also be the enemy outside its borders: the English, foreign capital, the federal government and periodically Americans.¹⁰ Even though many Quebec historians for the last thirty years have argued that there is nothing exceptional about their history—that Quebec developed in a normal pattern, similar to other North American societies—it seems that academia has not eradicated the average Quebecers’ view of the past as one full of failures. Asked to summarize their view of Quebec history in a survey, Létourneau discovered that the majority of his university students saw themselves as being a “people that was for a long time backward, oppressed by the clergy and by the English, and that has succeeded in part in averting the terrible fate looming over it by re-founding itself through the Quiet

⁹ Jocelyn Létourneau, *A History for the Future: Rewriting Memory and Identity in Quebec* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

Revolution, a great collective leap forward.”¹¹ The memory of the past that many Quebecers have developed is simple, tragic, and based on conflict with the “Other.” There is perhaps no better example of this than the memory of the Quebec City riots.

My thesis will show that the current memory of the riots in the historiography, as well as in other representations, is one centered on a narrative of victimization that was largely influenced by Jean Provencher’s work *Québec: sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918* (1971). However, for the first forty years following the riots, the story had been mostly forgotten by Quebec’s historical community both in professional and amateur circles. It was not until Quebec’s Quiet Revolution and afterwards, that historians, influenced by the academic and social forces of their times, as was Jean Provencher, began to re-discover the story of the riots.

This study is divided into four chapters. The first provides historical context by looking at francophone resistance to enlistment and conscription in Quebec during the First World War. The second chapter offers a new interpretation of the turbulent days in Quebec City between March 28 and April 2nd, 1918. Based predominantly on primary documents, it explores the motivations and actions of the main figures involved in the riots. The third chapter’s introduction comments on how the riots were remembered in the historiography from 1919 to the publication of Provencher’s book in 1971. The chapter’s body is an analysis of his work *Québec: sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918* and his subsequent play *Québec, Printemps 1918* (1973). Chapter four looks at the memory of the riots from the mid-1970s to the present by examining various representations in the historiography, but also in documentaries and public commemoration.

¹¹ Ibid., 21.

This study should prove valuable for two reasons. First, aside from Provencher's work, written almost forty years ago, no historian has dedicated serious time in the archives researching this story. The work should therefore interest its readers as it provides a new interpretation. Second, and more broadly, this is the first examination of how the Quebec City riots have been remembered over the last century. This is useful not only to understand how the present influences what we remember, but to also make one ponder what is remembered and what is forgotten in Quebec/Canadian history. Currently, this is a particularly salient issue in Quebec, demonstrated by the controversy regarding a new high school history curriculum titled "Histoire et éducation à la citoyenneté." This curriculum was released to the public in the spring of 2006 and will be discussed further in my conclusion.

In *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*, Peter Novick writes that "those who think as I do are content, in our historical work, to be suggestive, and we don't worry about being definitive. We want to offer what we hope will be fruitful—perhaps even 'edifying'—new ways of looking at things in the past."¹² I agree entirely. My intention in this work is to re-think a significant Canadian historical event, to raise questions about what took place in the spring of 1918 and to critique some of the assumptions that have been taken for granted in its remembrance. In no way do I claim to have the final word on the topic, nor do I believe that my interpretation is any more valid than those which came before me or those who will follow—it is just different. I suppose there will be some "truth" to be found in my work, but it will be partial and contingent on the way I have interpreted my research. In the end,

¹² Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 702.

despite the acknowledged limitations that comes with all historical writing, I hope this study will both offer a nuanced interpretation of one of the most violent riots in Canadian history, as well as serve as a useful analysis of how and why this event has been both forgotten and remembered.

1

Enrôlez-vous? War, Quebec and Conscription

It only takes a few bullets to spark an international crisis. On June 28th 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, was murdered in Sarajevo by Gavrilo Princip, a young member of the Black Hand terrorist group. Hoping to free all the Serbs and Croats from the grips of the Hapsburg Empire, Princip believed the Archduke's murder would bring attention to his group's cause. He received attention. Within a few weeks, due in large part to secret alliances and other indirect causes, this seemingly minor incident erupted into the First World War. In early August, Great Britain and its empire, including the Dominion of Canada, declared war on Germany.

At the beginning of the war most Canadians believed in the justness of the cause. Quebec was no exception. In both cities and countryside, crowds gathered to show support for Great Britain, France and their allies. In Montreal, people sang outside newspaper offices and paraded through the streets, simultaneously shouting "Vive le Roi" and "Vive la France."¹³ Montreal's *La Presse* newspaper wrote "Un souffle guerrier agite l'*Union Jack* et le *Tricolore*, dont les couleurs se marient fièrement au-dessus de leurs têtes. C'est la marche en avant pour le salut de la Patrie et L'Empire."¹⁴ In Quebec City, British-born Canadians, Irish-born Canadians, and French-Canadians, three groups that historically had not always seen eye-to-eye, assembled to show their common

¹³ Elizabeth Armstrong, *The Crisis of Quebec 1914-1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), 56.

¹⁴ *La Presse*, 3 August 1914.

disapproval of the Germans.¹⁵ Even the ardent Quebec nationalist, Henri Bourassa, editor of the newspaper *Le Devoir*, supported the war in the early days of August 1914.¹⁶

However, the war euphoria could not last. This was most noticeable in Quebec.

By the fall of 1914, it was apparent that Quebecers' enlistment numbers in the Canadian army were proportionally lower than in the rest of Canada, for many reasons. At the turn of the century, when Canada decided to support the British Empire in its conflict against the Boers in South Africa many French Canadians questioned the relevance of such an imperialist adventure. In 1910, when the Federal government passed its Naval Service Bill that allowed the British to use its ships during wartime, the anti-imperial sentiment among French Canadians grew stronger. Furthermore, Quebecers did not feel comfortable in a Canadian military controlled by Anglophones. Before the war, all instruction at the Royal Military College in Kingston had been in English; consequently, few of the high-ranking officers spoke French.¹⁷ In 1912, only 27 of 254 officers were French Canadians. Moreover, in pre-1914 Canada, there were no French Canadian battalions or regiments because British-born officers saw it as a low priority. When the war began, all training was in English and enlisted Francophones often experienced discrimination. The worst of it came from the Minister of the Militia, Colonel Sam Hughes, an Orangeman from Ontario, who publicly revealed his disdain for French Canadian soldiers.¹⁸ He placed Anglophone officers in control of the recruiting system, making it difficult for French Canadians to be promoted and he dissolved French

¹⁵ Armstrong, 56.

¹⁶ Sandra Gwyn, *Tapestry of War: A private view of Canadians during the Great War* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1992), 316.

¹⁷ Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec* (Toronto: Gage Publishing Limited, 1983), 208.

¹⁸ Sandra Gwyn, *Tapestry of War*, 316.

Canadian units to reinforce English battalions. Hughes was also criticized for not allowing the highest ranking French speaking soldier, General Louis Lessard, to command an overseas division.¹⁹

There were also social explanations for low enlistments among Quebecers. They were generally more rural and often married younger than their Anglo-Canadian counterparts. As might be expected, there were also fewer British-born men in Quebec, the group most likely to enlist in other provinces particularly in Ontario. In fact, 70 per cent of the First Division that went overseas were Canadians born in Great Britain. Similarly, Canadians from families that had been living in Canada for numerous generations were less likely to enlist, and French-speaking Quebec families were the oldest in Canada. It appears that many Quebecers supported France and its fight against the Germans, but they felt little attachment to a country that was perceived by many as having abandoned them after the Plains of Abraham.²⁰ Still, perhaps it was a domestic issue that most significantly curtailed enlistment in Quebec.

Both before and during the war, the Ontario schools' crisis was a thorn in the side of most French-speaking Canadians. In 1912, the provincial government, in Regulation XVII, restricted French instruction to the first two years of elementary school and demanded that all subsequent schooling be in English, excluding only one hour a day of French.²¹ The government argued that the bilingual system was expensive and produced poor students. Many Franco-Ontarians and Quebecers were enraged. Some saw this

¹⁹ Patrice A Dutil, "Against Isolationism," In *Canada and the First World War*, edited by David Mackenzie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 117.

²⁰ Desmond Morton, "La Guerre d'indépendance du Canada une perspective Anglophone," in *La première guerre mondiale et le Canada* eds. Legault & Lamarre (Montreal: Méridien, 1999), 24.

²¹ Yvan Lamonde, *Histoire sociale des idées au Québec* (Saint-Laurent: Fides, 2000-2004), 60.

directive as another Anglophone Canadian ploy to assimilate the French. For three years, French Canadians lobbied against the directive, to no avail. In 1915, to much outcry, Regulation XVII became law. Bourassa, who advocated a bilingual and bicultural Canada, used his newspaper to virulently criticize the Ontario government, and attacked the federal government for not using its power of disallowance to stop the bill from becoming law. Many Quebecers began to wonder where the real war was being waged. In front of the Quebec provincial legislature, Armand Lavergne, a well-known lawyer and Bourassa's right-hand man, proclaimed:

Si nous devons conquérir nos libertés, c'est ici que nous devons rester. Ce n'est pas dans les tranchées des Flandres que nous irons conquérir le droit de parler français en Ontario....Je dirai que chaque sou dépensé dans le Québec pour aider à l'enrôlement des hommes, est de l'argent volé à la minorité de l'Ontario...Je me demande si le régime allemand ne pourrait pas être favorablement comparé à celui des Boches de l'Ontario.²²

Undoubtedly, the Nationalists' goal to focus attention on the plight of the Franco-Ontarian minority significantly hurt recruiting efforts in French Quebec.²³

Despite obstacles and inhibitions, Quebecers still enlisted in the Canadian Army. By the end of the war, approximately 15,000 Quebecers had served voluntarily.²⁴ Many who enlisted had been encouraged by prominent Quebecers who publicly supported the war. Wilfrid Laurier told potential recruits, "If I were young enough myself, I too, would be in the firing line."²⁵ On August 8, 1914, Montreal's Archbishop Bruschési told his congregation, "C'est notre devoir à tous de donner à l'Angleterre notre loyal et généreux

²² Mason Wade, *Les canadiens français, de 1760 à nos jours*, translated by Adrien Venne (Ottawa: Cercle du Livre de France, 1963), 92.

²³ Patrice A. Dutil, 114.

²⁴ Trokimenkoff, 26.

²⁵ Granatstein & Hitsmen, 32.

appui. Notre peuple n’y manquera pas.”²⁶ Perhaps no one was more important than Doctor Arthur Mignault, who financed a French Canadian battalion. Mignault and Frédéric Monderet Gaudet, the first lieutenant colonel of the Royal 22nd battalion, relentlessly recruited young Quebecers for overseas action by appealing to their sense of history. In an enthusiastic speech at a large recruiting rally in Montreal’s Parc Sohmer, Monderet said, “Messieurs, vous êtes les fils de LaSalle, de Dollard des Ormeaux et de Frontenac. Vous avez hérité des qualités de vos ancêtres: enrôlez-vous avec les vôtres dans le régiment canadien-français.”²⁷

Quebec’s French-language press, like many of its French-speaking leaders, mostly supported the soldiers’ efforts during the war. Although *Le Devoir* focused mainly on the conflict between Anglophones and Francophones, manifested by the Ontario schools’ crisis, other newspapers, like *La Patrie*, Quebec City’s *Le Soleil*, and the church-directed *Action Catholique* allocated more space to support the troops and the war effort (though without ignoring the Ontario dilemma).²⁸ It was *La Presse*, Canada’s most-read daily at the time, that worked the hardest to increase reader enlistment and celebrate the heroism of the troops overseas.²⁹ From the beginning to the end of the war, *La Presse* informed the public about the Royal 22nd, its changes of leadership, its movements on the battlefield, its injured, and of course, its dead. In addition, the newspaper profiled many of its soldiers, such as the highly-decorated Georges Vanier, who later became the first French-Canadian Governor General, as well as Joseph Keable

²⁶ Pierre Vennat, *Les “Poilus” Québécois de 1914-1918* (Montreal: Les Éditions du Méridien, 2000. Volume I & II), 27.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁸ Wade, 648.

²⁹ Vennat, 12.

and Jean Brillant, the only two Quebecers to receive the Victoria Cross.³⁰ It appears that most French language newspapers, as well as many Quebecers, admired the courage of the soldiers and believed that their cause was just. Still, despite sympathy for the soldiers' plight, most Quebecers remained opposed to conscription.

In August 1914, when Canada entered the war, there was no need for the government to conscript its young men. Potential recruits were turned away by some militia regiments. Toronto's Queen's Own Rifles, for example, only allowed those who had previously served in the battalion to enlist. At the Toronto headquarters of the 48th Highlanders "recruiting officers sifted through the flock, taking only the best physical specimens into the building for examination. Hundreds were turned away."³¹ By October, the First Division and its 31,000 volunteers had sailed overseas to train for battle. In December, Robert Borden, the Conservative prime minister of Canada, told a Halifax crowd that "there has not been, there will not be, compulsion or conscription."³² Still, by the following summer, fueled by Bourassa's rhetoric, Quebecers worried about the introduction of conscription. On July 23rd, at Montreal's Parc Lafontaine, a minor riot broke out at a recruiting rally for the 41st battalion. The crowd, estimated by *Le Devoir* to number 12,000 people, and 1,500 by the *Montreal Gazette*, tore down recruiting posters and screamed "non à la conscription."³³ All of Quebec's English-language newspapers, and most French, condemned the riots.

³⁰ Ibid., 286.

³¹ Ian Hugh Maclean Miller, *Our Glory & Our Grief: Torontonians and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 17.

³² Granatstein & Hitsmen, 35.

³³ Armstrong, 111.

In a New Year's address to Canadians, at the beginning of 1916, Borden promised to double the size of the army from 250,000 men to half a million.³⁴ Laurier, as leader of the Opposition, called Borden's promise a "large contract." Nevertheless, for the first six months of 1916, recruiting numbers were stable. By July, the army had about 312,000 officers and men. However, it was becoming obvious that many young men were enlisting because of social pressure. For example, Rev. Logan Geggie told a crowd of people in Toronto that "any young man free of family ties who shirks his duty should be branded a coward."³⁵ In Hamilton, the municipal government let go of all of its part-time construction workers so that they could enlist. Despite these pressures, the numbers of volunteers began to dwindle by the fall of 1916. This reality, for an army that badly needed replacements after devastating battles at Mont Sorrel and Courcelette, forced the Canadian government to consider other means to raise troops.

Borden's decision to introduce conscription was based on several factors. After his trip to Europe in early 1917, the prime minister became acutely aware that Canada and its Allies were having serious problems in their fight to win the war. In February, Russia's government was overthrown by revolutionaries upset by the price of bread and the government's mishandling of the war. In April, the French army engaged in yet another disastrous offensive which provoked widespread mutinies among the ranks.³⁶ The British also had problems. Almost every day, the German navy waged an increasingly successful submarine campaign against British ships, sinking thousands of

³⁴ Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada 1608-1991* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1985), 135.

³⁵ Paul Maroney, "The Great Adventure: The Context and Ideology of Recruiting in Ontario, 1914-1917," *Canadian Historical Review* 77 (1996): 97.

³⁶ Robert Comeau, "L'Opposition à la conscription au Québec," in *La Première Guerre Mondiale et le Canada*, eds. Legault & Lamarre (Montreal: Méridien, 1999), 107.

tons of desperately-needed supplies to provision England and its Allies. Some good news came when the Americans, with their vast supplies of men and resources, decided to join the war, but it would take time before the Americans were ready to fight, and the Allies were in desperate need of men. With the failure of the voluntary enlistment system, and with mounting battlefield losses, Borden believed the only way to fulfill his promise was to raise an army of 500,000 men through conscription. His resolve to implement conscription was further fastened after he met with the troops on the battlefield. In a letter to Montreal's Archbishop Bruchési, Borden wrote, "I had the privilege of looking into the eyes of tens of thousands of men at the front who look to us for the effort which will make their sacrifice serve the great purpose for which it was undertaken."³⁷ It appears that one purpose, in the prime minister's mind, was greater independence and international clout after the war for Canada. Determined not to fail the Allies or his troops, the prime minister felt conscription was the only answer, even if it meant sparking a domestic crisis.

In May 1917, riots broke out in Montreal after Borden told Parliament he planned to introduce a conscription bill. On May 23rd, 3,000 people met at Montreal's Champs de Mars and broke the windows of the pro-conscription newspaper *La Patrie*. Meanwhile, at Parc Lafontaine, 10,000 people gathered to denounce the bill and the following night, crowds estimated at approximately 15,000 broke a streetcar's windows, attacked a policeman, and threw rocks at the *La Presse* building.³⁸ At the request of local authorities the military arrived and established order, although three soldiers were sent to the hospital by the mob. In June, the same month that the Catholic newspaper *La Croix*

³⁷ Granatstein & Hitsmen, 63.

³⁸ Vennat, 55.

contemplated the possibility of Quebec's secession from Canada, crowds in Montreal, Quebec City and other communities across the province gathered each night to protest conscription.³⁹ One of the more vocal protesters, Armand Lavergne, threatened to organize an armed rebellion if the government refused to conduct a nation-wide referendum on conscription. At the end of the summer, violence broke out in Montreal once again after the Military Service Act—that is, conscription—became law. Mobs broke windows, raided gun shops for weapons, threw projectiles and shot guns, injuring a rioter and a policeman.⁴⁰ In its description of these events, Montreal's *Gazette* wrote, "Crowds numbering two and three thousand marched through the Montreal streets, breaking windows, shouting 'Down with Borden' and 'Long Live the Revolution.'"⁴¹ There was even a plot, by the well-known anti-conscriptionist Elie Lalumière, to blow up the residence of Lord Althostane, an Anglo-Canadian magnate. Many Quebecers were angry, and some Canadians knew exactly whom to blame for the violence.⁴²

Henri Bourassa and the Nationalists refused to take any responsibility for the rioting. In an August, 1917 *Le Devoir* article titled "Sterile Violence," Bourassa argued that his newspaper had always denounced violence. He wrote that those who led the rioting were attracting negative attention for Quebecers, giving more reasons for Anglophone Canadians to punish Quebec.⁴³ Indeed, the majority of the French language newspapers, horrified by the violence in Montreal, admitted that the conscription law was deplorable, but asked their readers to remain calm and to obey it. Bourassa argued that Quebecers should work tirelessly to ensure that all anti-conscription candidates were

³⁹ Desmond Morton, *Fight or Pay: Soldiers families in the Great War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 178.

⁴⁰ Vennat, 60.

⁴¹ *Montreal Gazette*, 29 August, 1917.

⁴² Armstrong, 196.

⁴³ *Le Devoir*, August 1917.

elected in the next federal election. Others, like Oscar Drouin, an avid anti-conscriptionist encouraged resistance to the law and suggested that those affected by the Military Service Bill should organize themselves. In early September, Drouin, at an anti-conscription rally on Quebec City's Place Jacques Cartier, told the crowd he would assist anti-conscription groups in effective resistance to the law.⁴⁴

In the summer of 1917, Robert Borden had to call a federal election. His government was extremely unpopular, accused of wartime patronage profiteering and of financing Canada's most infamous weapon, the Ross Rifle.⁴⁵ Living costs were rising and consumer goods' prices were sky rocketing. Knowing the election would be fought over the controversial issue of conscription, the Conservative government used shrewd strategies to secure a win. In mid-August, it passed the War Time Voters' Act, giving overseas troops the right to vote—thus securing their electoral support. In early September, it passed the War Time Elections' Act, allowing women over the age of 21 to vote, as long as they had a brother, son, husband, or father in the military. The Elections' Act also disenfranchised Canadian citizens born in enemy countries, who had arrived in Canada after 1902; in addition it took the vote away from conscientious objectors, such as Mennonites and Doukhobors.⁴⁶ The government feared these groups would support the Liberals' anti-conscription platform. In October, a few English-speaking western Liberals, who supported conscription, left Laurier and crossed Parliament's floor to form a coalition government. By October 12th a coalition cabinet comprising of 13 Conservatives and ten Liberals was formed. Although the prime minister asked

⁴⁴ *Desrochers Report* (10 September, 1917), RG24 National Defense, *Quebec City Riots*, Vol.4517

⁴⁵ The Ross Rifle was a long marksman rifle that was issued to Canadian soldiers at the beginning of the war. It was infamous because of its weight and too often it jammed by dirt and rapid firing.

⁴⁶ Morton, "La Guerre d'indépendance du Canada une perspective Anglophone," 22.

Canadians to vote for his coalition government during the campaign, many Quebecers could not identify with a federal cabinet that had only two Quebecers.

The prime minister seemed to care little about his government's lack of popularity in Quebec. It is likely Borden believed that if he could gain support from his core base—middle- to upper-class Anglo-Saxon Protestants—the Quebecer vote would be irrelevant. By the end of November, when Borden discovered that over 90 per cent of potential conscripts demanded exemptions—in both Ontario and Quebec—he criticized Quebecers for low enlistment in the Canadian army. It appears Borden did this to deflect attention from the embarrassing reality that most English-speaking Canadians who were being recruited were as unenthusiastic about joining the military as the French.⁴⁷

The press and other politicians soon joined the attacks. On December 3rd, the *Toronto Mail and Empire* questioned if Laurier wanted a German peace. A week later, the same newspaper wrote that the French-Canadian leader was surely supported by the Kaiser.⁴⁸ A Unionist Liberal in Winnipeg called Quebec “the plague-spot of the whole Dominion.”⁴⁹ On the day of the election, the *Mail and Empire* told its readers that a vote for the Liberals was a vote for Bourassa and the Nationalist movement.⁵⁰ Most Quebecers, appalled by these attacks, denounced the Borden government and threw their support behind Laurier's Liberals. Although Quebecers were the largest group, others in the country also supported the Liberal leader and his anti-conscription position.

⁴⁷ Jack Granatstein, “Conscription in the Great War,” in *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, ed. David MacKenzie (Buffalo, N. Y.: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 66.

⁴⁸ Gwyn, 413.

⁴⁹ Granatstein & Hitsmen, 77.

⁵⁰ Armstrong, 77.

Organized labour was one such group which opposed conscription. In the spring and summer of 1917, organized workers protested on the streets and demanded that the government hold a referendum on the issue. On June 3rd, an anti-conscription protest in Winnipeg turned violent when the labour deputy, Fred Dixon, was seriously injured by soldiers who had recently returned from the Front.⁵¹ That same day, in Toronto, the military broke up a similar rally. In September 1917, at the 23rd Canadian Trades and Labour Congress, workers voted 200 to 6 in opposition of conscription but were less certain about how to oppose it. Many believed, like Bourassa, that the most effective strategy was to obey the law and use the electoral system to elect anti-conscriptionist parliamentarians; others felt that resistance and violence would be more successful. In a relatively close vote, 136 delegates voted to obey the law, and 106 to resist. Most of the resisters came from Quebec and the western provinces.⁵² At the Congress, there was even some talk about starting a massive general strike across the country to paralyze the economy and force the government to repeal the law. Despite their protests, Borden did not pay attention to the workers. Organized labour comprised only two per cent of the labour force—a constituency Borden felt he could ignore.

On the other hand, the prime minister knew his dealings with farmers—another large group opposed to conscription—would require delicacy. Farmers worried about their harvests: if the government conscripted their sons for military service, harvesting would be impossible. Farmers also felt that the Allies should send more food, not troops. Knowing he could not alienate the farmers, in early December the prime minister passed

⁵¹ Vennat, 58.

⁵² Bernard Dansereau, “Chronique du mouvement ouvrier politique,” *Bulletin d’Histoire Politique* 8 (2000): 144.

an Order in Council exempting all farmers' sons from conscription.⁵³ Thus, on December 17, farmers voted overwhelmingly in support of the Union government.

Borden's Union government won the December election with an impressive majority. The Union government elected 153 members; the Liberals, 82. However, Quebecers held 62 of the Liberal seats.⁵⁴ In the rest of Canada, Borden's party won all but 20 of the seats. After an overwhelmingly racist election campaign, the country was politically split by region and language. By and large, English-speaking Canadians sat on one side of the House of Commons; French-speaking Canadians on the other.

The Union government's election win was devastating in Quebec. Some French-speaking politicians questioned whether their understanding of Confederation—that of an equal pact between French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians—was working. Joseph Francoeur, a member of the Quebec provincial legislature, shocked Quebec and the rest of Canada when he proposed a motion passively suggesting that Quebec might secede from Canada. He said independence was an option if the other provinces understood Quebec as “un obstacle à l'union, au progresse et au développement du Canada.”⁵⁵ On January 17, 1918, the legislature had a lively debate when several Quebecers, particularly Quebec's Premier Lomer Gouin, defended Canada and Confederation. The resolution was withdrawn without a vote. While it seems Quebecers did not seriously intend to separate, the motion demonstrated their feelings of isolation, powerlessness and resentment. Thus, the Canadian government would need to act with caution in its conscription of Quebecers.

⁵³ Robert Bothwell, *Canada and Quebec: One country, two histories* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1995), 30.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁵⁵ Lamonde, 43.

Many Quebecers decided they would resist conscription at all costs. Some armed draft resisters hid in the backwoods of the Laurentian mountains. Others lied about being married or having children, while still others joined the priesthood. It was difficult for the military to find many of the draft dodgers because some local police forces did not cooperate. In a letter to the Militia Council, General Joseph Landry, the officer-in-command of Quebec City, complained about the stubborn nature of the municipal and provincial police.⁵⁶ Such a lack of enthusiasm might explain why so few men reported for duty in the capital city. According to a Military Service Act report issued by the government on April 1, 1918, Quebec City had the fewest men report for training compared to other Canadian cities. While other cities had on average approximately 1,500 men report, Quebec City had 225. Five thousand young men presented themselves for duty in Toronto, 2,206 in Winnipeg, 2,000 in Kingston and 1,417 in Montreal. Moreover, the report revealed that authorities stopped only 158 draft dodgers in Quebec City. Only Saint-John, New Brunswick, where 1,109 men reported for duty, had apprehended fewer resisters than Quebec City.⁵⁷

With little help from local police forces, the search for draft resisters in Quebec became the responsibility of the federally-run Dominion Police Force, which was Eastern Canada's equivalent of the Royal North West Mounted Police. Many Quebecers criticized this force for being a band of heavy-handed misfits who enjoyed using violence in their search for draft resisters. Rumors circulated that some of the men who comprised the police force were criminals, released to catch draft dodgers.⁵⁸ Similarly, stories circulated about a police force that ripped up exemption papers and arrested innocent

⁵⁶ Granatstein and Histmen, 87.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁵⁸ Hansard. Session (1918), Vol.I, 391.

Quebecers.⁵⁹ Particularly in the big cities, Quebecers said they recognized many of the policemen as the most disreputable characters in the province.⁶⁰ As a result, there was enormous strain between these authorities and the population. This uncomfortable tension continued after an alleged draft-dodger was arrested in Quebec City, sparking one of the most violent riots in Canadian history.

⁵⁹ *Le Devoir*, 1 April 1918.

⁶⁰ Hansard (1918), 391.

2

The Quebec City Riots 1918

Published in the early 1970s, Jean Provencher's book *Québec: sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918* was the first to extensively examine the story of the Quebec City riots. In compiling his work, the young historian worked in various archives examining newspapers, government documents, and perhaps most importantly the almost 500 page coroner's inquest. Although a few writers had previously alluded to the riots in a chapter or in a few lines in a textbook, Provencher's work greatly contributed to the historiography of the riots as it was the first book on the subject that relied extensively on primary documents. Since its publication, the book has generally been well received by academics as well as the general public. In the preface, Fernand Dumont, a well-known and respected Quebec sociologist, lent the book credibility by explaining that it was written "avec la plus stricte objectivité."⁶¹ Laval's Fernand Harvey described Provencher's use of sources as being "abondantes et variées" and commented on how the historian "évite le parti-pris simpliste et conserve une distance nécessaire face aux événements."⁶² Years later, UQAM's Robert Comeau described Provencher's book as "un ouvrage prenant, remarquablement écrit et documenté."⁶³ Furthermore, over the course of the last thirty-five years, Provencher has been asked to speak about the riots in newspapers, radio and television interviews. His work has been used in institutions like

⁶¹ Jean Provencher, *Québec sous la loi des mesures de guerre* (Montreal: Les Éditions du Boréal Express Ltée, 1971), 8.

⁶² Fernand Harvey, "Jean Provencher, Québec sous la loi des mesures de guerre, 1918," in *Recherches Sociographiques* 13 (1972): 157.

⁶³ Robert Comeau, "L'Opposition à la conscription au Québec," 96.

Montreal's McCord museum⁶⁴, in Canadian history textbooks, and has been cited frequently on the internet. Academics, like Desmond Morton and Judy Torrance, popular writers like Normand Lester, and documentarians like Mark Starowitz have all used Provencher's book in their own work.

Québec sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918 is powerful history. The book is well-written, simple, political, full of good and bad characters, and sensational. For Provencher, the Quebecers of 1918 were victims of the "Outsiders." He blames the Dominion Police, the federal government, and the army, for inspiring the rioting and provoking the violence on the Easter Monday which left four civilians dead. In addition, he also demonizes the enemy "within", Francophones like General Lessard, Brigadier General Landry and Alleyn Taschereau, the Minister of Justice's representative, for selling out to the English and betraying their own. Conversely, according to Provencher, the anti-conscriptionist leader Armand Lavergne, Police Chief Émile Trudel, Mayor Lavigne and especially the rioters should all be admired for their willingness to stand up for a just cause. In the end, Provencher's book, which was dedicated to the four who were killed by the Canadian army, was written to commemorate the Quebecers of 1918 as well as to correct the historical injustice of an event perceived as having been forgotten.

Like all writers, when creating *Québec sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918*, Jean Provencher was influenced by the intellectual and social climate of his time. His book, published one year after the October Crisis, makes implicit connections between

⁶⁴ "Cinq civils sont tués par les soldats à Québec." *McCord Museum*. www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/fr/collection/artefacts/PERS-12?Lang=2&accessnumber=PERS-12 (accessed June 15, 2006).

the events of October 1970 and the spring of 1918. In addition, the writer's political narrative that depicts Quebecers as being victimized by the "Other" appears to have been inspired by the academics at the Université de Montréal in the 1950s and 60s.⁶⁵ Like historians before and since, Provencher was searching for the elusive "truth" in the past and claimed to be "objective" in his pursuit. Nonetheless, he, like his contemporaries, could not help writing history with a political message and accordingly interpreted and selected documents that conformed to the politics of the present.

This chapter is necessary because it provides context for understanding the riots. It is also important for the historiography on the subject because it is the first comprehensive academic study of the riots in forty years, as well as being the first work written in English on the topic in more than seventy.⁶⁶ Like Provencher's work, this study has been shaped by forces of its own day, both within the historical discipline and by contemporary society. Consequently, although he and I have both used largely the same primary sources, particularly the two volume coroner's inquest, we offer two widely divergent narratives of the riots.

I EASTER THURSDAY 1918

On Thursday, March 28, 1918, at approximately 8:30 p.m., Joseph Mercier and his friend Alfred Deslauriers walked into the Salle Frontenac, a pool room and bowling hall in Quebec City's Saint-Roch neighborhood. Within minutes of entering, the two realized that a man named Bélanger, one of the hated Dominion police officers, was in the hall. In a speech given after the riots, Laurier described Bélanger as being "as well

⁶⁵ See Ronald Rudin's Chapter 3 in *Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 1997.

⁶⁶ Since Elizabeth Armstrong's *The Crisis of Quebec 1914-1918* (1937).

known in the city of Quebec as Barabbas at Jerusalem. He is known to be a boxer, a pugilist, a bully and a disturber of the peace, always fond of showing off his muscles.”⁶⁷ Though both young men had been exempted from military service, Mercier and Deslauriers thought that it was best to leave the hall in order to avoid an encounter with Bélanger. Mercier said he heard rumors that Dominion police agents, hoping to receive a \$10 bonus, would shred exemption papers and arrest innocent Quebecers.⁶⁸ While leaving, Dominion police agents stopped the two and asked to see their exemption papers. Deslauriers showed the agents his documents and was allowed to leave. However, Mercier had forgotten his exemption papers at home. Although the Dominion police agents did not allow him to call his home from the hall’s public phone, he asked a friend to find his father to bring the papers. Meanwhile, the Dominion agents handed the young Quebecer to military authorities, who brought him to the station. Mercier said that the soldiers were heavy-handed, such that they held him on each side of his body so he could not move.⁶⁹ Both municipal and Dominion police officers followed Mercier and the military police car. As the vehicles were leaving the Salle Frontenac, crowds of people protested Mercier’s arrest and followed the cars, shouting “Lâchez-le! Libérons-le!”⁷⁰ Soon after Mercier and the authorities arrived at the nearby station, Mercier’s father appeared with the son’s exemption papers his son had been issued the previous November. Mercier went free.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Library and Archives Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (2, 3, 4 and 5 April.1918), 391.

⁶⁸ Mercier testimony, *Enquête tenue devant le coroner pour le district de Québec le 8 avril 1918 et les jours suivants sur les causes de la mort de Honoré Bergeron, Alexandre Bussières, Georges Demeule et Édouard Tremblay*, E 17 folder 1661 (1918), Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales de Québec (Quebec City), 2.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁰ *Action Catholique*, 30 March, 1918.

⁷¹ Mercier Testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 6.

By this time, a crowd of approximately 5,000 people, both rioters and curious onlookers, had assembled outside of Saint-Roch's police station Number Three. With Easter weekend approaching, there were more Quebecers on the streets because their church services had ended. Some in the crowd became violent, throwing projectiles—mainly stones, bricks and pieces of ice—at the police station, breaking several windows. Much of the crowd's anger was directed towards Bélanger, a well-known former athlete and restaurant owner, who had taken refuge with a few other agents in the station. Capitaine Charles Desrochers, head of the Dominion police force in Quebec City, and Émile Trudel, head of the City police, arrived at the station shortly after they received word of the crowd gathering. Desrochers went straight into the station while Trudel and several other officers remained outside, trying to calm the people. Trudel entered the station and noticed that Desrochers was on the phone with Brigadier General Joseph Landry. Desrochers was hoping Landry, in charge of Military District No.5 (Quebec City and its surrounding area), would bring the troops to the station. However, Landry replied that before the military could be used the city's mayor, Henri-Edgar Lavigreur, needed to provide written authorization signed by two Justices of the Peace.⁷² Trudel interrupted their conversation, saying that they could not leave the station for this request while it was under siege.

After Landry spoke to Desrochers, he phoned the Mayor to inform him about the rioting. Lavigreur told the Brigadier General to make sure that the soldiers were ready in case they were needed.⁷³ However, the Mayor hoped to peacefully resolve the problem by appealing to the crowd. Shortly after the phone call, Lavigreur arrived by car at Place

⁷² Trudel Testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 3.

⁷³ Military report written by Brigadier-General Landry, 30 March 1918, RG24 National Defense, *Quebec City Riots*, Vol. 4517-4518, Library and Archives Canada.

Jacques-Cartier, a public square where most of the crowd had congregated, a few feet from the police station. The Mayor asked the people to remain calm and to refrain from violence. He told them he was not aware of the incident that had provoked the rioting but that as soon as he was informed he would publicly address the issue. At the inquest, the Mayor said after he spoke, “les gens ont arrêté; tout a cessé dans le temps.”⁷⁴ The Mayor told the crowd the Dominion police officers were no longer in the station, so there was no reason for the crowd to remain in the streets. After asking people to disperse, the Mayor returned home.

According to Émile Trudel, the crowd became more agitated after the Mayor left and his police force was overwhelmed by rioters. He explained that once the crowd realized the Dominion police officers had escaped from the station through the basement, the crowd divided itself in two and searched for them. The mob quickly found the person they were looking for. Bélanger was fleeing on a streetcar when a crowd of rioters assaulted him. They threw projectiles and punched the Dominion police officer several times in the face. Trudel said he heard a man scream from the street, “On a accroché Bélanger dans les chars et puis on l’a à moitié tué.”⁷⁵ Another overzealous rioter yelled out from a crowd of approximately 1,000, “S’il est blessé, on va le rachever.” Trudel, a local priest, and M. Létourneau, a Member of Parliament, all passionately asked the rioters to cease their violence. Trudel said, “Dans tout pays civilisé on respecte l’ambulance; respectez au moins les blessés.”⁷⁶ The crowd listened and an ambulance took Bélanger to the hospital. Although rumors spread that he had been killed, the hospital released him the following day. That same night the mob assaulted two other

⁷⁴ Lavigneur testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 2.

⁷⁵ Trudel testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 5.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 5.

Dominion police officers, Plamandon and Major Évanturel. In both cases, the mob forced the two men to promise to stop arresting conscripts.⁷⁷

II GOOD FRIDAY 1918

On the morning of March 29, Good Friday, Joseph Landry encouraged the Mayor to take all necessary precautions to prevent renewed rioting. He reminded the Mayor of the procedure Lavigueur had to follow for military assistance. In his military report to the Secretary of the Militia Council in Ottawa, Landry wrote, “I advised him (Lavigueur) to get the necessary requisition ready at once so that the same would not cause delay later. I even cited the Sections of the Militia Act to him and advised him to consult the City Attorney.”⁷⁸

In his report, Landry explained that he had received numerous reports from various sources warning him of possible attacks on buildings in the city. The most disturbing report came from the Deputy Registrar, Antoine Gobeil, in charge of registering conscripts, who heard that the mob planned to target his office. Landry admitted that most of the threats amounted to little, but he did think it wise to defend the Registrar’s office in the Auditorium⁷⁹ building. Landry wrote, “I specially asked the Mayor to take the necessary steps to do this, mentioning particularly a detail of police and firemen which could hold the mob pending the arrival of the military-this the Mayor promised to do.”⁸⁰

⁷⁷ *Le Devoir*, 30 March 1918.

⁷⁸ Landry military report, 30 March 1918.

⁷⁹ The Auditorium building is in Old Quebec City on rue St.Jean.

⁸⁰ Landry military report, 30 March 1918.

In the middle of the afternoon, Gobeil received a phone call from Trudel who assured him that there would be no rioting. During the inquest, the police chief said, “je ne croyais pas qu’après l’échauffourée de la veille, ils (the rioters) recommenceraient, qu’en tout cas c’était aux officiers à fédéraux qu’ils en voulaient.”⁸¹ Trudel’s phone call calmed Gobeil, who was worried after he received an anonymous call warning him of an attack on his building.⁸² At 6:30 p.m., Gobeil, confident that he had taken the necessary steps to avoid damage to his office, went home. At the inquest, Gobeil said, “je comptais que les précautions que j’avais prises en avertissant M.le Maire et les autorités militaires et que si c’était nécessaire toute la protection requise nous serait donnée.”⁸³ A few hours later, Gobeil, at home, received a phone call: his office was on fire.

Sometime after 7 p.m., after an urgent phone call from the Mayor, Trudel arrived at Lavigueur’s home. The Mayor informed him that the mob was congregating in Saint-Roch and was planning to walk to the Upper Town. Trudel and Lavigueur, with the Mayor’s requisition, went by car for signatures from Landry and two Justices of the Peace. Although Landry had advised the Mayor to get these signatures earlier, Lavigueur had not. Curiously, Trudel felt compelled to accompany the Mayor, even though he was not needed to sign the documents. Some people wondered, including the Mayor, why Trudel was not with his men, guarding the Auditorium. At the inquest, the Mayor said, “J’ai dit qu’il devait rester sur les lieux et commander ses hommes et il ne l’a pas fait.”⁸⁴

After the initial phone call from the Mayor, Trudel immediately phoned Sergeant Wellman and told him to assemble a group of policemen to defend the Auditorium.

⁸¹ Trudel testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 6.

⁸² Gobeil testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 4.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁴ Lavigueur testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 47.

Although the Mayor asked Trudel to place as many as 40 to 50 men, according to Lavigueur the police chief responded, “c’était impossible de ‘mettre’ autant d’hommes que cela, mais que, dans tous les cas, mon organization serait bonne et que tout marcherait bien.”⁸⁵ Trudel told Wellman to put four men outside the Registrar’s office with strict orders not to allow any entrance. In addition, two men were to be placed outside the Auditorium, while 20 officers were to remain hidden from the public.⁸⁶ A few days after the riots, in a letter written to Trudel, Sergeant Wellman explained that he had been unable to place four men outside the Registrar’s office because they had been locked out of the Auditorium building. When the rioting began, according to Wellman, he had one of his men call the military twice for reinforcements but they did not arrive quickly enough. He said that the ten men who guarded the Auditorium door were overtaken by 200 to 300 rioters who stormed the building, setting part of it on fire. At the time, the other sixteen men were spread out in the crowd trying to stop rioters from throwing projectiles or firing their guns.⁸⁷ Wellman writes, “Nous nous sommes fait déborder à l’endroit que nous occupions. Si nous avions eu la moindre assistance, nous aurions réussi à disperser les manifestants.”⁸⁸

Earlier that night, a few hundred people from Saint-Roch walked up to Quebec City’s Upper Town while singing “La Marseillaise” and “O Canada.” At around 9 p.m., they peacefully passed the Auditorium, on their way to the newspaper offices of *L’Événement* and the *Chronicle*. Once they arrived at the *Chronicle* building, the mob pillaged the office of its valuables, including a telegraph machine, a clock and a moose’s

⁸⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁸⁶ Trudel testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 8.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 28.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 10.

head.⁸⁹ They then broke all the windows of the *L'Événement* building. It appears the mob's motivation for attacking these buildings was the two papers' pro-conscription positions. Landry, Lavigueur, and Trudel had met to sign the mayor's requisition at Landry's nearby office; they helplessly watched the mob destroy the two offices. After observing the rioters act with impunity, the three authorities were convinced that the military was needed to establish order. With the requisition in hand, Trudel and the mayor went to find the two Justices of the Peace.

When the mob returned to the Auditorium, there was a large crowd of about 8,000 people, mostly curious bystanders. Some of the rioters began throwing projectiles, breaking windows of the building and hitting some of the policemen. Soon after 9:30 p.m., one of the rioters ordered the mob to charge the building. It was at this point that the rioters broke down the door and invaded the Registrar's Office, overwhelming Wellman and his men. They ripped up office documents and threw them out the window while the crowd outside cheered them on. They also set the office on fire. Soon after, firemen arrived at the scene and eventually put out the fire despite having two of their water lines cut by the rioters.

Just before 10 p.m., the Mayor returned to Landry's office with a requisition signed by two Justices of the Peace, Edward Foley and Alx. J. Messervy. Landry, satisfied that all protocol had been followed, ordered Lieutenant-Colonel J.A. Beaubien and his soldiers who formed the Composite Battalion to meet the Mayor at the Auditorium.⁹⁰ Fifteen minutes later, Landry reported that the battalion had formed a line in front of the Auditorium between the building and the crowd which he described as

⁸⁹ *Le Soleil*, 30 March 1918.

⁹⁰ Landry Military Report, 30 March 1918.

being “orderly though somewhat noisy.”⁹¹ The troops’ presence immediately calmed most of the crowd.⁹² Considering the damage already done, the Mayor decided that to read the Riot Act—allowing the military to shoot at the crowd—was not necessary. By midnight, with the crowd dispersing, Lavigneur gave Beaubien a signed statement that said the soldiers were no longer needed. Landry reported that the town was quiet by the early morning of March 30. In addition, he wrote to the Militia Council, that he had received word from Gobeil informing him, amazingly, that few of his papers pertaining to the Military Service Act had been destroyed by the rioters.

Almost immediately following the rioting, critics, including Robert Borden, accused civil authorities of failing to maintain the peace. The most popular target was Émile Trudel. In a letter to the Mayor, Trudel refused to accept any responsibility for the rioting; instead, he put the blame on others. He thought that Capitaine Desrochers should have ensured that the Auditorium door would be open so police could have better defended the building. He complained that the military had not arrived in appropriate time. He also grumbled that his force was severely undermanned and that he could only commit 26 officers to guard the building. He wrote, “Il était impossible aussi d’envoyer toutes nos forces à un endroit où l’on appréhendait des troubles et de laisser de la sorte le reste de la ville au merci des manifestants.”⁹³

Despite Trudel’s claim of innocence at the inquest, one can understand why he and the Mayor’s actions were questioned. It is still not clear why the Mayor waited until violence broke out to prepare the requisition for use of military authority. His judgment was particularly odd in light of the previous night’s riots, Landry’s early-morning

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² *Le Devoir*, 30 March 1918.

⁹³ Trudel testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 11.

insistence on preparing for more violence, 25 phone calls from citizens asking for protection, as well as the warnings, including that from Gobeil, that there could be an attack at the Auditorium. Landry's frustration with the Mayor's tentativeness and Police inaction was explicit in his military report. He wrote, "No effective Police action was being taken by the Municipal Police and, in spite of my having cautioned him that morning, the Mayor had no requisition and did not produce one until 9:57 p.m."⁹⁴ When the Brigadier-General saw how the mere presence of the troops had calmed the rioters, he must have been further irritated by the Mayor's tardiness.

Trudel's decision-making was also peculiar. For most of the day on the 29th, the police chief appeared to underestimate the real threat of renewed attacks by the rioters. This attitude was most pronounced when Trudel reassured Gobeil that the rioters would be quiet and that there would be no attack on the Registrar's office. In addition, the police chief's refusal to assist his men at the Auditorium, until he appeared with the military after 10 p.m. is difficult to understand. While traveling past the Auditorium with the Mayor, Trudel had two opportunities to join his policemen. However, both times he said that he should stay with the Mayor. At the inquest, Trudel's inability to give a credible reason for his absence from his men made the Chief appear to have performed unprofessionally.⁹⁵

Perhaps if the civic authorities had made better choices on March 29 much of the violence could have been avoided. Instead, rioters did as they wished with practically no recrimination, and their success seems to have encouraged the future violence. Concurrently, in their incapacity to effectively keep the peace, the civic authorities lost

⁹⁴ Landry military report, 30 March 1918.

⁹⁵ Trudel testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 42-43.

the federal government's trust. This would have serious consequences. After the Good Friday rioting, the federal government removed Lavigueur and Trudel's authority to establish safety in the city, and invested it in the military.

III EASTER SATURDAY 1918

On Saturday March 30, Joseph Landry visited the Mayor at his office. The Brigadier-General explained to Lavigueur that ending the riots was no longer the Mayor's responsibility. Earlier in the morning, Landry had received a phone call from Robert Borden, who, worried about the situation in Quebec City, told the Brigadier-General to take all possible measures to stop the violence. The Mayor agreed to relinquish control of the city and promised to cooperate with the soldiers. Furthermore, Lavigueur placed Trudel and his men under the command of the military.⁹⁶ At 12:15 p.m. Landry phoned Ottawa and asked for 1,000 additional troops, which would increase the total number of soldiers in the city to 1,500. The government ordered soldiers to Quebec. The prime minister decided that the highest ranking francophone officer in Canada, General Lessard, would command the troops once they arrived on Sunday, March 31. After Borden gave his orders to Landry, he telegraphed Lessard, who was in Halifax, and told him to go immediately to Quebec City.⁹⁷ Lessard also arrived on the 31st. Until then, Landry tried his best to keep the city quiet.

Although there were rumors of possible attacks on buildings around the city, there was little action for most of Saturday. The soldiers spent the day defending prominent buildings and patrolling the streets. At around 8:30 p.m., a crowd gathered in the Lower

⁹⁶ Lavigueur testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 15-17.

⁹⁷ Machin report written to Robert Borden, April 2 1918, Robert Borden's Correspondence MG 26 H, C-280, Library and Archives Canada.

Town and began to walk towards the Military Drill Hall, just off Grande-Allée in the Upper Town.⁹⁸ For the Quebecers, the Drill Hall was symbolic because it was the first place draft dodgers were sent if caught by the Dominion Police. At about 9 p.m., Lieutenant Colonel Girouard reported that though the crowd had reached la Grande-Allée, it was mostly under control. Girouard wrote, “they confined themselves to shouting abuse and firing snow-balls, and pieces of ice.”⁹⁹

About an hour later, the crowd, which was estimated to number 3,000 became increasingly unruly. Girouard’s soldiers were losing patience because the mob targeted them with ice, bottles, and stones. After he was hit twice on the head with ice, Girouard read the Riot Act.¹⁰⁰ In his report to General Landry, Girouard wrote, “I then ordered my men to load but not in any circumstances to fire without receiving a specific order from myself and to be given by me only.”¹⁰¹ Eventually, Girouard ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Montserrat, and his detachment of mounted artillery, to break up the crowd, “which he did very effectively by charging at full trot, then returning and cleaning the sidewalks on Grande-Allée in front of our men.”¹⁰² These cavalry charges mildly injured some civilians.

After 1 a.m., the mob ransacked the Brousseau & Brothers hardware store, which was cordoned off by the municipal police.¹⁰³ As during the previous night, the police did little to stop the rioters while they stole weapons—mainly guns and knives—which they

⁹⁸ The Military Drill Hall was known as the Manège militaire, located on la Grande Allée. This building recently burnt down in April 2008.

⁹⁹ Library and Archives Canada, *Girouard military report*, 31 March 1918, RG24 National Defense, *Quebec City Riots*, Vol. 4517-4518.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. At this point each officer had a copy of the Riot Act in both languages

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Brousseau & Brothers does not appear to exist any longer in Quebec City.

distributed to the crowd.¹⁰⁴ *Le Devoir*, wrote, “la possession de ces armes par les manifestants est inquiétante car on s’attend à de nouveaux troubles.”¹⁰⁵ After breaking all the windows of a streetcar, and engaging in a few more skirmishes near the Legislative Assembly building, the rioters withdrew and the streets were quiet.¹⁰⁶

In front of an excited and sometimes violent crowd, it appears the officers and the soldiers acted with prudence. Landry applauded the soldiers’ discipline, “on a jeté des pierres et des glaçons aux soldats, on les a insultés pendant une partie de la soirée. Les soldats, les troupes ont fait de leur mieux possible pour les disperser, sans avoir à tirer en aucune façon. Plusieurs soldats ont été blessés.”¹⁰⁷ Former Liberal Senator Phillipe-Auguste Choquette, who encouraged the rioters and the curious to go home that night, also commended the troops. At the inquest, he said, “les soldats se sont bien conduits, sans aucune provocation à l’exception de ces paroles déplacées que le militaire a dit je crois à ces soldats plutôt qu’au public. Tout s’est passé paisiblement et nous n’avons rien eu à regretter.”¹⁰⁸

IV EASTER SUNDAY 1918

On the morning of Easter Sunday March 31st, most from Quebec City were sitting in church. The night before, Cardinal Bégin, the archbishop of Quebec, had written a letter to all the Rectors of the Parishes of Quebec. He wrote, “we beg of you, Father Rector, when reading this advice tomorrow from the pulpit, to recommend calm

¹⁰⁴ *Le Soleil*, 1 April 1918.

¹⁰⁵ *Le Devoir*, 1 April 1918.

¹⁰⁶ *Action Catholique*, 1 April 1918.

¹⁰⁷ Landry testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 15. Several soldiers were mildly hurt and some were taken to the hospital.

¹⁰⁸ Choquette testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 7.

and moderation to your parishioners, and to exhort them to be on their guard against thoughtless impulses that cannot result in any good.”¹⁰⁹ Despite the Church’s appeal for peace, the rioting continued by afternoon.

It began with a violent encounter between soldiers and rioters when the former were trying to remove weapons from Hermann Young’s store. The rioters yelled insults and threw projectiles at the soldiers injuring a few. When the soldiers left the store some rioters followed and continued to bombard them with ice and bricks.¹¹⁰ It appears that one of the soldiers, without orders, lost his temper and shot one round at the mob. Another soldier used his bayonette to stab a man in the crowd. Two rioters were hurt, both with mild injuries to their arms.¹¹¹

All afternoon and night, hundreds of fresh soldiers, mostly Anglophones from Toronto and the Western provinces, arrived in the city. Under the command of Major Gooderham Mitchell, a 39-year-old General Staff Officer who had seen action on the Western Front, the Ontario soldiers arrived by train from Toronto. At the inquest, Mitchell remembered cautioning his troops on the train:

I warned them that they would probably not get as much cheering as they had at other times, but they were to remember that they were in a responsible position, that a great deal depended on the way they acted, and I asked them individually and collectively to bear in mind at all times they were to do nothing except on the instructions of those over them.¹¹²

Some in Quebec City welcomed the men, hoping that they would end the violence and restore order. Others were uneasy with a group of armed young Anglophones patrolling their streets. General Lessard later explained that he had no choice but to

¹⁰⁹ Begin’s letter to rectors, C/159

¹¹⁰ *Le Soleil*, 1 April 1918.

¹¹¹ *Le Devoir*, 1 April 1918.

¹¹² Mitchell testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 30.

summon fresh troops from Ontario. Lessard said the French speaking Quebec soldiers needed relief because they had been on duty for three days straight. According to the Major General, there were simply not enough Francophone soldiers to replace those on guard.¹¹³

These new troops saw action almost immediately. That night the Toronto battalion cordoned off the Upper Town, where most of the past rioting had taken place, from the Lower Town where most of the rioters lived. At the moment when the soldiers and some congregating rioters appeared as though they would confront each other, the rioters' were distracted by a man who approached them out of the darkness: it was Armand Lavergne.¹¹⁴

Earlier that night, around 7 p.m., Lavergne had received a phone call from an old friend, Alleyn Taschereau, who had been sent by the Minister of Justice to help Lieutenant-Colonel Machin gather information for his reports to Ottawa. Taschereau insisted that Lavergne, who had not been involved in the rioting, meet with him, Machin, and Lieutenant-Colonel Carruthers at the Chateau Frontenac. Lavergne, who was fighting a flu bug, walked over to the hotel. According to Lavergne, Machin, whom he had never met, asked him for his thoughts on the cause of the riots. Lavergne responded, "Mon Colonel, pour moi ces troubles sont causés par la bêtise et l'incurie dont on a fait preuve dans le choix de la Police Fédérale. On a choisi des individus de la respectabilité plus que douteuse."¹¹⁵ Lavergne believed the rioters were not revolting against the conscription law, but rather its application in Quebec. The lawyer also argued the soldiers' presence in the streets of the city was a direct provocation to its population. He felt that the rioting

¹¹³ *La Presse*, 3 April 1918.

¹¹⁴ *Le Devoir*, 1 April 1918.

¹¹⁵ Lavergne testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 6-7.

would not end until the soldiers were withdrawn. Machin explained to Lavergne that he had received information that the mob was assembling in the Lower Town. He asked the lawyer if he would go and speak to the crowd.¹¹⁶ The three government officials knew only Lavergne had enough influence over the people to calm them and encourage them to return home. In his report to Borden, Machin writes:

I explained to him(Lavergne) that the interview was entirely a personal one; and that while I happened to be the Director of the Military Service Branch of the Department of Justice and had come down to see the nature and extent of the damage to our office, I had no official status in talking to him..... He suggested to me that some compromise should be made with the military authorities, and I informed him that I had absolutely no power or status and that if he had any remarks to make to the G.O.C. he must see the officer himself, but what I had suggested to him, was purely personal from one man to another in the cause of the innocent.¹¹⁷

In a letter to Robert Borden, Allyn Taschereau reiterated Machin's position, writing, "it was never mentioned to him (Lavergne) that any official was speaking for the Government. Our conversation was a friendly one with the intention of helping the general public."¹¹⁸ At the inquest, Lavergne described his interpretation of the meeting. When he and Machin discussed the possible termination of the work of the Dominion Police Force in the city, the lawyer described Machin as saying, "C'est ma part, et je m'y engage. Ces gens là ne seront plus employés."¹¹⁹ Lavergne believed he had Machin's moral guarantee to withdraw the troops from the city. According to Lavergne, Machin had said, "Quant à retirer les troupes, je n'en ai pas l'autorité mais je ferai tout mon

¹¹⁶ Machin report to the Minister of Justice, 2 April 1918, RG13 Justice, *Quebec Riots*, Vol.221, 226, 229, 242, Library and Archives Canada.

¹¹⁷ Machin report to the Minister of Justice

¹¹⁸ Taschereau letter to Robert Borden, May 1918, Robert Borden's Correspondence MG 26 H, C-280, Library and Archives Canada.

¹¹⁹ Lavergne Testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 12.

possible.”¹²⁰ Regardless of which version one believes, Lavergne decided to speak to the crowd with the firm belief that he had the approval of the Canadian government.

While Lavergne was walking to Place Jacques-Cartier, the rioters pillaged the Martineau store of its merchandise.¹²¹ Unable to obtain any weapons, (the military had already removed all armaments), the rioters set the store on fire and fled the scene.¹²² A half hour later, the mob burnt down the Samson and Fillion store after stealing its weapons.¹²³ On their way to Place Jacques Cartier, these same rioters encountered Lavergne. The lawyer warned them that the soldiers would not hesitate to shoot. However, they refused to listen telling him to mind his own business. Lavergne tried to reason with the rioters. He explained that he was a well-known anti-conscriptionist. He said, “Je suis ici en mission. Je viens de la part des autorités, je sais ce que vous demandez-on va retirer les détectives dont vous vous plaignez et demain les troupes ne seront plus dans les rues.”¹²⁴ According to Lavergne, the majority of the crowd embraced his words and followed him to Place Jacques Cartier where a larger group of people were gathering. At approximately 9 p.m., Lavergne addressed a crowd of 4,000 to 5,000 Quebecers. He told them that if they were peaceful that night then the detectives and the soldiers would pull-out of the city. However, with great consequence, he also said that if the government failed to keep its promises, he would return the following night to Place Jacques Cartier. If that were to happen, Lavergne told the crowd that, “vous ferez ce que

¹²⁰ Ibid., 12.

¹²¹ *La Presse*, 1 April 1918.

¹²² *Le Devoir*, 1 April 1918.

¹²³ Military Report from Station Number 3, April 1 1918, RG24 National Defense, *Quebec City Riots*, Vol. 4517-4518, Library and Archives Canada.

¹²⁴ Lavergne testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 11-12.

vous voudrez.”¹²⁵ In parting, Lavergne’s final words were, “Maintenant je vous demande une chose ce soir avant de partir: Je vous demande votre parole d’honneur de vous disperser, d’être paisible et de vous fier à l’honneur du Gouvernement que je représente.”¹²⁶ According to Lavergne, a satisfied crowd went peacefully to their homes. A few days later at the coroner’s inquest, some witnesses argued that Lavergne’s all-or-nothing speech, full of empty promises that were impossible to guarantee, contributed to the increased hostility among the rioters. The following day, when the promises were not met, the rioters took Lavergne’s words literally—they did what they wanted.

V EASTER MONDAY 1918

On Monday April 1, 1918, *Le Devoir*’s two headlines read, “Les autorités s’engagent à retirer les troupes de Québec”, and “Le calme renaît à Québec.” Both statements proved to be entirely incorrect.¹²⁷ In the same newspaper, an article written from Ottawa described Canada’s capital city as consumed by political discussion concerning the riots. One French speaking Liberal from Quebec, referring to the massacre of unarmed civilians by the Russian Tsar’s army, was ominously quoted as saying, “le Canada est la seule des possessions britanniques qui n’avait pas encore eu son ‘bloody Sunday’”.¹²⁸ The country would not have to wait long to achieve such a regrettable feat.

On this densely foggy Easter Monday, Armand Lavergne walked to the Chateau Frontenac to speak to General Lessard, an old acquaintance. He pleaded with the General to hide his soldiers from public view. According to Lavergne, Lessard’s reply was, “Non,

¹²⁵ Ibid., 16.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 16.

¹²⁷ *Le Devoir*, 1 April 1918.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

il est trop tard, j'ai la force et je m'en sers et je vais disperser tout rassemblement."¹²⁹ Lavergne retorted, "Général vous allez tout recommencer et il y aura du sang versé certainement. La population va croire que c'est une provocation."¹³⁰ Lessard warned Lavergne to stay away from Place Jacques Cartier and implied the lawyer would be stopped that night if he tried to speak to the crowd. Earlier that day, when the Mayor asked the General to hide his soldiers from the public, Lessard had told him, "Les ordres sont très précis. Je ne connais pas les engagements ou les pourparlers de Lavergne avec le colonel Machin; mais Machin n'est pas autorisé à traiter avec qui que ce soit. Les troupes descendront et se placeront sur la place du marché."¹³¹ The General's resolve to deploy troops was further strengthened when the military received intelligence suggesting there would be more attacks on buildings in the city, including two hardware stores near Place Jacques Cartier.¹³² Consequently, at approximately 6 p.m. that night, Lessard sent 1,200 soldiers into Quebec City's Lower Town.

The mobilization of soldiers should not have been surprising to the Quebecers. Throughout the day, the military had placed signs across the city warning the public that those who participated in any form of public demonstration would be arrested and imprisoned. The military even cautioned citizens they could be injured or killed if they were at the wrong place at the wrong time. In addition, Lessard had placed warnings in every prominent newspaper demanding the public stay away from the rioters by remaining at home.¹³³ At the inquest, Lavergne, who on the Monday night stayed home fearing the crowd might riot if he was arrested, argued that the Quebecers did not take

¹²⁹ Lavergne testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 20.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹³² Military Report from Station Number 3.

¹³³ Machin Report to Robert Borden, 2 April 1918.

these warnings seriously because they were not signed and had no official government stamp. Lessard, who had thought the lawyer's argument absurd, replied, "Je ne crois pas qu'il y ait une seule personne dans toute la ville de Québec qui ne savait pas quelles étaient les mesures de rigueur qui seraient prises-sans sceau et sans signature. Elles savaient très bien où elles en étaient."¹³⁴

Major Robert Rodgers commanded the soldiers that were sent to the Lower Town. The force consisted of 580 Royal Canadian Regiment, 400 Royal Canadian Engineers, 100 Royal Canadian Dragoons, and 100 Machine Gun Company with 10 machine guns. Almost all of these soldiers were Anglophones, conscripted under the Military Service Act, and, excluding the officers, had no battlefield experience. At the inquest, Rodgers explained, "I got very strict orders to avoid a clash if possible and if possible not to use any force, but to keep a mob from collecting. I spoke to the men at the time they went out and told them under no consideration were they to load their rifles until they got an order from a senior officer."¹³⁵

At around 8 p.m., a large crowd was congregating at the Place Jacques Cartier in Saint-Roch. The soldiers tried to disperse the crowd in a peaceful manner.¹³⁶ Rodgers explained his approach, "If we saw two or three talking, I told them (his soldiers), 'don't bother them; if you see seven or eight young fellows and they are nasty, why I say go up and ask them to move on.'¹³⁷ At around 9 p.m., the rioters hid in the back streets of the square, after stealing weapons and ammunition from the stores of Mr. Cantin and Mr.

¹³⁴ Lessard Testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 18.

¹³⁵ Rogers testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 3.

¹³⁶ Rodgers Military Report, 1 April 1918, RG24 National Defense, *Quebec City Riots*, Vol. 4517-4518, Library and Archives Canada.

¹³⁷ Rodgers testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 27.

Lajeunesse. They threw bricks, stones, and ice at the soldiers.¹³⁸ The soldiers struggled to identify those throwing projectiles because of the thick fog, which reduced visibility to approximately 15 meters. At one point, a rioter shot his revolver five times at a soldier who was trying to apprehend him. However, the revolver malfunctioned and the soldier was not hurt.¹³⁹ Shortly after, the Royal Canadian Dragoons, on horseback, rushed the rioters with saber in hand down a side street. In this manoeuvre, one soldier was hit in the head by a brick and required medical treatment.¹⁴⁰ By 10:30 p.m., the Dragoons withdrew their exhausted horses after rushing the crowd for over two hours. On the Boulevard Langelier, some soldiers were fired upon by snipers who were hiding on rooftops and behind snowbanks. After two soldiers were hit by bullets, Rodgers sent in reinforcements: 25 soldiers under the command of Major Mitchell.

When Mitchell moved his soldiers west towards the intersection of Saint-Vallier, Bagot and Saint-Joseph, the rioters shot at them. When the troops arrived at the intersection, they had their eyes on two large crowds of rioters—one which was straight-ahead, down Bagot Street; the other to their right, at the intersection of Saint-Vallier and Laviolette. Mitchell had his troops stop, while he proceeded to speak to what he thought was the more reasonable of the two crowds, at Laviolette.¹⁴¹ As Mitchell approached the crowd, he realized six municipal policemen were experiencing difficulty holding back the rioters. Xavier Blouin, Constable for the City Police, pleaded to the crowd, “Reculez pour l’amour du bon Dieu, les soldats s’en viennent vous allez voir ce qui va vous arriver.” According to Blouin, one rioter adamantly replied, “C’est pas des balles qui piquent c’est

¹³⁸ *Le Devoir*, 2 April 1918.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Rodgers testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 4.

¹⁴¹ Mitchell testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 35.

des cartouches blanches ça ne nous attrapera pas.”¹⁴² When Mitchell, asked the crowd to disperse in English, they responded by heckling and by bombarding him with ice and projectiles.¹⁴³ As the crowd refused to listen, Mitchell returned to his soldiers who by then had received reinforcements. At this point, just after 10 p.m., Mitchell’s force consisted of approximately 55 men.¹⁴⁴ A half hour later, the General Staff Officer ordered his troops to cross Saint-Vallier and to clear the rioters off Bagot street. While the soldiers crossed the street, they were shot at by the mob down Bagot. One sergeant was wounded. Sometime after 10:30 p.m., the Canadian army opened fire on the Quebecers.

Although the military read the Riot Act earlier that night at Place Jacques Cartier, it does not appear that they re-read it before opening fire. Several witnesses, including a few municipal police constables, testified that they did not see or hear the military read the Act. During the inquest, Lavergne criticized Mitchell for failing to follow the law by reading the document. Mitchell, who had not received a copy of the Act, despite Rodgers’ claims otherwise, replied, “Is it necessary to read it before any action is taken in any part.” Major Barclay, the lawyer representing the military, argued Mitchell and his officers had the authority to open fire without reading the Act.¹⁴⁵

It remains unclear who gave the orders for the soldiers to shoot. At the inquest, Rodgers thought Mitchell gave the orders. However, Mitchell denied this. Although he was the officer who stopped the shooting, Mitchell admitted he was unsure which officer had ordered the soldiers to begin. Mitchell explained that any officer under his command technically had the authority to make such a decision. The General Staff Officer said,

¹⁴² Blouin testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 2.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴⁵ Mitchell testimony, 28.

“The officer in charge of these men would be at liberty to, in carrying out my instructions, to use his judgment in matters of that sort. Under the circumstances I consider that the troops were quite justified in replying to the fire as they did.”¹⁴⁶

Although there was one witness who claimed the soldiers shot first (Dion), all other witnesses at the inquest testified that the troops responded to the rioters’ initial shooting (Blouin, the police men, Caouette, Mitchell, Rodgers). In addition, all the newspapers reported that the rioters had begun the shooting.¹⁴⁸

Around 11 p.m., after hearing nearby gun shots, Major Rodgers made his way to the intersection where the soldiers opened fire. By this time, most of the crowd had dispersed. However, there were still some brazen rioters who continued to shoot at the soldiers through the fog. At about midnight, after five shots were fired in Rodgers’ direction, the Major used a Lewis machine gun that had been recently brought up by his soldiers to the corner. It appears Rodgers’ goal in using the gun, that shot 750 rounds per minute, was to create a “psychological effect;” that is, to scare the rioters, not hurt them. At the inquest, Rodgers explained how he used the Lewis gun:

They (the rioters) had gone down that street (Laviolette). So I saw no one in front of me and I got down on the ground myself and saw that the machine gun was traversed as I thought into the brick wall or very close to it, and I got an

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 11.

¹⁴⁸ There was also controversy as to how the soldiers fired their rifles. Rodgers and Mitchell both stated that the soldiers engaged in mostly individual fire. However, a few witnesses, said they saw the soldiers employ a volley by lining up together and firing simultaneously. Wilfred Dion, with a limited view, watched the action from his apartment at the corner of Bagot and Saint-Joseph. He claimed the soldiers, on four different occasions, used a volley over the course of a half hour. (Dion testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 6) The reverend Isodore Evain, who went out into the street to help Édouard Tremblay, one of the victims who died, said the soldiers, who had been using inappropriate language, had one knee on the ground and shot in a line. (Evain testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 19) His friend, reverend Cotnoir, described hearing “beaucoup de coups de feu qui se sont fait entendre successivement.” (Cotnoir testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 4) Cotnoir said he heard the soldiers shoot their rifles successively three times that night. It is also unclear how many of these rifle shots were aimed to hit targets. In an effort to intimidate the rioters, it is possible that much of the rifle fire was shot either at the ground or in the air. A few days after the riots, Lessard, in an interview with *La Presse*, said, “if the soldiers meant to intentionally kill civilians there would have been many more than four civilians dead.” (*La Presse*, 3 April 1918)

interpreter to yell at them three or four times that we were going to start the machine gun. There were three or four shots around the corner; So I started the machine gun and stopped it just like that (the witness snaps his fingers)...I should judge it ran about three-quarters of the drum, that is, about 36 shots were fired.¹⁴⁹

According to Rodgers, the machine gun was fired only once at three feet off the ground, towards a building.¹⁵⁰ However, Isidore Caouette, Ovide Landy, and Alfred Boucher, all municipal Police officers said they heard the machine gun fire twice.¹⁵¹ Wilfred Dion testified the machine gun, “a tiré deux fois, à ma connaissance, et la troisième fois, je l’ai entendu tirer lorsque j’étais au téléphone.”¹⁵² Dion said the machine gun stopped almost immediately in the first two firings. With no other evidence to support Dion’s claim the machine gun was fired three times, it is possible he heard rifle fire the “third time” when he was on the telephone.

It seems the machine gun played a minor role in the riots. There is strong evidence suggesting only one gun was used, and was fired either once or twice for a few seconds when a few people were in the streets. In addition, there is no proof that the machine gun caused casualties. It did not play a role in the deaths of the four victims. In the end, as was Rogers’ intention, it is likely that the machine gun’s primary function was psychological. Nevertheless, perhaps to sell copies, some of the newspapers sensationalized the story of the machine gun(s). On April 2nd, *Le Devoir* wrote, “Non contents de se servir de fusils, ils prirent des mitrailleuses et les braquèrent sur la foule. Un corps complet de mitrailleurs, descendu spécialement à cet fin, a été très actif.”¹⁵³ *Le*

¹⁴⁹ Rodgers Testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 10.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁵¹ Caouette testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 2.

¹⁵² Dion testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 18.

¹⁵³ *Le Devoir*, 2 April 1918.

Soleil described the machine gun firing several times at the crowd.¹⁵⁴ *La Presse* said the soldiers replied to the mob's initial fire with three machine guns.¹⁵⁵

Sometime past midnight, after the machine gun had been used, the streets were quiet. The next morning, April 2, the results of the rioting were sobering: 62 rioters had been arrested, hundreds of revolvers and other weapons had been seized, numerous civilians and soldiers had been injured, and unfortunately, four civilians had been killed.¹⁵⁶

VI AFTERMATH

Although Quebecers were saddened by the tragic events in 1918, most condemned the rioting. Over the course of the riots, numerous Quebec City residents had asked Trudel, Lavigueur and Landry to increase security for both private and public property. Furthermore, many fled the city until order was re-established.¹⁵⁷ Quebec parliamentarians, although critical of the Dominion Police Force, were also unanimously opposed to the rioting. George Parent, a member of Parliament for Quebec City, called the violence and vandalism, “damnable acts.”¹⁵⁸ Ernest Lapointe, another Quebec MP, said, “there was no justification for rioting or unlawful resort to violence.”¹⁵⁹ All of the Quebec newspapers, both French and English, also criticized the rioting. *Le Devoir* wrote, “les organisateurs d'émeutes et de résistances violentes à la loi sont les pires ennemis des jeunes gens qu'ils prétendent protéger et qui seront leurs premières

¹⁵⁴ *Le Soleil*, 2 April 1918.

¹⁵⁵ *La Presse*, 2 April 1918.

¹⁵⁶ *Le Devoir*, 2 April 1918.

¹⁵⁷ *La Presse*, 1 April 1918.

¹⁵⁸ Hansard. Session 1918 Vol.I., 418.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 418.

victimes.”¹⁶⁰ *La Presse* said the rioters unjustly destroyed property which caused disgust among ordinary citizens.¹⁶¹ *Le Soleil* wrote, “nous savons que l’immense majorité des citoyens désapprouve et regrette la violence et les désordres produits par la suite.”¹⁶²

Quebecers were more ambivalent about the military’s role during the riots.

George Parent described the soldiers as having “behaved gallantly,” although, the MP also said “a few of them took pleasure in doing a little more than was necessary.”¹⁶³ Most of the English-language newspapers, and some French, such as *L’Évenement*, argued the military had acted appropriately. This newspaper wrote, “les soldats ont agi avec calme et patience, et que ce n’est quand ils furent poussés à bout qu’ils firent feu.”¹⁶⁴ *L’Action Catholique* wrote, “c’est grâce aux mesures si bien prises par le général Lessard, c’est grâce au tact et au jugement dont il fait preuve, que les pertes de vie ont été réduites au minimum.”¹⁶⁵ However, other French newspapers were critical of the soldiers’ actions on the Monday night. On April 2nd, the headline in *Le Devoir* was, “Les soldats de Toronto font feu sur la foule.”¹⁶⁶ A few pages later, an article described the soldiers as shooting “à l’aventure” and “sans pitié.”¹⁶⁷ More virulently, *La Presse* wrote, “En faisant entrer trop tôt en action les baïonnettes, les fusils, la cavalerie et les mitrailleuses, elles ont trop fait croire qu’elles avaient hâte de tirer sur la population de Québec.”¹⁶⁸

On April 2nd, in an effort to avoid further clashes with the rioters, the military sent its largest contingent of soldiers to patrol the streets and to make more arrests.

¹⁶⁰ *Le Devoir*, 5 April 1918.

¹⁶¹ *La Presse*, 2 April 1918.

¹⁶² *Le Soleil*, 3 April 1918.

¹⁶³ Hansard. Session 1918 Vol.I., 417.

¹⁶⁴ *L’Évenement*, 2 April 1918.

¹⁶⁵ *Action Catholique*, 5 April 1918.

¹⁶⁶ *Le Devoir*, 2 April 1918.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *La Presse*, 2 April 1918.

However, the city remained quiet. After five days of violence, with little to show for its action, it appears the mob had decided it was in its best interest to obey the law by staying at home. Two days later, Robert Borden used the War Measures Act, which had been passed in the early days of the war, to put Quebec City under martial law. The War Measures Act suspended civil liberties and made official the military's supreme authority. It also legalized retroactively all interventions the military had made from the beginning of the riots. The retroactive nature of the law was important because it protected all officers and soldiers from prosecution for any illegal acts.

On April 3rd and 4th, the majority of the Quebecers implicated in the rioting were released from prison, due to lack of evidence. Even weeks after the rioting, the authorities gave only a few fines and did not charge anyone with serious crimes. The authorities speculated as to the identity of the riot leaders, including the possibility that they were from outside Quebec City. Many, including the Mayor and various parliamentarians¹⁶⁹, believed the leaders were from Montreal. In a letter to the Justice Minister, Robert Borden wrote, "the source of the Quebec disturbance was really in Montreal; that there is a secret organization in Montreal which is carrying on the work of fomenting these disturbances; and that there is good reason to believe that German money is assisting the work."¹⁷⁰ Some even thought the communists were linked to the riots. General Lessard was convinced that one of the riot leaders was a Russian staying in Quebec City. The Russian was shadowed by the military for several days after the violence.¹⁷¹ Ultimately, there was little substantial evidence that could be used to arrest potential leaders inside or

¹⁶⁹ See Hansard. Session 1918 Vol.I., 379-464 (April 5 1918)

¹⁷⁰ Robert Borden letter to the Minister of Justice, 12 April 1918, Robert Borden's Correspondence MG 26 H, C-280, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁷¹ Lieutenant O'Gallagher Military Report, 14 April 1918, RG24 National Defense, *Quebec City Riots*, Vol. 4517-4518, Library and Archives Canada.

outside the city. Few of the rioters who had vandalized buildings, pillaged stores, thrown projectiles and fired guns were reprimanded by the law.

The military held a Court of Inquiry, on April 3rd, to determine whether the soldiers, during the shooting on the Monday night, had used soft explosive bullets, more casually known as “Dum-Dums.” The coroner who had examined the four victims’ bodies declared the wounds could only have been caused by explosive bullets. Outlawed by the 1899 Hague Convention, soft explosive bullets were known to cause larger and more devastating wounds. The Court of Inquiry’s verdict was that the coroner’s charge was without foundation.¹⁷² A few days later, at the inquest, the soft explosive bullets issue was once again raised. Dr. Albert Marois, a practising doctor with 34 years experience who had examined all four victims, testified he believed the four were killed by “Dum-Dums.” Nevertheless, Francis D. Lafferty, a ballistics expert, argued regular rifle bullets could have caused the four victims’ wounds depending on the distance between the victims and the rifles. In addition, Lafferty claimed that if bullets had ricocheted off a wall, the results could be irregular wounds.¹⁷³

The coroner’s inquest into the deaths of the four victims began on April 8. Georges-William Jolicoeur, the coroner for the district of Quebec, presided over the court. There were six jurors, all but one francophone, and various lawyers, including Armand Lavergne who represented the Demeule family. By April 13, after 30 witnesses had testified, the jury made its decision. They read the following to the court:

Le jury est d’opinion que, considérant que les personnes tuées en cette occasion étaient innocentes de toute participation à cette émeute qui devait son origine à la manière inhabile et grossière avec laquelle les officiers fédéraux chargés de

¹⁷² Proceedings of a Military Court of Inquiry, 3 April 1918, RG24 National Defense, *Quebec City Riots*, Vol. 4517-4518, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁷³ Lafferty testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 1.

l'exécution de la loi de conscription envers les insoumis exerçaient leurs fonctions, il serait du devoir du gouvernement d'indemniser raisonnablement les familles des victimes que l'on a prouvées innocentes et sans armes à ce moment, ainsi que d'indemniser ceux qui ont souffert des dommages de cette émeute.¹⁷⁴

The jury added that it regretted the events that had occurred in the city and condemned the irrational acts performed by the rioters, some of whom were thought to have come from outside of the city. In the end, it was the city of Quebec, not the federal government, that spent more than \$200,000 dollars repairing damaged buildings, particularly the Auditorium. To this day, the federal government, likely because it continues to feel unaccountable, has not offered compensation to the victims' families.

On April 5th, Parliament debated the cause of the Quebec City riots. Like the jurors, almost all the French Canadian members from Quebec argued the rioting was inspired by the Dominion Police's misapplication of the Military Service Act. On the other hand, the Anglophone members felt the riots were sparked by Quebec's disdain for the conscription law. The likely cause for the rioting was a combination of a few factors. There is no doubt many Quebecers were outraged by the perceived abuses committed by the Dominion Police Force. The attacks on Bélanger and Évanturel demonstrated the rioters' hostility towards how the law had been applied by these officers of dubious character. However, some Quebecers' revulsion for conscription itself was also a possible cause for the rioting. After all, as seen in the spring and summer riots of 1917 and the high rate of draft dodging, many Quebecers were not timid about breaking the law.¹⁷⁵ When considering the willingness of many Quebecers to resist conscription, it is easier to explain the prolonged violence, the vandalism of newspaper buildings, and the looting of

¹⁷⁴ *Action Catholique*, 14 April 1918.

¹⁷⁵ See Chapter One.

hardware stores that occurred during Quebec City's five day riots. In addition, economically, the government's wartime economy, which had introduced income tax to raise money for the war, and which had caused food, clothing and fuel prices to soar added to rising tensions amongst the mostly working-class rioters. From this perspective, it is perhaps not a surprise that a little incident, such as the arrest of Joseph Mercier, could have developed into one of Canadian history's bloodiest riots.

3

Forgetting and Remembering the Quebec City Riots

In early April 1918, Thomas Vien, a Member of Parliament for Lotbinière (Quebec), reflected on how he thought Canadians, in and outside of Quebec, would remember the recent disturbances in Quebec City. Standing in the House of Commons, he said:

For the outsider the incident will have only an historic importance. Many will come to Quebec to visit the spot where it occurred, to see the places where the machine guns were laid on the mob and to see the streets where the men fell. But we Quebecers who live there shall constantly have a remembrance of the disgrace that took place last week.¹⁷⁷

Only a few days after the riots, Mr. Vien predicted that outsiders would not remember the events in the same way as Quebecers. For those who came from beyond Quebec, the memory of the riots would be elicited by visiting the site which would produce an artificial and temporary remembrance. Conversely, for Quebecers who lived through the riots and continued to live with its legacy, the memory would be visceral and permanent.

It is beyond the scope of this work to comment on the accuracy of Mr. Vien's prediction, as the record does not provide sufficient evidence to show how much Quebecers have individually remembered or forgotten the riots. It is possible, however, through the historiographical record to examine whether historians were producing works on the subject of the Quebec City riots. This chapter will show that Quebec's francophone community of historians displayed little interest in remembering the riots in the first forty years after the First World War. By the dawn of the Quiet Revolution, in response to shifts in Quebec's intellectual and social climate, the community's amateur historians began to re-discover the story. Soon after, one of them, historian Jean Provencher, published *Québec: sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918* (1971), the only book to be written on the topic, and his subsequent play *Québec, printemps 1918* (1974). These two works, reflections of the larger society in which Provencher lived, would most profoundly revive the story of the Quebec City riots.

¹⁷⁷ Hansard. Session 1918 Vol.I., 441.

I MES ENFANTS, SALUEZ LES BRAVES QUI PASSENT

It was not until the 1940s that Quebec's two French-language universities established history departments, a decade that also saw the founding of the first professional association of Quebec historians, as well as the first professional historical journal to examine Quebec history. Compared to English Canada, the relatively slow development of the discipline's institutionalization in Francophone Quebec can be attributed to a certain degree to the control of the Catholic Church as well as to the few Francophones who had real economic power.¹⁷⁸ Nevertheless, before the 1940s the seeds for Francophone Quebec's academic historical community were planted. Historians such as Lionel Groulx, Thomas Chapais, and Gustave Lanctot were all part of this community, scholars who were not quite "professional" but who had some methodological training and a firm grasp of the literature on the historical discipline.¹⁷⁹ However, while showing interest in more modern approaches to writing history, the historians in this period, both laymen and clerics, had difficulty agreeing on whether history was more science or art and what role God played in affecting the past.¹⁸⁰

Up until the Quiet Revolution, Quebec's historical community was generally more concerned about studying the history of New France and of the years directly after its fall than writing about more modern topics like conscription and the Quebec City riots.¹⁸¹ The school textbooks of the period, many of which were written by clerics with

¹⁷⁸ Ronald Rudin, *Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 1997), 14.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 46. This disagreement was particularly noticeable at the Semaine d'histoire (1925), Quebec's first historical conference which was organized by Groulx.

¹⁸¹ Rudin., 53.

little training in the historical discipline, generally encouraged students to take pride in their French-Canadian and Catholic heritage through the glorification of Quebec's heroes, particularly from the pre-Conquest period.¹⁸² Consequently, these textbooks saw the First World War as a positive experience and devoted considerably more space to remembering the contributions of the Royal 22nd battalion, rather than to the divisive story of the conscription crisis and the riots. For example, the textbook *Histoire du Canada* (1919), that mentioned conscription in one sentence and did not discuss the riots, asked its readers to worship the soldiers of the 22nd battalion.¹⁸³ A few years later, *Précis d'histoire du Canada* (1928), written by Abbé Joseph Rutché, commented on conscription only to explain that the Canadian government introduced the measure in order to raise more soldiers for its army.¹⁸⁴ Similarly, Fathers Paul-Émile Farley and Gustave Lamarche's *Histoire du Canada* (1933) devoted seven pages to the story of the war, one paragraph to conscription, and nothing to the riots.¹⁸⁵

After the Second World War, *Mon pays: histoire de Canada* (1954), by the cleric Guy Laviolette, briefly mentions conscription but mainly celebrates the accomplishments of the Royal 22nd battalion. In his sentence pertaining to the riots, the author writes "à Québec pendant la Semaine Sainte de 1918, on eut à déplorer non seulement des scènes disgracieuses mais aussi des blessés et des morts."¹⁸⁶ Likewise, *Mon pays* (1954), a

¹⁸² Mourad Djebabla-Brun, *Se souvenir de la Grande Guerre: la mémoire plurielle de 14-18 au Québec* (Montreal: VLB, 2004), 68. The school textbooks were authorized by the *Comité catholique du conseil de l'instruction publique*,

¹⁸³ Adélaré Desrosiers et al., *Histoire du Canada* (Montreal: Beauchemin, 1919), 109.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 262.

¹⁸⁵ Paul-Émile Farley & Gustave Lamarche, *Histoire du Canada* (Montreal: Librairie des Clercs de St-Viateur, 1933), 424-430. Published into five editions, this popular textbook's history of the First World War remained the same from the first edition (1933) to the last (1967). Lionel Groulx was a reader for all five editions.

¹⁸⁶ Guy Laviolette, *Mon pays: histoire du Canada* (Laprairie: Procure des Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne, 1954), 394.

textbook by Léon Daigneault, discusses only the Canadian soldiers' battlefield experiences and the achievements of the Royal 22nd. *Histoire du Canada* (1954) also mainly focuses on the story of the Western front. Although it does allocate a few sentences to the riots, it does not explain why they occurred or identify who was involved. The textbook's author, Jean Bruschési writes, "Il y eut des morts et des blessés."¹⁸⁷ A few years later, *Mon pays* (1956) by Abbots Hermann Plante and Louis Martel, as well as *L'Histoire de notre pays* (1958) by Alphonse Grypinich, both completely ignore the story of the riots. In its fourteen page story of the war, the latter textbook explains conscription in a one-sentence reference as an unpopular law in Quebec.¹⁸⁸ This is in contrast to the former work which provides a detailed description of the conscription crisis, and for the first time in a school textbook, criticizes federal government policy towards Quebecers during the war.¹⁸⁹

It was the Martinique born Robert Rumilly, a civil servant with no professional training in the discipline, who was the only francophone to write about the Quebec City riots before the Quiet Revolution. Although averse to archival research, his forty-one volume *Histoire de la province de Québec* (1940-1969)¹⁹⁰ is still an important contribution as it was one of the first large studies of post-Confederation Quebec history.¹⁹¹ Similar to Groulx, he believed that French-Canadian culture was being threatened by the pre-dominance of Canada's Anglophone majority, as well as by the evils of modernity.¹⁹² By taking pride, through history, in the French language and the

¹⁸⁷ Jean Bruschési, *Histoire du Canada* (Montreal: Éditions Beauchemin, 1954), 615.

¹⁸⁸ Alphonse Grypinich, *L'Histoire de notre pays* (Montreal: Les clercs de Saint-Viateur, 1958), 321.

¹⁸⁹ Hermann Plante & Louis Martel, *Mon pays: synthèse d'histoire du Canada* (Trois-Rivières: La Flèche, 1956), 293.

¹⁹⁰ His volume on the riots was published in 1942.

¹⁹¹ Rudin, 53.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 53.

Catholic religion, Rumilly, like many of his contemporaries including Groulx, believed that his people could resist these powerful assaults on their survival.¹⁹³ Akin to Groulx, this historian's writing, which emphasized individuals, concentrated on the stories of Quebec's heroes, those who defended the rights of French-Canadians and Catholics, and of the villains who threatened them.

In his section on the riots, which includes no footnotes, Rumilly's imagination was captivated by Armand Lavergne. When Lavergne spoke to the crowd on the Easter Sunday of the riots, the historian describes him as nothing less than a war hero. He writes, "Le colonel Lavergne est en civil, mais on dirait toujours qu'il porte un uniforme, un casque, un panache; on l'imagine au temps de la guerre en dentelle, colonel aux cheveu-légers."¹⁹⁴ Alternatively, his portrayal of the Dominion Police and the Canadian Army, the two groups he blames for provoking Quebecers to riot, is much more critical. In a typically dramatic passage, Rumilly describes conscripts being mistreated by the police:

Si les insoumis échangent quelques mots, en route, les policiers, flairant une conspiration, leur enjoignent: "Speak English!" S'ils font un geste de la main, les policiers passent les menottes, comme à des voleurs. Des femmes, apeurées, sanglotent. Des adolescents, sur le pas des portes, assistent, impuissants, rageurs, à ce spectacle. Ils le gravent dans leur mémoire.¹⁹⁵

Similarly, in his story of the army's actions on Easter Sunday, he writes, "les officiers anglais donnent des orders sévères. 'Quand je commanderai le tir, dit l'un deux, il faudra tirer sérieusement, tirer pour tuer.'"¹⁹⁶ However, his description of April 1st

¹⁹³ Ibid., 54.

¹⁹⁴ Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec: XXIII L'Armistice*. 41 vols (Montreal: Montréal Éditions, 1943), 71.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 69

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 70.

1918, the night the four civilians were killed, was particularly exaggerated. He writes, “Une mitrailleuse crépite, puis deux, puis trois. Un homme tombe comme une pierre. Un autre tombe le buste en avant, cassé en deux. D’autres roulent à terre... La neige, clémente, commence à les recouvrir.”¹⁹⁷ A few sentences later, in his depiction of the scene after the shooting, Rumilly writes, “Une main sanglante a laissé son empreinte sur un mur de la rue, à hauteur d’appui; peut-être un blessé s’est-il relevé là.”¹⁹⁸ In the end, Rumilly’s sensational story of outsiders victimizing innocent Quebecers, in many ways foreshadowed the later work of the Université de Montréal academics.

II A BROKEN PEOPLE

By the 1950s, the historical profession was firmly entrenched at both the Université de Montréal and the Université Laval. At the former institution, Guy Frégault, Maurice Séguin and Michel Brunet, all historians who had worked under Groulx’s tutelage, argued that the obstacles Quebecers faced in the post-Second World War period, both economically and politically, were due to the Conquest.¹⁹⁹ Unlike Groulx, who believed that British rule had allowed Quebecers to accomplish much, the Montreal historians believed the legacy of the Conquest, including the founding of the Canadian

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 72.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 73. From the perspective of a ‘modern’ historian, it would be easy to dismiss Rumilly’s dramatic history of the riots due to his lack of footnotes and the little time he spent working in the archives. Even Groulx, a better trained historian than many of his contemporaries, was critical of Rumilly’s work both from a methodological and analytical standpoint. (See Ronald Rudin’s *Making History*, 55) However, in a historical community that did not fully appreciate the scientific aspect of the discipline, Rumilly’s practices as a researcher and writer were not particularly uncommon. Moreover, his work on the riots does address some interesting issues that subsequent historians would rarely study, such as the class tension between the Upper Town bourgeois Quebec families and the working class rioters. See Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec: XXIII L’Armistice*. 41 vols (Montreal: Montréal Éditions, 1943), 75.

¹⁹⁹ Rudin, 95.

state, had been an unmitigated disaster for Quebec.²⁰⁰ More pessimistic than some of their predecessors, who often had seen the hand of God guiding Quebecers through the rough and tumble of their history, the Montreal historians constructed a secular narrative of the past which blamed the “Other” for all their problems. Two hundred years after the Conquest, due to the pernicious British rule and the American influence in the province, these historians argued that Quebecers were a ‘broken people’ with nothing to be proud of. In a lecture at the University of Toronto, Guy Frégault said, “Here we are with our four million people and our illusions.”²⁰¹ For these academics, the impact of the Conquest could only be erased if Quebecers were to achieve more political and economic independence. Their new perspective on Quebec’s past inspired many of the reforms during the Quiet Revolution and encouraged some Quebecers to demand special status, if not sovereignty, for the province.²⁰²

In their examination of the past to show the victimization of the French by the English, the Montrealers, like their predecessors, wrote mostly about the history of New France and the impact of Conquest during the late 18th and 19th centuries. Consequently, they did not write about conscription and the Quebec City riots. However, by the late 1950s and subsequently, their view of the past would start to influence Quebec’s amateur historians who would come to write on the topic.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 101.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 105.

²⁰² Ibid., 127. Historians at the Université Laval, such as Jean Hamelin, Fernand Ouellet and Marcel Trudel held a very different version of Quebec’s past than the Montrealers. Since the end of the Second World War, they had been arguing that the political and economic troubles Quebecers encountered in their present, as well as in their past, could be attributed, not to Conquest and British rule, but rather to their own failings. In studying the past, these historians looked to discover what united Quebecers with outsiders rather than searching to find evidence of conflict. In the introduction to *Canada: Unité et Diversité*, Trudel writes that history can work to “désunir les hommes par les mauvais souvenirs qu’elle rappelle, elle peut aussi contribuer à les réunir, si elle leur remet en mémoire ce qu’ils ont en commun.”²⁰² (Paul G. Cornell et al, *Canada: Unité et Diversité* {Montreal: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston of Canada Limited, 1968}, p.X). Perhaps for this reason, in its section on the First World War, the textbook does not discuss the riots. See Ronald Rudin’s Chapter Four “The Laval Approach” in *Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec*.

At the dawn of the Quiet Revolution, Albert Tessier published *Québec-Canada: Histoire du Canada* (1959)²⁰³, a work that marks a pivotal shift in the historiography of the riots. It is the first school textbook that does not mention the Royal 22nd battalion or any of the battles where the Canadian army fought, including Vimy. Instead, Tessier's version of World War I, which incorporates for the first time such stories as the Francoeur motion, is entirely that of Quebec, conscription and the riots.²⁰⁴ Similar to the Montreal historians, the author portrays the Quebecers of 1918 as victims of the "Other." He writes, "Un régiment de Toronto fut envoyé à Québec pour maintenir l'ordre. L'inévitable se produisait: une émeute éclata. La troupe fit claquer les mitrailleuses, tuant quatre civils et infligeant des blessures à plusieurs autres."²⁰⁵

By the 1960s some Quebecers still believed that their economic and political positions could not improve within the framework of Confederation. The separatists, whether violent like the *Front de Libération du Québec*, or democratic like René Lévesque's *Parti québécois*, believed, like Groulx, Rumilly and the Montreal academics, used history to advance their political cause. It is in this context that one can understand the amateur historian Joseph Costisella's popular work *Le Peuple de la nuit: histoire des Québécois* (1965).

As in Tessier's account, the soldiers and the battlefields are absent from Costisella's version of the war which is centered on conscription and the Quebec City riots. The journalist, in virulent language, describes all those who supported the European adventure, which he calls a "crime coopératif", as a clique of traitors and sellouts.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ 1959 is the same year that Maurice Duplessis, the long-time premier of Quebec, died.

²⁰⁴ Albert Tessier, *Québec-Canada: histoire du Canada* (1973-1958) (Quebec: Pélican, 1958), 253.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 253.

²⁰⁷ Joseph Costilla, *Le peuple de la nuit* (Montreal: Éditions Chénier Inc, 1965), 101.

Conversely, the author positively depicts the draft dodgers who hid out in the woods during the conscription crisis, as having chosen to die for Quebec rather than for the King of England.²⁰⁸ As for the riots, Costisella argues they were just one example, among many in the history of Quebec, where the “colonial” federal government abused its power in order to subject Quebecers to its rule. Akin to Rumilly’s portrayal of the Easter Monday violence, in both tone and lack of footnotes, the author writes, “Le lendemain, les troupes colonialistes ouvrirent le feu avec les mitrailleuses contre le peuple, pendant que les mercenaires de la cavalerie chargeaient sabre au point.”²⁰⁹ In more inflammatory language, Costisella writes:

Ce fut une boucherie écœurante: des femmes, le visage ensanglanté, furent défigurées pour la vie. Des enfants furent gravement blessés, le sang vermeil de la population s’ajouta à tout celui qui avait été répandu depuis 1760, pour que l’Ordre colonialiste règne. Il y eut quatre civils de tués, et de très nombreux blessés. Les résistants ripostèrent en ouvrant le feu sur les troupes colonialistes depuis les toits et de derrière les bancs de neige.²¹⁰

Similar to that of the Montrealers, the author’s view of Quebec’s past since the Conquest is one of the victimization of Quebecers by outsiders. In this lugubrious history, a violent army disfigures innocent women while children are severely beaten. Meanwhile, the martyred rioters are entirely free from blame, returning fire only after the four civilians were killed. Like Rumilly, and later Provencher, Costisella’s morality play has bad guys—the colonialists, Borden, the Dominion Police, and the English, opposed by good guys—Armand Lavergne, Henri Bourassa, Mayor Lavigueur and Police Chief Émile Trudel. The latter two officials, the author believes, tacitly encouraged the rioting.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 104.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 105.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 105.

²¹¹ Ibid., 104.

A few years later, the story of the riots in *Histoire 1534-1968*²¹² (1968), by Denis Vaugeois, Jacques Lacoursière, and Jean Provencher, all amateur historians, appears, to have also been influenced by the Montreal academics' interpretation of the past. In the preface to a later edition, the authors claimed their work was "serious, objective and balanced."²¹³ They wrote, "Elle (their history) ne pretend pas apporter une nouvelle interprétation de notre histoire, elle tient au contraire à laisser au lecteur la liberté de formuler ses propres jugements à partir d'une information aussi complète que possible."²¹⁴ Nevertheless, in this popular school textbook's eight page history of the First World War, the battlefield experience is described in two sentences, and there is no mention of Vimy or the Royal 22nd battalion. Instead, they include two photographs never seen before in a school textbook. The first, referring to the Francoeur motion, is a picture of a *La Presse* newspaper with the title, "Pour faire sortir le Québec de la Confédération canadienne."²¹⁵ Published in an era when the French President Charles De Gaulle uttered his famous words "Vive le Québec libre", and during which many Quebecers were already questioning Quebec's place in Canada, such a headline might have had particular relevance to its readers. More related to the riots, the second photograph, which takes up an entire page and makes it very clear whom the students

²¹² Denis Vaugeois et al., *Histoire 1534-1968* (Montreal: Éditions du Renouveau pédagogique, 1968). *Histoire 1534-1968* went through seven editions, the last one appearing in 2000. Its title changed to *Canada-Québec-Synthèse Historique* in its second edition published in 1969. Throughout the 1970s and part of the 80s, this was a very popular Canadian history textbook in Quebec.

²¹³ Denis Vaugeois et al., *Canada-Québec: synthèse historique* (Montreal: Éditions du Renouveau pédagogique, 1978), 7.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

²¹⁵ Denis Vaugeois et al., *Histoire 1534-1968* (Montreal: Éditions du Renouveau pédagogique, 1968), 480.

should blame for the deaths, reads, “Cinq civils sont tués par les soldats à Québec.”²¹⁶ As for their written history of the riots, which is sometimes confused, the authors hold the Dominion Police and the soldiers responsible for the violence and portray Quebecers as victims of the “Other”.²¹⁷

III ON AVAIT RAREMENT PARLÉ AUPARAVANT

In the autumn of 1970 believing independence from Canada could only be achieved by violence, the *Front de Libération du Québec* kidnapped James Cross, a British diplomat, and Pierre Laporte, a Quebec cabinet minister. In an effort to crush the FLQ movement, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau declared the War Measures Act. Within twenty-four hours of the measure being declared, officials arrested hundreds of suspected FLQ members, most of whom were never charged. To many in the rest of Canada, the murder of Pierre Laporte justified the prime minister’s decision to use the War Measures Act. However, many Quebecers were unsettled by seeing armed soldiers and tanks patrolling the streets of their cities, as well as hearing of the mass unwarranted arrests in the middle of the night. Moreover, some were indignant by the actions of a prime minister from Quebec who appeared to be selling out his people. To this day, the memory of the October Crisis continues to arouse powerful emotions among many Quebecers.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 483. Although the headline says that five civilians were killed, in fact there were four victims who died. This photograph, which would be used in subsequent editions of the textbook, might have been that much more relevant to students who lived through and could remember the October Crisis of 1970.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 485. On the Easter Sunday (March 31st), the authors say the Anglophone soldiers from Toronto charged the crowd with bayonets which provoked the crowds to riot. This is likely untrue. On the Sunday, Quebec City was relatively quiet, particularly after Armand Lavergne had given his speech. It appears that the authors were referring to the action outside the Drill Hall on March 30th Easter Saturday. However, on that night, it was mostly Francophone soldiers, not Anglophone troops from Toronto, who charged the crowd on horseback after losing their patience with the increasingly violent rioters.

Jean Provencher, a young Quebec historian, who had some professional training²¹⁸, was greatly affected by the October Crisis.²¹⁹ Confronted by the War Measures Act of 1970, Provencher began to write his popular history *Québec: sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918*. In an interview with *Le Soleil*, the historian explained his motivation for writing his book, “Quand j’ai entendu des gens d’un certain âge, lors des événements d’octobre dernier, dire des choses comme ‘ça n’a pas de bon sens, on n’a jamais vu ça au Québec’, etc., je n’ai pu m’empêcher de rédiger mon livre.”²²⁰

Provencher’s book is divided into three chapters. The first examines the conscription crisis and Quebec during the First World War. The second, the longest, focuses on the five-day riots from March 28th to April 1st 1918, and the third looks at the aftermath of the riots and the coroner’s inquest.

The second chapter “*Le Soulèvement Populaire de Québec*” is the story of the key events during the riots, largely based on testimony given during the coroner’s inquest. Being the first and apparently only historian until the current author to examine the inquest, Provencher’s chapter is important because he has provided previously unpublished information. Influenced by the Montrealers’ view of the past, as well as the political and social unrest of early 1970s Quebec, Provencher writes with a politically charged narrative that depicts Quebecers as victims of the Canadian Army and Federal government policy.

²¹⁸ Jean Provencher received his “licence et un diplôme d’études supérieures en histoire de l’université de Laval.” For the last forty years, he has been an independent historian and he has produced numerous works about Quebec history.

²¹⁹ In 1974, Provencher published *La grand peur d’octobre 1970* which is the story of how allegedly the federal government and Quebec’s provincial government duped Quebecers with misinformation during the October Crisis.

²²⁰ *Le Soleil*, “*Vous souvenez-vous des émeutes de Québec?*”, 30 October 1971.

In this chapter, Provencher is critical of several key figures who tried to stop the rioting. Above all, he is especially tough on General Lessard. For Provencher, Lessard is no more than a pawn of the British-federalist imperialists. He perjoratively describes Lessard as being well-trained at the game of repressing rebellions and protests.²²⁵ Lessard, the historian points out, had gained experience during the 1878 Quebec City workers' strike, the 1885 North-West Rebellion, as well as the Boer War.²²⁶ According to Provencher, the Major-General's involvement in the Quebec City riots was just one more example of his long history of repressing minorities-whether it be workers, the Métis, the Boers, or Quebecers.

In contrast to Provencher's portrayal, some sources offer a quite different description of Lessard. For example, in March 1918, *La Presse* describes the General as being well-respected and "l'un des militaires les plus qualifiés que nous ayons au Canada."²²⁷ The same newspaper wrote that Lessard commanded great admiration from General Foch and General Kitchener.²²⁸ In the House of Commons, Wilfrid Laurier had commended Borden's government for sending General Lessard to Quebec City. Laurier said, "General Lessard should have been used long ago. If he had been called to service in the early months of the war, perhaps there would be no trouble to quell today in the city of Quebec."²²⁹ Even *Le Devoir*, had approved the appointment of Lessard to command the troops in Quebec City.²³⁰

²²⁵ Provencher, *Québec: sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918*, 82.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

²²⁷ Pierre Vennat, *Les "Poilus" Québécois de 1914-1918* (Montreal: Les Éditions du Méridien, 2000. Volume I & II), 45.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.

²²⁹ Hansard. Session 1918 Vol.I., 393.

²³⁰ *Le Devoir*, 1 April 1918.

Provencher acknowledges none of this throughout his book. Referring to the inquest when Lessard was asked by one of the jurors whether soldiers had been killed or injured on Easter Monday, Provencher writes, “Le général lui (the juror) répond que quelques soldats ont souffert de blessures et ajoute: “Nous avons au moins une douzaine de chevaux qui sont blessés. Il y a un cheval qu’on a été obligé de tuer.”²³¹ Curiously, Provencher decided to include the horse quote, which itself was accurate, but omitted the General’s description of the injured soldiers. In fact it was his recollection of the injured soldiers, which Lessard estimated to be about thirty men (more than just a few), that had prompted him to make his horse comment.

In addition, Provencher portrays Lessard as being entirely unreasonable, power thirsty, and looking to provoke the rioters to violence. He devotes a considerable amount of attention to describing the exchange, on the morning of Easter Monday, between Armand Lavergne and General Lessard. In this conversation, portrayed entirely from Lavergne’s perspective, General Lessard dismisses Lavergne’s plea to hold back the soldiers and tells the lawyer “J’ai la force et je m’en sers.”²³² Lessard comes across as being arrogant and close-minded. However, Provencher does not include Lessard’s testimony which explains his perspective on the matter. With considerable experience dealing with rioters, Lessard believed it had been imperative to send out troops to make sure the rioters were not able to congregate. At the inquest, he said, “C’est entendu que quand une foule s’organise que c’est trop tard pour la disperser. On peut avoir plus de gens qui seront tués et blessés.”²³³ In short, according to Lessard, his intention of sending

²³¹ Provencher, *Québec: sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918*, 125.

²³² *Ibid.*, 98.

²³³ Lessard testimony, *Enquête tenue devant le coroner pour le district de Québec le 8 avril 1918 et les jours suivants sur les causes de la mort de Honoré Bergeron, Alexandre Bussières, Georges Demeule et*

out the soldiers on Easter Monday was in order to avoid, not foment, further bloodshed and violence. By placing posters around the city, and by putting warnings in newspapers, both at considerable cost to the federal government, Lessard also argued that he had tried his best to convince Quebecers to stay home that night. At the inquest, when Lavergne criticized Lessard for his actions, the General replied, “Je suis venu pour aider la situation, j’ai cru qu’on comprendrait la chose—simplement pour aider au Général Landry—pour que vous n’ayez deux Canadiens Français pour vous aider. J’ai fait mon grand possible pour empêcher l’effusion du sang.”²³⁴

Provencher is not much kinder to Brigadier-General Joseph Landry. In his description of March 29th, the night the rioters burned the Auditorium, Provencher writes, “Landry promet également de tirer sur les manifestants immédiatement après la lecture de l’Acte d’émeute. Mais le maire l’exhorte à agir avec plus de prudence.”²³⁵ The historian makes this claim based solely on Laviguer’s testimony, ignoring that of Landry. According to the Brigadier-General, once the Riot Act was read, he had told the Mayor that his troops would wait for Laviguer’s orders before shooting at the rioters.²³⁶ Based on the discipline shown by the soldiers the following night, it seems credible that Landry did want to avoid violence. Second, Provencher appears to be mistaken to say the Mayor encouraged Landry to be more prudent, thus portraying the civilian as more compassionate than the soldier. It seems more plausible that Laviguer was reluctant to read the Riot Act because when he and the military arrived at the Auditorium it had already been severely damaged. As stated in Chapter 2, if the Mayor, as Landry advised,

Édouard Tremblay, E 17 folder 1661 (1918), Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales de Québec (Quebec City), 9.

²³⁴ Lessard testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 21.

²³⁵ Provencher, *Québec sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918*, 62.

²³⁶ Landry testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 11.

had fulfilled the legal requirements to authorize military authority much of the violence might have been avoided. In any case, once the Mayor arrived late on the scene, he decided that reading the Riot Act would not be useful. However, the Mayor's unwillingness to read the act was not because he was ethically opposed to firing on the rioters. Indeed, in testimony Provencher chose not to include in his book, the Mayor said he supported the shooting of rioters in order to protect public property.²³⁷

Provencher's depiction of the military's rank and file is also suspect. When describing Easter Monday, he portrays the cavalry as knocking down women and children who did not have time to get off the sidewalk. He then writes, "Ces gestes brutaux soulèvent la fureur populaire et les glaçons, les briques et les pierres se mettent à pleuvoir sur les soldats."²³⁸ The problem here is that there is no evidence, certainly none provided by Provencher, that women and children were injured by the horses. Furthermore in the description of the soldiers' first round of firing, Provencher writes, "À un moment donné, sans avoir lu quelque papier que ce soit, l'officier en charge leur a donné l'ordre de tirer. Après le coup, nous avons entendu une plainte extraordinaire d'un homme."²³⁹ Strangely, in his footnote, Provencher credits Major Mitchell for these words that portray the soldiers as acting impulsively, when in fact they are the words of the witness Wilfred Dion. Conversely, on the same page, in two other footnotes, in testimony given by Dion, the historian mistakes him for Mitchell. It is difficult to say whether these footnotes merely represent an error in Provencher's methodology, or whether he intentionally used Mitchell's name to give increased credibility to a narrative too dependent on the eyewitness Dion.

²³⁷ Lavigne testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 54.

²³⁸ Provencher, *Québec sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918*, 110.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

Similarly, Provencher misuses Rodgers' testimony in describing the operation of the machine gun. After Rodgers testified that he only shot the gun once for 36 rounds, Provencher then writes, "Deux nouvelles salves se font entendre. On tire dans les portes ou les fenêtres de certaines maisons."²⁴⁰ Inexplicably, Provencher attributes this claim of multiple firings to Rodgers, a man who had testified the contrary.

Jean Provencher, like Rumilly and Costisella, is much kinder to Armand Lavergne, Émile Trudel, and Henri-Edgar Lavigueur. In Provencher's mind, Lavergne is the noblest character in the entire story. The historian appears to view Lavergne as a tragic hero: a principled anti-conscriptionist that tried his best to stop the rioting but ultimately was betrayed by the federalist forces. However, Provencher does not mention that Lavergne, on Easter Sunday, told the crowd that they could do as they wished if the federal government did not fulfill their alleged "promises." Lavergne played a dangerous game that he hoped would force the government to concede to his demands. However, if the demands were not met, as they were not, the lawyer's ultimatum would force a showdown between rioters, who now had expectations for change, and the army, which was sent out to prevent the crowd from assembling at Lavergne's rally.

Provencher's description of Lavergne's actions on Easter Sunday and Monday is almost entirely told from the lawyer's point of view. For example, the historian uses Lavergne's testimony to accuse Taschereau and Machin of offering, in gratitude to the lawyer for speaking to the crowd, the position of Chief Keeper of Records of the Militia Service Act in Ottawa. When Lavergne refused the position, Provencher, in an apparent telling revelation of his own political allegiance, writes, "Voyant que Lavergne ne mord pas plus rapidement à l'appât fédéral, les trois hommes reviennent aux problèmes

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 117.

immédiats.”²⁴¹ Such suggestive rhetoric portrays Lavergne as faithful to his people and suggests that other Quebecers, such as Lessard and Taschereau, somehow sold-out by going to work in Ottawa. In any case, Provencher probably should have informed the reader that Machin, Taschereau and Robert Borden all vehemently denied offering Lavergne such a position.²⁴²

Provencher also portrays the Chief of Police Émile Trudel as a man of exemplary integrity. In the Good Friday description, the night the Auditorium was attacked, the historian defends Trudel and his force for not shooting at the rioters. At the inquest, after Major Barclay asked Trudel why he did not protect public property, Provencher recalls the Chief of Police’s eloquent response, “Parce qu’on peut rebâtir une propriété. Vous ne pouvez pas rebâtir une personne.”²⁴³ However, Provencher does not mention Trudel’s successive failures to defend the building, or his decision to follow the Mayor instead of remaining with his officers. More telling still, although he includes a picture with a caption that reads “Émile Trudel, chef de police de Québec...Il refusa d’ouvrir le feu sur ses compatriotes”²⁴⁴, Provencher does not incorporate Trudel’s testimony in which the Chief admitted he would have shot first at hostile rioters armed with weapons.²⁴⁵ Neither does Provencher mention the testimony of Horace Scott, a city policeman, who claimed Trudel phoned him at the police station on the night of Easter Sunday, and ordered his men to go and fire on the rioters gathered at the C.P.R. station.²⁴⁶ Trudel, in his second

²⁴¹ Ibid., 88.

²⁴² Letter writer by Alleyn Taschereau to Robert Borden(57032). In Robert Borden’s Correspondence MG 26 H, C-280 at the *National Archives of Canada*. Also, Robert Borden’s comments during the April 5th Parliamentary Debate, *Hansard*, Session 1918 Vol I.379-464.

²⁴³ Ibid., 65.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 65.

²⁴⁵ Trudel second testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 2.

²⁴⁶ Scott testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 1.

appearance at the inquest, adamantly denied Scott's accusations and argued that someone was trying to impersonate him on the phone.²⁴⁷

Similar to his representation of Trudel, Provencher also ignores some of Mayor Lavigneux's actions. In his description of the Good Friday riots, the historian admits that Landry advised the Mayor to make sure the legal requirements were met for military intervention; however, Provencher does not convey the sense of frustration felt by Landry and Borden when the Mayor failed to accomplish this task. Without being familiar with these perspectives, it is difficult to understand why the prime minister felt it necessary to send more troops to Quebec and to give overwhelming powers to the military. In regard to, arguably, the most critical day of the riots, when appropriate action by the Mayor might have ended the violence, Provencher refuses to criticize Lavigneux's decisions. During the inquest, in another pertinent exchange between Barclay and Lavigneux, which Provencher does not point out, the Mayor admitted that on the Friday morning, after receiving more than 25 phone calls, he was aware that many Quebecers were afraid for their lives and property. When Barclay asks the Mayor, "Les citoyens ordinaires de Québec avaient peur pour leurs vies et leurs propriétés pendant ces jours là?", Lavigneux responds by saying, "Oui, plusieurs."²⁴⁸ It is possible Provencher ignored this testimony because it shows that some Quebecers feared the actions of the rioters and were worried about their own safety and property. This is contrary to the historian's belief that the rioters were mostly benevolent, targeting only symbols related to conscription. In addition, by including Lavigneux's admission, the Mayor might have been perceived as not having taken the appropriate action to protect the citizens of Quebec City.

²⁴⁷ Trudel second testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 1.

²⁴⁸ Lavigneux testimony, 41.

Throughout the book, Provencher chooses the accounts he thinks best supports his argument while ignoring those that do not. A good example is the testimony of Dr. Marois, the doctor who examined the bodies of the four victims. Provencher accepts Marois' argument that the victims were killed by explosive bullets from the rifles of Canadian soldiers. In his narrative, the historian describes Alexandre Bussières as being, "atteint aux poumons par les balles explosives des soldats."²⁴⁹ Although Dr. Marois' expertise should not be dismissed, the historian does not mention Lafferty's inquest testimony in which he argues that such wounds could have been caused by regular bullets. Furthermore, in his conclusion, Provencher does acknowledge the April 3rd Military inquest²⁵⁰, which took place five days before the Coroner's inquest and which determined explosive bullets were not used by the army. However, the historian simply rejects the jury's findings for being made too quickly, and doubts the possibility for objectivity among the mostly Anglophone jurors. Curiously, the historian is uncritical about the potential for bias at the Coroner's Inquest a few days later among the mostly Francophone jury.

Provencher is also reluctant to blame the rioters for the initial shooting on the Easter Monday. The historian's only admission is that "des officiers rapportent à Rodgers qu'ils sont les victims de tireurs isolés."²⁵¹ A few paragraphs down, on the same page, the historian explains, "On entend certains coups de feu venant de la foule. Mais on ne sait si c'est là le bruit de véritables balles ou de balles blanches."²⁵² By using the word "on", the historian is ambiguous in explaining *who* thought the bullets were not real. Does he mean

²⁴⁹ Provencher, *Québec sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918*, 121.

²⁵⁰ This inquest only lasted one day.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 112.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 112.

the crowd? The police? The military? Or him? As there are no footnotes to explain this claim, there are also no answers to these questions.

In any case, at the coroner's inquest, there was significant testimony given, none of which Provencher has included in his book, which suggests the rioters were responsible for the initial shooting. Xavier Blouin, constable for the city police force, estimated that the rioters shot at the soldiers between 25 and 50 times before the troops responded.²⁵³ Blouin also acknowledged that he had seen at least one soldier injured. Isidore Caouette, another constable, testified he had also seen a soldier fall after being shot by the rioters. In addition, Caouette, in testimony supported by Constables Landry and Boucher, acknowledged that the soldiers did not reply with fire until they began to suffer injuries.²⁵⁴ Major Mitchell said two soldiers had been wounded before he went to the intersection of Saint-Vallier, Bagot, and Saint-Joseph, and, after he arrived, one soldier was shot through the jaw. Mitchell claimed these three injuries all happened before the soldiers began shooting.²⁵⁵ Finally, Major Rodgers said his soldiers shot at the crowd only after being under considerable fire on Boulevard Langelier as well as at the intersection where the victims were killed.²⁵⁶

Québec: sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918, with its simple and provocative account, thus encourages the reader to develop a sense of anger towards the “outsiders” so powerfully identified by the author. It appears the historian wants the story of the riots to be viewed as yet another example of Quebecers being victimized by the “Other.” For Provencher, the federal government's failure to indemnify the families of the four killed

²⁵³ Blouin testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 3.

²⁵⁴ Caouette testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 2.

²⁵⁵ Mitchell testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 11-12.

²⁵⁶ Rodgers testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 7.

only exacerbates Quebecers' continued sense of victimization. At the end of the author's work, Léandre Demeule, the older brother of Georges Demeule, explains to Provencher that his family never received any money from the federal government. The book ends with Demeule bitterly saying, "Absolument rien. Je n'ai jamais entendu parler que que ce soit ait eu une cent. On n'a rien eu. Pas même une letter de sympathie. Pas même un billet de char."²⁵⁷

This sense of victimization at the hands of the "Other" is also prevalent in Provencher's *Québec, Printemps 1918* (1973). On October 11th 1973, the author's play, which partially re-created the coroner's inquest, opened in Quebec City's Théâtre du Trident. It ran for one month, ending symbolically on November 11th, the anniversary of the First World War armistice. Later, Provencher and Gilles Lachance, the co-author, published the play in book format.

Similar to *Québec: sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918*, Provencher claims his play represents the "truth" about the riots. In the preface, he writes:

Québec, Printemps 1918 ou le jeu conscient de l'ambiguïté est un document authentique. Tous les personnages ont existé et sont désignés sous leur nom véritable. Leur témoignage correspond aux notes sténographiées de l'enquête du coroner tenue à Québec, du 8 au 13 avril 1918. Nous aurions pu être tentés de dramatiser les événements, de modifier les caractères et d'orienter agréablement l'action. Nous avons préféré nous éloigner de l'allégorie pour cerner davantage la réalité.²⁵⁸

Despite Provencher's faith in being able to find the "truth" in the past, a creed in which his contemporaries at the academic institutions believed, his play is far from a "document authentique" because many of the witnesses who testified at the inquest are

²⁵⁷ Provencher, *Québec: sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918*, 140.

²⁵⁸ Jean Provencher & Gilles Lachance, *Québec, printemps 1918* (Montreal: l'Aurore, 1974), 17.

not part of his account. For example, Provencher does not include Lafferty, Blouin, Scott, Mitchell or Landry. The omission of the latter two in particular is significant considering that both officers spent a great amount of time testifying. Instead, the historian's play is focused on characters like Wilfred Dion and Armand Lavergne, even though the actual inquest ended with testimony given by Mitchell, Choquette, and Scott. The emphasis on Dion, the one and only witness who remembered the soldiers shooting first at the rioters is questionable, because much of his testimony at the actual inquest was relatively short and was contradicted by other witnesses who are not cast in the historian's play. It appears that by ending the play with Lavergne's story, Provencher hoped to leave the audience angered by the story of a Quebecer, with noble intent, betrayed by federalist forces.

Although Provencher says the testimony given by the witnesses is authentic to the original inquest document, the reality is that the historian has put his own words into various characters' mouths. For example, when explaining his role in operating the machine gun, Provencher's Major Rodgers says, "J'ai tiré avec la mitrailleuse sur les murs, trois fois."²⁵⁹ This claim is false for at the inquest, Rodgers acknowledged that he shot the machine gun once for only a few seconds.²⁶⁰ However, by making Rodgers shoot the gun three times, Wilfred Dion, the only witness to say the gun was fired more than twice, becomes more credible, ultimately strengthening Provencher's argument. Furthermore, reflecting the impact of the October Crisis on the author, Provencher has Rodgers, and several others, use the term "loi des mesures de guerre" or in Rodger's case "War Measures Act", a term they never used in the original document. Lastly,

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 97.

²⁶⁰ Rodgers testimony, 47.

Provencher's Rodgers comes across as lacking confidence, repeating himself, and struggling to speak in French. At the actual inquest, Rodgers appears confident, competent, and only gives his testimony in English.

When first published, *Québec: sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918* was promoted as the story Quebecers should have been taught but never were. Provencher, possibly with his own interests in mind, encouraged the idea that it was tragic that Quebecers had forgotten this important story. At the beginning of both book and play, the historian includes the poignant quote from Charles G. Power, a former Quebec member of parliament, who said:

Il est difficile de comprendre que le sort d'un homme, Louis Riel, exécuté à plus de mille milles de Québec, ait pu remuer tout un peuple jusqu'au plus profond de son être collectif pendant trois générations, alors que ce même peuple a passé sous silence et relégué dans l'oubli, en l'espace de quelques semaines, ce qui constituait, dans son esprit tout au moins, le massacre de quatre citoyens innocents au cœur même de la province.²⁶¹

Provencher's two works both honoured the four who were killed and commemorated those Quebecers who chose to fight for, what the author deemed, a just cause. Furthermore, the works were meant to correct the perceived historical injustice of an event that seemed to have been forgotten. In a Radio-Canada interview, Provencher said "On avait rarement parlé auparavant (before he wrote the book) et dans aucun manuel scolaire on en avait fait mention, c'est pour ça justement j'ai fait le bouquin."²⁶² Although he ignored the work of some of his predecessors, it is true that Provencher's work revived a story which historians appeared to have largely forgotten. At the time,

²⁶¹ Provencher, *Québec: sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918*, 18.

²⁶² "Entretien avec l'historien Jean Provencher sur la conscription de 1918." *Radio-Canada*. www.medias.biblio.usherbrooke.ca/ot_5-24.wma (accessed August 4, 2006).

judging by his work's reception, it seems some believed the resuscitation of the story was a worthy cause. Fernand Dumont, in the preface to Provencher's book, expressed the debt Quebecers owed the young historian, when he wrote, "Que l'on n'en parle plus? On sera reconnaissant à Jean Provencher d'en reparler."²⁶³ *Le Soleil*, a few weeks before the play opened, praised Provencher's work for informing Quebecers about this tragic story.²⁶⁴ On opening night, the same newspaper explained that the historian's play would bring justice to the names of the forgotten victims.²⁶⁵ The day after the first performance, the paper remarked that an opening narration to situate the characters in historical context was needed for an audience which until now was "contenté des insuffisances historiques de nos livres de classe."²⁶⁶ According to Dumont, Quebecers now had a duty to remember this episode in Quebec's history. He eloquently wrote, "Les peuples non plus ne doivent pas accepter que l'on relègue à l'oubli les témoignages anciens de leur servitude."²⁶⁷ Some took heed of Dumont's words. Since Provencher published his work, at least among Quebec's amateur historical community, the story of the Quebec City riots has been frequently represented in texts, documentaries, and public commemoration.

²⁶³ Provencher, *Québec: sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918*, 11.

²⁶⁴ *Le Soleil*, 29 September 1973.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 11 October 1973.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 12 October 1973.

²⁶⁷ Provencher, *Québec: sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918*, 11.

4

Blaming the “Other”: The Quebec City Riots and the Narrative of Victimization

In early September 1998 approximately one hundred people, both young and old, attended the unveiling of the monument *Québec, Printemps 1918* in Quebec’s City’s Lower Town. In the same year that thousands of people around the world commemorated the 80th anniversary of the First World War’s end, these Quebecers gathered to remember a different story. According to a communiqué released to the press by the monument’s committee, Quebecers were supposedly remembering the “80e anniversaire de ces manifestations populaires et démocratiques en protestation contre les méthodes utilisées par les recruteurs, suite à la mobilisation générale.”²⁶⁸

Sitting on a make-shift stage that flew a large Quebec flag, were several dignitaries- the Parti québécois’s André Gaulin; the Mayor of Quebec City, Jean-Paul L’Allier; the President of the Société Saint-Jean Baptiste, J-Léopold Gagner; a descendant of one of the four victims; several members of the monument’s committee, including its President Louis Bélanger; and the historian Jean Provencher. Although

²⁶⁸ Communiqué released by the “Comité ‘Québec, Printemps 1918’”, (September 4th, 1998). *Québec-Printemps 1918*, Dossier M4.2/Qu., Archives de la Ville De Québec (Quebec City).

Bélanger, more than anyone, was responsible for building the monument, Provencher's work had ultimately inspired this public remembrance.²⁶⁹

The monument *Québec, Printemps 1918* is one of several representations of the riots over the past thirty years to reflect Jean Provencher's work. This chapter will examine three different forms of representations: written texts, film, and public commemoration. It will show that in all the forms, the story of the Quebec City riots has changed very little since Provencher. That story has continued to be told through a narrative of victimization that often demonizes Lessard and his soldiers, and overdramatizes the role of the machine guns.

I LES SOLDATS ONT TIRÉ SUR LE MONDE (TEXTS)

By the 1970s, a group of Francophone academics had emerged who had a very different view of Quebec's past than the Université de Montréal academics. Among the latter, historians such as Paul-André Linteau, Jean-Claude Robert, Jacques Rouillard, and Normand Séguin, who were mostly born in the 1940s and who had benefited from the gains of the Quiet Revolution, argued that Quebec had developed in a "normal" pattern much like other Western nations. By examining the role that material forces played in affecting immigration, secularization, and urbanization, these historians refuted the discourse of difference championed by their predecessors, instead finding commonalities in the past among Quebecers and other groups.²⁷⁰ Consequently, over the last thirty years, it is perhaps no surprise that these academics have spent little time considering issues

²⁶⁹ Louis Bélanger (president of the *Québec, Printemps 1918* monument's committee), in discussion with the author, 18 December 2006.

²⁷⁰ Ronald Rudin, *Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 1997), 172.

such as conscription and the Quebec City riots.²⁷¹ With the professional historians (those with PhDs) consumed by other topics in Quebec's history, the story of the riots remained in the hands of Quebec's amateur historical community.²⁷²

One of the amateurs, the journalist Gérald Filteau, was one of the first Quebecers to write a book on the topic of Quebec and the First World War. *Le Québec, le Canada et la guerre 1914-1918* (1977), like Provencher's earlier work, vilifies General Lessard in telling its story of the riots. The General is described as being a French Canadian who was completely "assimilé."²⁷³ According to this book, it was Lessard and his army which were responsible for infuriating ordinary Quebecers and ultimately for killing the four victims. Similarly, in the multivolume *Le mémorial du Québec* (1979), edited by Éliane Catela de Bordes, Lessard is again described in unflattering terms. In a ten-page chapter on the riots, the author, Clément Fluet, describes Lessard as:

le dur des durs. Natif de Québec, il s'est montré brutal envers les grévistes qui refusaient de construire le parlement de Québec en 1878 et cruel à l'égard de ses demi-frères, les Métis du Manitoba, lors de la rébellion de 1885. Ottawa compte sur lui pour mater les émeutiers. Le gouvernement fédéral a bien choisi son homme.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ In Paul-André Linteau, Jean-Claude Robert, and René Durocher's influential work *Histoire du Québec contemporain* (Volume I (1979), Volume II (1986)) there is one paragraph dedicated to conscription but nothing on the riots. See Paul-André Linteau et al *Histoire du Québec contemporain: de la Confédération à la crise* (1867-1929) (Montreal: Boréal, 1986), 404.

Interestingly, in the English version, there is a brief story of the riots and a photograph of the *Le Devoir* newspaper titled "Le sang coule à Québec-5 citoyens paisibles tués." See Linteau, Durocher & Robert, *Quebec: A History 1867-1929* (Toronto: Lorimer & Company, 1983), 524-525. Also, in the French version, the word conscription is not included in the index. In the English version, however, it is included and the word can be found on 15 pages in the textbook.

²⁷² As explained in the preface, the amateur historians are defined as a group of people who wrote about Quebec's past but did not obtain a Ph.D and who were not associated with an institution of higher learning.

²⁷³ Gérard Filteau, *Le Québec et la guerre 1914-1918* (Montreal: Les Éditions de l'Aurore, 1977), 160. Interestingly, the author argues that the rioters believed they were the descendants of the 1837 rebels, a statement probably more indicative of the author's politics rather than how the rioters actually viewed themselves. There does not appear to be any evidence that shows the rioters compared themselves to the 1837-38 rebels. Filteau makes assertions that appear to have no basis. For instance, the author states that the coroner's inquest determined that the military had acted illegally by sending in the troops without the consent of the civil authorities; this is untrue.

²⁷⁴ Clément Fluet, *Le mémorial du Québec*, ed. Éliane Catelas de Bordes (Montreal: La Société des Éditions du Mémorial, 1980), pg.6 (Vol 5).

A few pages later, after explaining that the military had shot illegal soft-nosed bullets at the rioters²⁷⁵, Lessard is portrayed as a *vendu*²⁷⁶ when the author writes, “Un Canadien, Québécois de naissance, aurait permis l’emploi de ce genre de balles contre ces citoyens?”²⁷⁷ In Normand Lester’s popular work *Le livre noir du Canada anglais* (2001)²⁷⁸, which the former PQ Premier of Quebec, Bernard Landry, praised as being a ‘must-read’²⁷⁹, Lessard is once again demonized. Citing Provencher’s work²⁸⁰, Lester explains-contrary to the facts- that the General illegally proclaimed martial law without asking for authorization from the Mayor or from the Premier of Quebec.²⁸¹ Consequently, Lester argues, Lessard was then able to use his repressive powers in order to shoot at the unarmed crowd with his machine guns.²⁸² This leads the author to speculate sarcastically why there has not been a heritage minute²⁸³ produced to tell the story of Lessard’s actions in Quebec City. To emphasize his point, Lester writes, “Ce moment de grandeur dans l’histoire des Forces armées canadiennes est largement oublié.”²⁸⁴

Just as Lessard has been condemned by writers in the post-Provencher historiography, the Anglophone soldiers have likewise been negatively portrayed. In his description of the Anglophone soldiers’ arrival in Quebec City, Filteau writes, “la

²⁷⁵ This claim was never effectively proven at the inquest.

²⁷⁶ A *vendu* is a term that has been used to describe a Francophone who has sold out to Anglophones.

²⁷⁷ Clément Fluet, 9 (Vol 5). In the wake of the 1980 Quebec referendum on sovereignty-association, such a portrayal might have had particular resonance for some Quebecers who at the time questioned Pierre Trudeau and Jean Chrétien’s loyalty towards Francophone Quebec.

²⁷⁸ Lester’s book was widely distributed in Quebec and was translated into English. Lester was also awarded the *Prix Olivar-Asselin* by the *Société Saint-Jean Baptiste* for his book.

²⁷⁹ William Johnson, “Quebec is Mad and it’s all your fault,” in the *Globe and Mail*, 29 November 2001.

²⁸⁰ Lester also cites Rumilly and Filteau’s work on the riots.

²⁸¹ Normand. Lester, *Le Livre Noir du Canada Anglais* (Montreal: Les Éditions des Intouchables, 2001), 226.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 226.

²⁸³ According to the author, the book was written in order to examine Canadian history’s more controversial stories, those which were not included in the federally sponsored *Heritage Minutes*.

²⁸⁴ Lester, 226.

population deviant furieuse et même les gens les plus pacifiques rageaient intérieurement.”²⁸⁵ *Le mémorial du Québec* describes soldiers who knocked down women and children on the Easter Monday night. The author writes, “Que reste-t-il de ces cinq jours de rébellion? Quatre morts, un nombre inconnu de blessés et des souvenirs amers: un militaire ordonnant à ses soldats de ‘tirer pour tuer’ sur ses frères de sang et des soldats racistes qui ont osé crier: ‘Venez donc, enfants de chiennes de Français, nous allons vous découdre’.”²⁸⁶ The textbook *Le Canada dans le Contexte Nord-Américain* (1984) written by Rodolphe Chartrand et al., also describes soldiers from Toronto attacking the crowd “à la baïonnette” on the Easter Sunday.²⁸⁷ According to Chartrand and his contributors, these attacks sparked the rioters to shoot and injure soldiers on the Easter Monday.²⁸⁸ *Notre Histoire* (1984), written by Danielle Dion-McKinnon et al., incorporates an alleged eye witness account of the shootings on the Easter Monday. In the passage titled “Les Anglais tirent sur le monde,” Rosaire Dion (the eye witness) describes the “Toronto” soldiers as a “gang” which simply did not like the Quebecers. In his last sentence, Rosaire Dion says, “Je ne sais pas au juste comment ça (the riots) a commencé, mais les soldats ont tiré sur le monde et il y a eu quatre morts. Un affaire ‘de même’, on n’oublie jamais ça.”²⁸⁹

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 159.

²⁸⁶ Fluet, 9.

²⁸⁷ Rodolphe Chartrand et al., *Le Canada dans le contexte nord-américain* (Montreal: Guérin, 1984), 290. In its six and a half page history of conscription and the riots, the textbook explains that during the First World War, “le Québec a le sentiment d’être annexé et dominé.” See pg. 291.

²⁸⁸ Although there does not appear to be any documentary evidence that the soldiers attacked any crowds on the Easter Sunday, the quietest day of the riots, the authors structure their words in such a way so that the rioters are portrayed on the Easter Monday as merely reacting to the alleged heavy-handedness of the soldiers on the previous day. This is one of the first works that argues the rioters shot first at the soldiers Chartrand et al., pg.292.

²⁸⁹ Danielle Dion-McKinnon et al, *Notre Histoire* (Montreal: Éditions du Renouveau pédagogique, 1984), 206. This textbook makes only one reference to the European battlefield when the authors write, “En Europe, les Canadiens se signalent dans plusieurs combats: Courcelette, Vimy et Paschendale.” It ignores

Likewise, in *Nouvelle France-Canada Québec*(1986), Claude Bouchard and Robert Lagassé write, “L’opinion populaire au Québec condamne les dirigeants de l’Armée qui ont fait preuve d’une hâte intempestive à utiliser les armes contre les Québécois.”²⁹⁰ Along similar lines, Jacques Lacoursière’s *Histoire Populaire du Québec* (1997) explains that the soldiers shot at the crowd after the rioters threw ice and snowballs at the troops.²⁹¹ He describes the riots as a “émeute meurtrière.”²⁹² Still others agreed. *Histoire du Québec: Une Société Nord Américaine* (1998), a work by Yves Bourdon and Jean Lamarre, explains that the soldiers shot at the crowd on the Easter Friday when some Quebecers were ‘protesting’ in front of the military registry office.²⁹³ In *Le livre noir du Canada anglais*(2001), evoking the Conquest, Lester writes:

On peut imaginer sans peine l’effet que font ces soldats anglais de Toronto sur les Canadiens français. Pour la première fois depuis 1759, une armée anglaise en tenue de combat occupe Québec, des Dragons patrouillent à cheval. La tension monte. Les militaires ontariens, unilingues comme il se doit, se comportent en conquérants.²⁹⁴

the contributions of the 22nd battalion, and explains that the war was fought by “les Canadiens” not by Quebecers who found themselves “isolé du reste du Canada.” See pg. 207.

²⁹⁰ Claude Bouchard & Robert Lagassé, *Nouvelle France-Canada Québec* (Montreal: Beauchemin, 1986), 225. In this textbook’s section on the First World War, Vimy and Ypres are described in one sentence.

²⁹¹ Jacques Lacoursière, *Histoire Populaire du Québec* (Sillery: Septentrion, 1997), 129. This textbook dedicates three lengthy chapters to telling the story of the First World War, but only one paragraph for the story of the battlefield and does not mention Vimy or the Somme.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 129.

²⁹³ Yves Bourdon & Jean Lamarre, *Histoire du Québec: une société nord-américaine* (Laval: Beauchemin, 1998), 138. There is no evidence that the soldiers shot at the crowd on the Easter Friday. This textbook in its seven page history of the First World War does not mention Vimy, the Somme, the Last Hundred Days, or the 22nd Battalion. In the last sentence about the riots, these authors write, “Québec connaît alors quatre jours d’émeutes qui resteront gravés dans les mémoires.” See pg.135.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 223. On the one hand, the author’s description of the rioters seems to be overly generous mentioning only that they attacked the Police station and the Military Registry office, without explaining that other buildings were vandalized and pillaged for weapons. In addition, Lester includes nothing about the rioters attacking the Dominion Police officers or the soldiers before the Easter Monday violence.

For Lester, the soldiers perceived the Quebecers as an enemy comparable to the Germans.²⁹⁵ However, he argues that in many ways the soldiers' hatred for the Quebecers was more profound than for the Germans, because the former were perceived as traitors to the national cause.²⁹⁶ The injustice of the soldiers' treachery, for Lester, as for Provencher, continues to this day because the four victims' families have still not been compensated. Lester writes, "Les parents des quatre civils québécois abattus par l'armée, dans des conditions extra-légales, n'obtiendront jamais justice ni aucune compensation. Après tout, ce n'étaient que des Canadiens français, et ils payaient pour tous les autres qui en auraient mérité autant."²⁹⁷

In the post-Provencher historiography, the narrative of victimization has been further reinforced by the often sensational description of the machine guns. *Le mémorial du Québec* (1979) argues that the soldiers shot first at the rioters with machine guns full of "les balles fédérales," and which killed at least one of the victims.²⁹⁸ In *Nouvelle France-Canada Québec* (1986), the authors write, "le gouvernement fédérale fait intervenir l'armée qui ouvre le feu sur la foule avec des mitrailleuses; quatre civils sont tués et un grand nombre sont blessés."²⁹⁹ *Le Canada: une histoire populaire de la confédération à nos jours*³⁰⁰ (2001), Don Gillmore and Pierre Turgeon's book that was written in both official languages, explains that on the Easter Monday some rioters threw stones at the

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 223.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 224.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 225.

²⁹⁸ Fluet, *Le mémorial du Québec*, pg.8 (Vol 5). There is no evidence that demonstrates the four victims were shot by machine gun fire nor that the soldiers knocked down women and children on 1 April 1918 (See Chapter two)

²⁹⁹ Claude Bouchard & Robert Lagassé, *Nouvelle France-Canada Québec*, 225.

³⁰⁰ In the same year that *Canada: A People's History/Canada: Une Histoire Populaire* was aired, a two volume book written in both languages that was based on the documentary series was released. *Canada: A People's History/Canada: Une Histoire Populaire* (2001), by Gillmore and Turgeon, describes rioters who attacked the stores of Anglophone businessmen, and a city police force that refused to stop the rioting.

soldiers which caused the troops to reply with machine guns. Citing words from a letter written by Frank Scott, a military chaplain, the authors write, “Soudain, nous avons entendu le feu de plusieurs mitrailleuses. Le bruit était assourdissant et donnait l’impression qu’un massacre se déroulait en bas de la falaise.”³⁰¹ For his part, Normand Lester explains that the most blatant manifestation of the soldiers’ hatred for the Quebecers was when the troops opened fire on the crowd with the heavy machine gun.³⁰² He writes, “C’est à la mitrailleuse lourde que les Ontariens vont se venger....Bilan : quelque soixante-quinze victimes civiles, dont quatre hommes fauchés par une rafale de mitrailleuse.”³⁰³

II IL A ÉTÉ CRUCIFIÉ SUR LA TERRE DÉTROMPÉE (FILM)

In Jocelyn Létourneau’s *A History for the Future: Rewriting Memory and Identity in Quebec*, there is an interesting exchange between two filmmakers concerned with how best to tell the story of the Conquest. Phillippe Falardeau, an assistant to the documentarian Jacques Godbout, argues that filmmakers need to be diligent researchers who study all the facts, consult numerous historians and offer multiple perspectives of the event. Conversely, the screenplay writer René-Daniel Dubois argues that such rigorous methodology will result in a story much too complex for a general audience.³⁰⁴

According to Dubois, the past can only be understood through simple and dramatic

³⁰¹ Don Gillmore & Pierre Turgeon, *Le Canada: une histoire populaire de la confédération à nos jours* (Saint-Lambert: Fides, 2001), 116. Scott apparently wrote this letter from his home in Quebec City’s Upper Town.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 224.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 224.

³⁰⁴ Jocelyn Létourneau, *A History for the Future: Rewriting Memory and Identity in Quebec* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), 95.

narrative.³⁰⁵ In the end, he goes off to Hollywood to make his film, while Falardeau quits the project after Godbout and he are unable to create a satisfactory and objective narrative of the past. Over the last twenty years in Quebec, as in much of the Western world, films, similar to the one Dubois proposes, have become increasingly popular among general audiences who often find scholarly work inaccessible.³⁰⁶ The large viewership of the CBC/Radio-Canada television documentary *Canada: A People's History/Canada: une histoire populaire* (2000/2001) is one example of this phenomenon.³⁰⁷

Like texts, documentaries are subjective representations of historical reality. This seems obvious, but documentaries for a long time have held a certain trust by the public and have often been perceived as being able to convey authenticity.³⁰⁸ Bill Nichols explains why:

First, documentaries offer us a likeness or depiction of the world that bears a recognizable familiarity. Through the capacity of film, and audio tape, to record situations and events with considerable fidelity, we see in documentaries people, places, and things that we might also see for ourselves, outside the cinema. This quality alone often provides a basis for belief: we see what was there before the camera; it must be true.³⁰⁹

Though documentarians often pursue the goal of “truth” in their work, which is a worthwhile endeavour, most would admit that it can never actually be achieved. After all, the documentary’s purpose, like other media, is to tell a story. Alan Rosenthal argues that the narrative is the most important part of a historical documentary. He writes “telling stories is what film does best; it deals with conceptual and abstract thought only

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 99.

³⁰⁶ Annie Beauchemin, “L’enseignement non-scolaire de l’histoire depuis dix ans et la foire publique de la mémoire,” *Bulletin D’Histoire Politique* 14 (2006): 75.

³⁰⁷ Margaret Macmillan, *The Uses and Abuses of History* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2008), 4.

³⁰⁸ Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), xiii.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 3.

with difficulty.”³¹⁰ In order to tell its story, as well as to capture the attention of a general audience, the documentarian might use narration, witnesses, re-enactment, background music, and other effects. However, the documentarian is not just a “fly on the wall”, letting reality just ‘happen’ in front of the camera.”³¹¹ The documentarian makes choices and what he or she decides to shoot and how they shoot it will inevitably be subjective.³¹²

Since Provencher, there have been three films produced on the First World War which have told the story of the Quebec City riots- all through an uncomplicated and dramatic narrative of victimization which demonizes General Lessard and the soldiers, and sensationalizes the use of the machine guns. Richard Boutet’s *La guerre oubliée*³¹³ (1987) is the most sensational of the three. This docu-drama examines the experience of Quebecers during the First World War, but it largely focuses on conscription and the riots. In order to tell its anti-war, anti-federal government, and anti-Anglophone story, it presents both real historical figures and fictitious ones. In addition, there are elderly witnesses, some of whom are real veterans, who tell their own stories about certain events that occurred during the war. Furthermore, Joe Bocan, a well known Québécoise singer, plays the on-screen role of narrator and sings numerous period songs throughout the movie.

Like many of the texts in the post-Provencher period, *La guerre oubliée*’s portrayal of General Lessard is highly pejorative. Standing inside a Catholic Church, Bocan introduces Lessard. She says, “Le Lundi Rouge. Sur l’ordre de Sieur Borden une

³¹⁰ Alan Rosenthal, 3rd ed, *Writing, Directing, and Producing Documentary Films and Videos*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 203.

³¹¹ Jim Leach & Jeannette Sloniowski, ed, *Candid Eye : Essays on Canadian Documentaries*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 7.

³¹² Bernard, 2.

³¹³ This film which is about an hour and a half in length spends about twenty minutes telling the story of the riots.

troupe bien armé de 1,080 soldats Anglophones commandé par Général Lessard, un francophone, occupe la ville de Québec...c'est l'état de siège."³¹⁴ In the next scene, Bocan plays a maid who is working in Lessard's Château Frontenac office where she watches Lessard's meeting with Mayor Lavigueur. After showing Bocan, the camera moves to a stern and authoritarian looking Lessard, played by the actor Jacques Godin, who is sitting at his desk. In silence, Lessard gets up slowly and walks over to the Mayor who is standing at the door. In a meek and nervous manner, the Mayor hands Lessard the keys to the city. When the keys are transferred from the civilian to the soldier, the viewer hears a loud and menacing military drum. With key in hand, Lessard walks back to his desk, puts it down, and picks up a local newspaper. Nothing is said. He returns to Lavigueur and with the head of his walking stick dramatically hits the newspaper which reads, "Le maire n'arrive plus à contrôler la situation." Lavigueur looks dejected. Finally, Lessard breaks the silence. While circling Lavigueur, who stands obediently at attention, Lessard says, "Monsieur vous n'avez pu contrôler la situation avec votre police municipale. Je prends les moyens pour maîtriser la chose le plus tôt possible. Nous allons tirer et nous allons faire des prisonniers. C'est la loi des mesures de guerre."³¹⁵ Lessard returns to his desk where he turns and throws up his arms when he sees that Lavigueur has not left. The Mayor, by now sweating profusely, nervously finishes his drink and wipes the sweat off his brow. With ominous music in the background playing, he leaves. After Lavigueur has departed, the General and his assistant, angrily turn to the maid (Bocan) who realizes she has been caught eavesdropping. She glances away from the two men and continues her cleaning.

³¹⁴ *La guerre oubliée*, DVD, directed by Richard Boutet (Montreal: Les Productions Vent d'Est, 1987).

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

In order to convey its narrative of victimization, this scene, like others in the film, mixes elements of fiction and fact. It is true that on the Easter Monday, the Mayor, who was concerned about future violence in his city, met with Lessard at the Château Frontenac. It is also true that, at the inquest, Lavigueur claimed that Lessard said “Nous allons tirer et nous allons faire des prisonniers.”³¹⁶ But, just as in Provencher’s work, Boutet ignores Lessard’s inquest testimony which makes the General’s actions appear much more reasonable. Moreover, the filmmaker’s penchant for fabricating is seen at the moment when the Mayor hands over the key to the General; an event that was never alluded to by either man.³¹⁷ Equally unauthentic is the film’s depiction of the exchange between the two men; Lavigueur was not made to stand obediently in silence but instead was able to voice his concerns to Lessard. As in Provencher’s play, Lessard uses the charged words “la loi des mesures de guerre” which likely would get an emotional rise out of the film’s viewers, but which were never used at the coroner’s inquest. Lastly, and even more telling, there is no evidence that there was a maid in the room who overheard Lessard’s conversation with the Mayor. Yet, Boutet needed her presence as a way of showing how the General was all too conscious of the severity of his words to Lavigueur.

Bocan, as maid, returns in two later scenes. In the first, she explains that the Prime Minister has phoned Lessard to make sure that “tout soit en ordre.” Then the viewer once again sees Lessard in his office speaking to Borden on the phone. He says, “Yes, Mr. Prime Minister. Yes. No...No. Yes, sir. Yes, for the King and the Country sir.” When he hangs up, Lessard looks somewhat troubled by the conversation.³¹⁸ What did

³¹⁶ Lavigueur inquest testimony, *Enquête du coroner*, 48.

³¹⁷ In fact, it was Landry, who on the Easter Saturday, made the Mayor aware that he was no longer in charge of the city’s security. See Chapter 2.

³¹⁸ *La guerre oubliée*.

Borden tell him? Is the filmmaker implying that Borden gave Lessard direct orders to shoot at Quebecers? Regardless of the answers, the scene works to depict Lessard as an obsequious subject of the Federal government and a pawn for the British imperialists.

In the second scene, set after the Easter Monday night shooting, the maid is once again listening to Lessard on the telephone. He is now speaking to a journalist. Lessard says, “Non monsieur, je n’ai pas donné l’instruction de tirer. J’ai simplement dit aux soldats qu’ils sont obligés à se défendre....qu’ils pouvaient disperser la foule.”³¹⁹ While the journalist is presumably speaking, Lessard tells his assistant to put a record on in the background. This order makes the General look heartless considering the topic being discussed. He then says to the journalist, “Non, aucun soldat mort. Mais nous avons une douzaine de chevaux qui ont été blessés, et même un cheval qu’on a été obligé de tuer.”³²⁰ When the conversation ends, Lessard once again catches the maid listening to the conversation. This time she drops a tea cup and backs away from him in horror.

The film’s treatment of the ordinary soldiers is equally negative. For example, there are three very odd scenes which have Bocan in a church being confronted by the soldiers. In the first, the soldiers appear to be running at her but then after she falls to the ground, they ignore her and keep running. The second shows five soldiers slowly approaching Bocan with their guns pointing at her. Eventually, she is cornered. The camera jumps back and forth between a terrified Bocan, and a close-up of a gun barrel and the blade of a bayonet. In the third, the viewer only sees the scared face of Bocan in the same cornered position where she eventually screams in reaction to some sort of

³¹⁹ *La guerre oubliée.*

³²⁰ *Ibid.* Lessard made this comment at the inquest. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, he referred to the horses in connection with the thirty or so soldiers who had been wounded by the rioters. In both Provencher’s book and in Boutet’s film, Lessard’s words have been taken out of context.

action taken by the soldiers. It is not clear why the soldiers are chasing Bocan, nor why they approach her with their guns. Even more peculiar is the scene where she screams, thus implying the soldiers were assaulting her.³²¹

Similar to the church scenes, the soldiers are also portrayed as being cruel and violent in the depiction of the Easter Monday shootings. After Lessard gives the orders to “Charge”, the soldiers are seen riding their horses and running on foot towards the people. Concurrently, in the background Joe Bocan sings a song with such lyrics as, “Tirer soldat Canadien. Tirer sans pitié et sans quartier...”³²² When the song is over, shot from above, we see several soldiers placing a machine gun down on the street. Once the gun is ready, a soldier begins shooting (numerous rounds of bullets) into the crowd. The result of the shooting is four dead bodies on the ground. Then, in perhaps the most dramatic scene of the movie, Bocan sings an ode to the four who were killed. In the fog, wearing a white dress, apparently blood-stained, she walks to each victim to sing their story. As she arrives at Demeule’s corpse, a soldier kicks the body and then runs away. In song, Bocan comments on the boy’s youth, and sings, “il a été crucifié sur la terre détrompée.” She then walks over to the builder Bergeron and sings, “il ne fera plus de maison...une balle l’a frappé au front.” When Bocan sings to the fallen Tremblay, the next body, the viewer sees an elated soldier stealing Bergeron’s personal belongings in the background. Eventually, she arrives at Buissières and she poignantly sings, “il pensait sûrement revoir son bébé lui dire bonsoir.” At the same time, a soldier steals the personal

³²¹ Ibid. There does not appear to be any evidence of such assaults by the soldiers in the historical record.

³²² Ibid. This song was very difficult to understand. I looked for the lyrics but I could not find them. It appears this song was written for this scene.

belongings of Tremblay. Finally, walking by a crying woman, Bocan sings about how the women in these mens' lives will be profoundly affected by the tragedy of their deaths.³²³

In Boutet's version of the riots, the narrative of victimization is constructed not only through the dramatized scenes but also through witness testimony. Before proceeding, however, a word of caution is necessary. In "Rules of Engagement: Public History and the Drama of Legitimation," the historian Graham Carr, explains that there is a popular perception that experience is 'the most authentic truth.'³²⁴ In his discussion of the controversy surrounding the CBC documentary *The Valour and the Horror*, Carr explains that many Canadian Second World War veterans were upset with the documentarians' narrative which they claimed was "untrue." One veteran, who was testifying in front of a Senate committee, exclaimed, "I was there. I went through it. I know."³²⁵ However, Carr remarks, "'what counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward'" because experience is 'always already an interpretation and something that needs to be interpreted.'³²⁶

Like the veterans, Boutet's non-actor witnesses do not provide "uncontestable" evidence, but rather an interpretation that needs to be critiqued. In *La Guerre Oubliée's* story of the riots, the witness testimony is largely given by one man, who will be described as Witness #1. None of the witnesses is identified by name. More troubling, no explanation is provided about the role that any played during the riots or how old they

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Graham Carr, "Rules of Engagement: Public History and the Drama of Legitimation," *Canadian Historical Review* 86 (2005): 332.

³²⁵ Ibid., 331.

³²⁶ Ibid., 334.

might have been in 1918.³²⁷ Furthermore, in some cases, they describe their remembered experience of a particular moment during the riots but more often they comment on certain events which they appear not to have witnessed. This is problematic because as “witnesses”, their testimony is supposed to describe what they saw rather than what they think they know.

The witness testimony naturally strengthens the narrative. In his description of the Easter Thursday skirmish, Witness #1 explains that the Dominion Police ripped up the exemption papers of two young men and then arrested them at the Salle Frontenac.³²⁸ In his portrayal of Easter Friday, he claims that the mostly French-Canadian soldiers, under the command of Landry, refused to shoot at the mob when they attacked the Auditorium building.³²⁹ He says that Lavigueur signed the Riot Act at the Military Drill Hall instead of in the Lower Town, on the Easter Monday. He believes this was a big reason for the tragic deaths. He explains, “C’est là qui était le trouble, parce que personne ne savait que l’acte d’émeute a été lu.” Describing the same day, Witness #3 (the third to speak in front of the camera) argues that the shootings occurred in the late afternoon after thousands of people had finished their working day at the shoe factories. He says, “ils (the Quebecers) pensaient pas de rencontrer des soldats là. Quands ils ont vu les soldats, le rage l’ont pris les autres. Les autres n’ont pas d’armes pour dire pour se défendre.” He then says that the crowd began throwing bricks at the soldiers’ heads. Lastly, in the only

³²⁷ In the film’s credits, they cite numerous names of the various witnesses interviewed for the entire film but with no further description. Therefore, it is impossible to know the names of the three men who were interviewed for the story on the riots.

³²⁸ *La guerre oubliée*. On the Easter Thursday, interestingly, he also says that the mob liberated prisoners after they broke into Police Station #3 in their pursuit of the hated Dominion police officers. He says, “ils ont tout fait sortir les prisonniers qu’il y avaient là...même les ivrognes...ont dit les bums. Ils ont fait sortir...puis ils les ont envoyer.” Boutet’s 3rd “witness” is the only person who has tried to insert this claim into the “historical” record.

moment where it is clear that the person actually watched the event, Witness #1

graphically-if very questionably- describes Demeule's death. He says:

L'armée a tiré. On s'en allait à quatre pattes par terre. Le petit Demeule est parti. C'est en traversant l'autre bord de la rue qu'il s'est fait poigner par les balles. Quand on est arrivé le lendemain matin il y avait encore un gros paque de chair après la clôture où le petit Demeule avait été pincé.³³⁰

Unlike *la Guerre oubliée* which has actors and witnesses to tell its story, *Les 30 journées qui ont fait le Québec* (2000) uses interviews mostly with academics, but also with other historians such as Provencher, as well as voiceover narration for its description of the riots. This multi-episode documentary series, directed by Jean Roy, tells the stories of the thirty supposedly most important days in Quebec history. Provencher, who acted as consultant for the project, is interviewed at length in *La loi de conscription-24 Juillet 1917*.³³¹ He, and the others interviewed, give authority to the narrative because of their credentials as historians. Indeed, the general public's perception, as Carr writes, is often that "experts are sure about what they say, and that anyone in their position would agree with them."³³² Nevertheless, historians, like eyewitnesses, provide an interpretation of history which can be problematic. "By couching their authority in the language of

³³⁰ Ibid. Although the description of the shooting makes for dramatic viewing, one does have to wonder about its authenticity considering so much of the witness' history appears to be flawed. Moreover, none of the period newspapers or any of the people who testified at the coroner's inquest described Demeule's death in such a ghastly manner.

³³¹ "Loi De Conscription-24 Juillet 1917." In *Les 30 journées qui ont fait le Québec*. VHS. Directed by Jean Roy. Montreal: Eureka Productions, 2000. In this first episode of the documentary, one that is forty-seven minutes long, almost half is dedicated to the Quebec City riots. Although the series will tell 29 other stories, curiously, the producers will begin this series with the conscription episode even though chronologically it occurred after other events like the founding of *Le Devoir* newspaper (1910) (Episode 8). One wonders if the sequential privileging of the conscription story is a result of Provencher's long time interest in the subject.

The video begins with several Quebec historians commenting on the First World War and the conscription crisis. The historians discuss the Ontario Schools' crisis, the Francoeur motion, Armand Lavergne, and the Montreal riots in the summer of 1917. Very briefly, the historians mention Ypres and Vimy, but only to point out that these battles were futile and had both economic and human costs. The last twenty minutes of the video is devoted to telling the story of the riots..

³³² Carr, 337.

empiricism and objectivity”, Carr states, “historians manage(d) to ‘conceal’ their ‘intervention’ in the narrative by conjuring a view of history devoid of any politics other than the ‘ideology of realism.’”³³³ In this documentary, Provencher, the only historian to comment on the history of the riots, is an active agent in the construction of the victimization narrative.

Provencher, as in his book, romanticizes the rioters as well as Trudel, Lavigueur, and Armand Lavergne, whom he compares to René Levesque. On camera, he is genuinely excited about the rioters’ actions and puts the entire blame for the violence on the military authorities. In the documentary, he is even harder on Lessard than in his book, describing the officer as a man who “a gagné sa vie comme repressur” and “a tué sur les Africains.” For two weeks after the Easter Monday violence, the historian claims that Lessard did not consult the Mayor of the city or the Premier of the province, but instead abused his powers and ruled like “un roi de la ville.” With somber music playing in the background, the video associates these days with cruel repression.³³⁴

Unlike his book, in which Provencher admitted that the rioters threw projectiles at the soldiers, the documentary does not mention that the rioters played any aggravating role. In his description of the encounter between the soldiers and the rioters at the pivotal intersection, the historian says, “Il y a du monde sur Bagot, il y a du monde sur Saint-Vallier...il y a George Gooderham Mitchell qui dit ‘hey! on installe la mitrailleuse’. Non seulement ils ont décidé de tirer des cents de carabines ensemble, mais de tirer la mitrailleuse!”³³⁵ At the same time that Provencher provides his commentary in a voice-

³³³ Ibid., 340.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ According to the testimony at the inquest, it was Major Rodgers who made the decision to use the machine gun. See Chapter 2.

over, the documentary shows dramatic period footage, which does not appear to have been filmed on the Easter Monday, showing the soldiers shooting at a crowd with both rifles and machine guns.³³⁶

Provencher, as in his previous works, argues that the Quebec City rioters were victims of a great injustice, one which continues to this day because of the federal government's failure to provide indemnities to the victims' families. He poignantly says "ce que je trouve épouvantable à propos de cette histoire..c'est que ces gens là ont été tués dans leurs quartiers, par la guerre, par les soldats, pour être opposé à la guerre. C'est tout à fait absurde."³³⁷ Appropriate to his narrative, the episode ends with the credits rolling over the pictures of the four victims, ending with Georges Demeule. The very last picture seen is one of a soldier shooting a machine gun.³³⁸

The machine gun is also central to Jacqueline Corkery's version of the Quebec City riots in the documentary series *Canada: A People's History/Canada: Une histoire populaire* (2000/2001).³³⁹ In the segment about conscription titled "Une promesse non tenue" ("Broken Promises" in English), the story of the riots which is approximately two and a half minutes long is told by an off-screen narrator as well as by historical re-enactment. Corkery's history, like Boutet's and Provencher's, depicts Quebecers as victimized by the "Other". The documentary explains that on the Easter Thursday, Joseph

³³⁶ Ibid. There appears to have been no visual record of the shootings.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ "Une promesse non tenue." In *Le Canada: une histoire populaire de la confédération à nos jours*. DVD. Directed by Hubert Gendron and Gordon Henderson. Montreal: Société Radio-Canada, 2001. Corkery, who was the director/ producer/writer for this episode, argues that the crowd's anger was incited upon Joseph Mercier's arrest by the Dominion Police on the Easter Thursday. However, the documentarian ignores that the rioters vandalized the Police station and attacked the officers Bélanger and Évanturel. The following night, Easter Friday, the documentary describes the rioters ransacking symbolic buildings like the Auditorium as well as the *Chronicle* and *L'Événement* newspaper buildings, but does not acknowledge that the rioters also vandalized and pillaged several buildings that held no symbolic meaning over the course of the five days.

Mercier was arrested by the Dominion Police force for not having his exemption papers thus inciting the anger of many Quebecers. Without acknowledging the distinction between the nights of Easter Thursday and Easter Friday, Corkery portrays Mercier's arrest as having inspired the rioters to storm the Auditorium building, to burn the Registrar's records, and to vandalize the offices of the "government run" *Chronicle* and *L'Événement*.³⁴⁰ In this version, there is no mention of the rioters vandalizing the Police Station #3, or the pillaging of hardware stores for weapons, nor the attacks on the Dominion Police officers, Évanturel and Bélanger.

Also misleading is the documentary's portrayal of the soldiers' participation in the conflict. It does not describe the Army's early involvement under Landry's command but instead claims that soldiers from Ontario and the West intervened after four days of rioting. With the Easter Monday shootings being the next story told, this omission is important because it gives the impression that the soldiers arrived in Quebec City and immediately began shooting at the crowd. In this context, the Easter Monday shootings are powerfully described by means of a real letter written by a woman named Amy Scott. With machine guns shooting in the background, an actress playing Scott recites the letter she is writing to her husband, "Tu ne peux pas savoir comment on se sent quand on entendent le crépitement des mitraillettes, les hurlements de la foule enragée et quand tu pense que tout près de nous il y a des combats et un pan de sang."³⁴¹ Without explaining why the soldiers shot at the rioters, the narrator says, "Une douzaine de citoyens sont blessés... quatre autres sans armes sont tués." There is no mention of the soldiers being

³⁴⁰ Although the two newspapers supported conscription, there is no evidence that they were being run by the federal government.

³⁴¹ Ibid. In Gillmore and Turgeon's textbook, instead of using Amy Scott's letter to describe the violence, the authors quote her son who appeared to be listening to the shooting from the Upper-Town. See this Chapter's section on texts.

attacked or any resulting injuries to the troops. With somber music playing, the documentary shows the newspaper obituaries of the four victims ending with Demeule. Each victim's occupation and age is described, and in Bergeron's case, the narrator poignantly explains that he had six children.³⁴² In the final scene the camera pans towards a coffin covered with white roses. This coffin presumably is Demeule's. We then hear a sensational account of the Demeule shooting while sad music is playing in the background. This graphic account is identical to Witness #1's in *La Guerre Oubliée*.³⁴³

III C'EST PEU CONTESTABLE (PUBLIC COMMEMORATION)

In her book *Martyred Village: Commemorating the 1944 Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane*, Sarah Farmer examines French public remembrance of the killing of hundreds of innocents by the Nazis. She writes:

Commemoration reveals much about a society's relationship to its past because it mediates between individual testimony and collective remembrance; between the often conflicting perspectives of participating groups (survivors, the families of those touched by the events being memorialized, associations, government authorities, political parties); between past, present and future; between remembered experience and the written works of professional historians; between remembering and forgetting.³⁴⁴

³⁴² Unlike the documentary, the book's authors explain bluntly that the result of the shooting was, "Bilan officiel: 4 morts et plus de 70 blessés." The book also ignores the stories of the four victims and does not include the documentary's sensational account of the Demeule death. See Gillmore and Turgeon, 116.

³⁴³ Curiously, unlike almost all of the written and eyewitness accounts in this documentary series, the witness is not identified. Perhaps, Corkery was unable to find the correct name in Boutet's film's credits, a problem this writer encountered. However, that does not explain why she does not cite Boutet's movie in her bibliography. This is not the only peculiarity to her bibliography. For instance, on the French page of the series' official website the documentarian's bibliography includes Jean Provencher's book *Québec sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918*. However, the book is not included on the English page. "Bibliography References by Episode." *Canada: A People's History*. http://history.cbc.ca/history/?Mival=GENcont.html&series_id=4&episode_id=99&chapter_id=2&page_id=2&lang=E#13 (accessed November 15, 2007).

In a series which produced all its episodes in both languages, supposedly telling the same history, it seems odd that the bibliographies would not be the same.

³⁴⁴ Sarah Farmer, *Martyred Village: Commemorating the 1944 Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 4.

The public commemoration of the Quebec City riots, as was the case at Oradour-sur-Glane, has also reflected many of the elements that Farmer identifies. Nevertheless, unlike the French village, which government officials deemed worthy of memorialization immediately following the Second World War, the story of the Quebec City riots took much longer to be publicly recognized. For the first fifty years following the riots there was little public remembrance of the event. However, in the last thirty years, increasingly there has been more commemoration culminating with the unveiling of the monument in 1998. Like the texts and films produced in this period, public commemoration has largely reflected Provencher's work telling the story of the riots through the lens of victimization.

By the late 1960s, perhaps as a result of the written works produced on the riots by some of Quebec's amateur historians, two Francophone newspapers paid a small tribute, for the first time, to the riots' 50th anniversary. This recognition had taken five decades. On the 1st anniversary (1919)³⁴⁵, the press had commemorated the Battle of Ypres, and on the 25th (1943)³⁴⁶ had remembered the creation of the Royal Air Force; however, in neither year did the newspapers choose to write about the riots.

³⁴⁵ During the inter-war period, there appears to be no evidence that Quebecers publicly commemorated conscription and the riots. In March-April 1919, one year after the riots, the popular press (I looked at the period from the end of March to early April in *Action Catholique*, *Le Devoir*, *L'Événement*, *La Presse*, and *Le Soleil*) was more interested in stories about the Paris Peace Conference, Wilfred Laurier's recent death, the French gift of Vimy Ridge to Canada, the Spanish flu, and the return of the 22nd battalion to Quebec than remembering the violence in Quebec City. In their newspapers, Quebecers not only read about returning soldiers, but were also encouraged to participate in commemorative military events. To celebrate the four year anniversary of the battle of Ypres, *La Presse* informed its readers that there would be a ceremony and that all of the city's militia groups were to participate. *L'Événement* asked Quebec City residents to show their support for the returning 22nd battalion by organizing and attending a celebratory parade. Even *Le Devoir* celebrated the return of the troops and ignored the anniversary of the riots.

³⁴⁶ In 1943, there was little evidence in the popular press that Quebecers were commemorating the riots' 25th anniversary. Instead, the newspapers told stories about the Second World War, the first tramway strike in forty years, and the Boston-Detroit Stanley Cup series. There was only one French language newspaper that mentioned the Quebec City riots. *Le Soleil*, in a daily section titled "Il y a vingt-cinq ans", remembered the Easter Monday riots in two sentences. *Le Soleil* wrote, "L'émeute éclate de nouveau à St Sauveur cette fois, et les rues St Joseph et St Vallier sont balayées par les mitrailleuses. 83 civils sont arrêtés et détenus à la citadelle." Although *Le Soleil*'s headlines on April 2nd 1918 were exclusively about the riots, twenty-five years later the top story the newspaper selected to remember was about the British

By the mid 1970s, a few years after Provencher published his two works, the *Société nationale des Québécois* led a movement to commemorate the riots.³⁴⁷ However, the result was modest. On July 1st, 1978, when most of the country was celebrating Canada Day, a group of Quebecers attended the unveiling of a small plaque in Quebec City's Lower Town. The plaque, which was placed by the city on the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN) building³⁴⁸, read:

Près d'ici tombèrent sous les balles des troupes fédérales du Canada,
le 1er avril 1918,
Honoré Bergeron (49 ans)
Alexandre Bussières (25 ans)
Georges Demeule (15 ans)
Édouard Tremblay (23 ans),
Les Québécois n'oublient pas
Société nationale des Québécois
1er Juillet 1978.³⁴⁹

But sixty years after the riots not all Quebecers agreed that they were worth remembering. In her book, Sarah Farmer writes, "Groups that organize around maintaining and communicating a common memory.....seek to gather others to their view of the events being recalled and thereby to influence public understanding of the past. Yet these commemorative efforts are often punctuated as much by conflict as consensus."³⁵⁰ Indeed, there were some who opposed the plaque's unveiling because they associated such history with Quebec's separatist movements.³⁵¹ Unable to halt the

and French forces making progress on the battlefield. *Le Devoir*, *L'Action Catholique*, *La Presse*, and *L'Événement* ignored the riot story but chose to remember a different history. On April 1st 1943, in full length articles, each of these newspapers commemorated the Royal Air Force's 25th anniversary.

³⁴⁷ Interview with Louis Bélanger, December 18, 2006.

³⁴⁸ This building is at 155 Boulevard Charest in Quebec City's Lower Town. After the monument was built in 1998, the plaque was removed from this building.

³⁴⁹ Letter written by André Laflamme, archivist, *Québec-Printemps 1918*, Dossier M4.2/Qu, Archives de la Ville De Québec (Quebec City).

³⁵⁰ Farmer, 4.

³⁵¹ Interview with Louis Bélanger.

plaque's erection, the protesters won a small victory when they convinced the municipal government to place it a few blocks away from the actual site of the shootings.³⁵²

In the early 1990s, after having finished reading *Québec: sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918*, Louis Bélanger, a civil servant, went for a walk to the intersection where the four victims had been killed. Dismayed by the absence of any form of commemoration, he wrote a letter to Quebec City's mayor Jean-Paul L'Allier. In it, Bélanger explained that the riots were a significant event in the neighbourhood's history, and he felt that the plaque which was a few blocks away was not a sufficient commemoration.³⁵³ He argued that a monument needed to be built at the intersection where the killings had taken place. Jean-Yves Roy, the president of the St-Roch citizens' committee³⁵⁴, supported Bélanger's idea for a monument and also wrote a letter to the Mayor. In a letter dated March 11th, 1992, Roy wrote:

Monsieur le maire, l'année 1993 sera le soixante-quinzième anniversaire³⁵⁵ des tristes, importants et méconnus évènements qui survinrent à Québec au printemps de 1918. Or, à notre connaissance, absolument rien ne souligne ces évènements qui sont pourtant, selon les mots de l'historien Jean Provencher, parmi les plus

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ At the time, Bélanger was a member of this committee.

³⁵⁵ On the 75th anniversary, a year after Roy wrote his letter to the Mayor, *Le Devoir* was the only newspaper to write a commemorative article about the riots. "Les émeutiers de la Basse-Ville" by Rémy Charest provides a tragic history of the riots conveyed mainly through the reporter's interview with Jean Provencher. According to Charest, on the Easter Monday, the soldiers opened fire on the crowd without provocation leaving four dead and numerous injured. Furthermore, the reporter argues, with no supporting evidence, that the martial law imposed on Quebec City after the riots was considerably more severe than in October 1970. In the article's last section titled "les silences de l'histoire", Charest quotes Provencher as saying, "Quand j'ai voulu faire mes recherches, il y a vingt ans, ceux qui avaient été témoins des évènements ne voulaient pas en parler, un peu comme si on avait eu honte." *Le Devoir*, 1 April 1993. Furthermore, Charest argues that the memory of the riots has remained almost exclusively within the families involved. This seems to contradict Robert Comeau's argument in "L'Opposition à la conscription au Québec" (1998), in which the UQAM historian argues that conscription and the riots have been mainly remembered by union workers and nationalists. See Robert Comeau, 'L'Opposition à la conscription au Québec,' In Legault & Lamarre, eds., *La Première Guerre Mondiale et le Canada* (Montreal: Méridien, 1999), 92.

tragiques de notre histoire. De plus, nous croyons que la relance du quartier St-Roch bénéficierait d'œuvres d'art publiques. Ces raisons nous amènent à vous demander d'entreprendre des démarches afin que soit érigé un monument commémorant les événements du printemps 1918.³⁵⁶

Roy, like Bélanger, believed the monument should be built at the intersection of the shootings. In his letter, he also made the point that the intention of the monument's erection would not be to "ressasser de vieilles rancoeurs", but to "embellir la ville et à faire en sorte que les Québécois connaissent un événement important de leur histoire."³⁵⁷ Although L'Allier was initially reluctant to satisfy Bélanger and Roy's requests³⁵⁸, eventually the Mayor approved the project.

Soon after, Bélanger formed a monument committee of about fifteen to twenty people. This group included the president of the *Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste*, members from the *Syndicat des fonctionnaires* and the *Caisse populaire*, a few provincial government workers, an architect, a few artists, a local businessman, and Jean Provencher.³⁵⁹ Their first order of business was to raise money. Bélanger, who was elected the president of the committee, says, "On avait toujours le même problème: pas d'argent, pas d'argent, pas capable à ramasser de l'argent."³⁶⁰ The only groups willing to give them money were the *Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste* and the *Caisse populaire*.³⁶¹ It was the latter organization that gave the committee \$1500 to start the project.

³⁵⁶ Letter written by Jean-Yves Roy to Mayor Jean-Paul L'Allier. March 11, 1992. *Québec-Printemps 1918*, Dossier M4.2/Qu, Archives de la Ville De Québec (Quebec City).

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Interview with Louis Bélanger. L'Allier initially believed that the plaque on the CSN building was adequate commemoration.

³⁵⁹ Interview with Louis Bélanger

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid. In the end several groups contributed money to finance the monument. Among the most important were: "le secrétariat aux développements des régions du gouvernement du Québec et le ministère de la culture et des communications du Québec, la Commission de la capitale nationale, la caisse d'économie des travailleuses et travailleurs de Québec, la Société Saint-Jean Baptiste de Québec et la ville de Québec."

The committee then held a contest to select a local artist to design the monument. After short-listing three, they gave each \$500 to propose a design. One artist suggested a monument that would have four chairs covered by a burial shroud. Another wanted to build a large column with a sculpture of a bird sitting on the top, shot dead by an arrow. Some of the members on the committee thought that these first two proposals were simply too political. In the end, Aline Martineau's *Québec, Printemps 1918* won the contest. According to Bélanger, Martineau's narrow rectangular stone flower with metal petals of human form was "le plus traditionnel des trois."³⁶²

As for the monument's explanatory text, the committee recommended a particular narrative which Bélanger claims was not overly political. He explains that the committee "ne voulait jamais exagérer l'aspect nationaliste du monument. On a proposé à la ville de Québec un texte neutre...ou assez neutre." However, to the committee's surprise, the city's final version was much more charged. Bélanger acknowledges, "notre texte ne parlait pas à propos des régiments anglais."³⁶³

Mayor L'Allier approved the following narrative for the plaque:

Au printemps 1918, des événements tragiques marquent l'histoire de la ville de Québec. Le 28 mars de cette année-là et durant cinq jours consécutifs, des citoyens et des citoyennes manifestent leur opposition à la mobilisation obligatoire et aux méthodes prises par les autorités fédérales pour rabattre les conscrits.

Le 1er avril, tout se gâte lorsque les autorités militaires donnent l'ordre aux 1200 soldats anglophones amenés expressément de l'Ontario et de l'Ouest canadien de disperser à la baïonnette, les gens rassemblés au centre-ville. Les cavaliers chargent la foule. Celle-ci, rassemblée à l'angle des rues Saint-Vallier, Saint-Joseph, et Bagot, réagit en lançant des pierres aux soldats. Après avoir lu, en anglais, l'ordre

Communiqué released by the "Comité 'Québec, Printemps 1918'", (September 4th, 1998). Québec-Printemps 1918, Dossier M4.2/Qu, Archives de la Ville De Québec (Quebec City).

³⁶² Interview with Bélanger.

³⁶³ Ibid.

de dispersion, les soldats mitraillent la foule tuant quatre personnes et en blessant soixante-dix autres.

Quatre-vingt ans plus tard, une fleur à pétales humains s'élève en ce lieu au sommet d'une sculpture monumentale. Elle symbolise la vie dont on retrouve la puissance dans le mouvement spontané d'un peuple qui se lève pour défendre ses convictions et qu'on découvre si fragile aussi quand la mort arrive de façon violente comme ce le fut, ce printemps-là pour quatre québécois:

Honoré Bergeron, 49 ans, menuisier

Alexandre Buissières, 25 ans, mécanicien

Georges Demeule, 14 ans, cordonnier et machiniste

Joseph-Édouard Tremblay, 20 ans, étudiant à l'École technique

Cette fleur, ainsi déposée, témoigne de respect qu'inspire aux vivants le souvenir de ceux qui laissèrent ici leur vie.³⁶⁴

Once the text was written, the task then turned to raising \$25,000 to build the monument. The committee solicited the neighborhood and various groups.³⁶⁵ In 1994, they held a press conference attended by about twenty people, but no journalists.³⁶⁶ According to Bélanger, "ils n'ont pas parlé dans les journaux...c'était un échec total." Like the earlier protests against commemorating the riots, some Quebecers simply were not interested in supporting such a project. Bélanger explains, "pour bien des gens et des journalistes c'était comme tous les monuments sont devenus quelque chose de controversé... tous les monuments qui avaient une petite coloration politique."³⁶⁷ For him, it was the monument's political implications that explained why journalists and others were not willing to support its construction. "Chaque fois qu'on voulait parler de ça les gens disaient... c'est politique... mais voyons ce n'est pas politique!", he exclaims.

³⁶⁴ Québec-Printemps 1918, Dossier M4.2/Qu, Quebec City Archives.

³⁶⁵ The committee asked for money from the Quebec government and its various ministries, Quebec companies, and even, as Bélanger put it, "les fédérales."

³⁶⁶ The press conference was held at the Tam-Tam Café on the Boulevard Langelier.

³⁶⁷ For example, in the interview, Bélanger mentioned the federalist protests at the unveiling of Quebec City's Charles de Gaulle monument in 1997.

For Bélanger, the upcoming referendum on Quebec's sovereignty was also partly to blame. He says, "Tout ça se passe avant le référendum...vois-tu ça joue tout le temps ces affaires là. Il y avait des gens qui venaient à la réunion et disaient 'est-ce que c'est un bon temps de faire ça...le référendum s'en vient.'"³⁶⁸ However, Bélanger and his committee vowed to complete their project.

Nevertheless, it was hard to disassociate the monument from the politics of the day. In 1998, when Christiane Gagnon, a Quebec City Bloc Québécois Member of Parliament, rose in the House of Commons the monument's political implications were apparent. She said:

Mr. Speaker, on April 1, 1918, four people were killed by English Canadian soldiers at a rally against conscription. After reviewing the events, the coroner's inquest concluded that "the individuals shot on this occasion were innocent victims in no way involved in this riot—and it is the government's duty to pay fair and reasonable compensation to the victims' families", which has yet to be done. As a reminder, a work of art commemorating these tragic events will soon be erected at the very location where they took place in Quebec City's Lower town by the Comité Québec-Printemps 1918, a group of people in the Quebec City area. The Bloc Québécois asks that the federal government publicly apologize to the victims' families and redress an 80-year old injustice by compensating them. Those who appreciate historical accuracy also remember the events that occurred in the spring of 1918.³⁶⁹

A few months later, on the morning of the unveiling, the committee feared that politics might ruin the ceremony. Having heard that there might be protesters in the crowd, Bélanger decided to err on the side of caution. He explains, "j'avais un jeune fils que je n'ai pas amené à l'inauguration parce que j'avais peur qu'il y aurait des

³⁶⁸ Interview with Louis Bélanger.

³⁶⁹ "Thirty-Sixth Parliament. 1st Session." Hansard. *Government of Canada*.

<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?pub=hansard&mee=102&parl=36&ses=1&language=E&x=1#T1100> (accessed January 15th, 2007).

manifestations.”³⁷⁰ However, the committee had little to fear. Out of about hundred people who attended the ceremony, there were only two, both in their sixties and carrying Canadian flags, who quietly protested the unveiling.³⁷¹ Bélanger describes the two as “des pièces d’extrémistes.”³⁷² He admits that he cannot understand why anyone would protest the neighborhood’s history which for him was “peu contestable.” When the ceremony was over, Télévision Quatre-Saison interviewed Bélanger, Martineau, and the two protesters.³⁷³ That evening, much to the chagrin of Bélanger, the network allocated as much time to the protesters as it did to Bélanger and Martineau in its report on the building of another controversial monument in Quebec City.³⁷⁴

Today Bélanger is proud of the monument he helped build to remember the history of his community. He says, “On pense que toute histoire à Québec s’est passé en haut (in the Upper Town). C’est pas vrai.”³⁷⁵ He believes that his working-class neighborhood never had much interest in remembering the story of the riots. According to him, “quand on parle de l’oubli et la honte, ça je pense que c’est un élément de classe.” However, with the building of the monument, Bélanger believes that the story of the riots

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ In Robert Comeau’s article “L’Opposition à la conscription au Québec” (1998), the historian argues that there were several protesters, mainly veterans, who were at the unveiling of the monument. He writes, “lors du dévoilement de la statue, un groupe de contre-manifestants formé surtout de vétérans a manifesté sa désapprobation. L’exemple montre à quel point, sous le vernis de la mémoire unitaire, les dissidences demeurent.” Robert Comeau, ‘L’Opposition à la conscription au Québec,’ in *La Première Guerre Mondiale et le Canada*, eds. Legault & Lamarre (Montreal: Méridien, 1999), 93. Unfortunately, Comeau’s claims are not accompanied by footnotes. This is particularly frustrating as Bélanger, who had never heard of Comeau’s article, was adamant that there were only two protesters and not a “group.” Bélanger was not sure whether or not the two protesters were veterans.

³⁷² Interview with Louis Bélanger.

³⁷³ This television network was the only one to attend the unveiling. On September 5th, 1998, the newspaper *Le Soleil* showed a picture of L’Allier, Martineau, and Bélanger at the unveiling. However, there was no accompanying article. There was only a very brief caption that identified the monument and its location, as well as the three people in the picture. Interestingly, the caption did not explain what the monument was commemorating. There was no mention of the four victims.

³⁷⁴ Interview with Louis Bélanger.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

is a source of pride for Quebecers. He explains, “je n’ai pas l’impression qu’il y avait un manque...mais maintenant ils sont fiers d’avoir ce monument.”³⁷⁶

In 2008, ten years after the unveiling, the monument was once again the site of gathering and protest. On the riots’ 90th anniversary, the left-wing anarchist group NEFAC (Northeastern Federation of Anarchist-Communists/La fédération des communistes libertaires du Nord-Est) organized a rally in Quebec City’s Lower Town.³⁷⁷ The rally had a triple function: to evoke the riots, to protest the Canadian government’s involvement in the Afghanistan war, and to provide a counter-commemoration to the official remembrance of Quebec’s 400th anniversary. In a Radio-Canada interview, Mathieu Houle-Courcelles, a member of the anarchist group *La Nuit*, explained that the official celebrations, which largely focused on Samuel Champlain’s 1608 founding of Quebec, ignored Quebec City’s long history of conflict. He explained, “ils préfèrent les (riots) oubliées, préfèrent les taire...l’histoire de la ville de Québec est ponctué de révolte.”³⁷⁸ On March 27th, 2008, approximately 300 protesters representing various left-

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ “Appel à une manifestation anti-militariste.” *NEFAC*

<http://nefac.net/fr/node/2338> (accessed May 14, 2008)

The following is an excerpt from this website: “Québec fut à l’époque témoin d’une véritable révolte populaire contre la conscription. Du 28 mars au 1er avril 1918, des foules de plusieurs milliers de personnes ont affronté l’armée à main nue dans les rues du centre-ville. Cinq jours d’émeutes pendant lesquels un poste de police est assiégé, des journaux militaristes attaqués et un bureau de l’armée incendié. Cinq jours qui se sont terminés par un bain de sang dans le quartier Saint-Sauveur quand l’armée charge la foule, faisant 35 blessés et 4 morts. Aujourd’hui, 90 ans plus tard, le Canada est une fois de plus en guerre. Les motifs ne sont guère différents, il s’agit une fois de plus d’une guerre impérialiste menée au nom de la démocratie et de la liberté. Mais, hier comme aujourd’hui, les peuples ne sont pas dupes. Il n’y a peut-être pas de conscription mais c’est en notre nom, et avec notre argent, que le Canada fait la guerre. Néanmoins, malgré la propagande incessante, une majorité de la population québécoise s’oppose à la guerre. Cette opposition populaire doit pouvoir s’exprimer! C’est pourquoi nous marcherons le 28 mars prochain pour commémorer le 90e anniversaire des émeutes contre la conscription et pour manifester notre opposition à la guerre en Afghanistan.”

³⁷⁸ “Quatre-vingt ans plus tard, des militants se souviennent de la conscription.” *Radio-*

Canada. <http://www.radio-canada.ca/radio/emissions/document.asp?docnumero=54379&numero=62> (accessed May 5, 2008)

wing groups in the province gathered at the nearby Bibliothèque Gabrielle Roy.³⁷⁹

Among them was Houle-Courcelles. In his address to the crowd, he exclaimed, “Québec n’est pas qu’une ville de garnison, elle a aussi un fier passé antimilitariste.”³⁸⁰ After a few speeches, the group marched to the monument with signs that read “1918-2008. “90 ans de massacre” and “Je me souviens.” One person held a sign which listed the names and ages of the four riot victims and in large bold letters read “Mort pour la liberté.”³⁸¹

One year later, on the 91st anniversary, Quebecers gathered once more at “*Québec-Printemps 1918*” for another act of commemoration. Officials from the municipal and provincial government, from the Société Saint-Jean Baptiste, as well as Aline Martineau, the monument’s artist, all attended the ceremony. Four red roses were deposited by the monument to honour the victims of the killings. Reporting on the anniversary, a local Quebec City newspaper described the violence that occurred on the Easter Monday. “Après avoir repoussé la foule dans le quartier Saint-Sauveur et lu en anglais l’ordre de dispersion, le major George G. Mitchell fait installer une mitrailleuse au coin des rues Saint-Vallier, Saint-Joseph et Bagot et ordonne de tirer. Quatre personnes tombent sous les feux des soldats et aucune de celles-ci n’avait pris part à l’émeute.”³⁸²

Although the coroner’s inquest recommended that the federal government should pay

³⁷⁹ On November 11th, 2008, in *Le Devoir*, the historian Mourad Djebabla, wrote erroneously that Quebecers ignored the 90th anniversary of the Quebec City riots while other Canadians were commemorating the 90th anniversary of the November 11th armistice. In his words, “Cet anniversaire est passé totalement sous silence au Québec comme au Canada.”³⁷⁹ The historian added that it was due time for a feature film to be made on the subject of the riots.

³⁸⁰ -“La gauche antimilitariste manifeste à Québec.” *Presse-toi à Gauche* (accessed May 19, 2008)

³⁸¹ To see the pictures from the protest see “Aujourd’hui comme hier, nous rejetons votre guerre!” *Presse-toi à Gauche*

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/10060289@N05/sets/72157604305532435/> (accessed May 19, 2008)

³⁸² -“Commémoration des émeutes de 1918.” *Québec-Hebdo*, <http://www.quebechebdo.com/article-318247-Commémoration-des-emeutes-de-1918.html>, (accessed May 4, 2009)

reparations to the victims' families, the article explains that ninety-one years later the families are still waiting for this injustice to be resolved.

There is perhaps no better word than “sensational” to describe how the story of the riots has been told since the work of Jean Provencher. In historical writing, film, and through public commemoration, its history has been conveyed using sensation as a key tool to engage the audience's attention and to frame the story from a perspective of victimization. In order to effectively accomplish this task, most representations, whether through texts, film, or commemoration, have demonized General Lessard and the Anglophone soldiers, while exaggerating the role that the machine guns played. Since Provencher, the story has changed very little because historians have resorted to parroting each other, rather than examining available documents in the archives. Today, due to the remarkable interpretative homogeneity of its various representations, Quebecers who care to remember the story of the riots will most likely view the event as another tragic example of their being victimized by the “Other.”

Conclusion

In the 1920s, Maurice Halbwachs, the French sociologist, wrote, “a collective memory, at least a significant collective memory, is understood to express some eternal or essential truth about the group-usually tragic.”³⁸³ For many Quebecers, the memory of their collective past, at least from the Conquest onwards, is one of tragedy and victimization by the “Other.”³⁸⁴ This memory, of course, is as much a reflection of how Quebecers view themselves in the present as what happened in the past. As memory is sometimes contested, the present often becomes a battleground for, as Halbwachs put it, “competing narratives about central symbols in the collective past.”³⁸⁵ Such was the case in the recent public debate over Quebec’s new high school history curriculum “Histoire et éducation à la citoyenneté.” For many, the document’s perceived attempt to downplay some of the more divisive episodes in Quebec’s history was seen as a direct attack on the common identity of Quebecers. The sovereigntist, Éric Tremblay, wrote, “l’exercice révisionniste consiste à oblitérer des pans entiers et les moments cruciaux de notre histoire ayant forgé notre identité québécoise et favorisé l’émergence du mouvement de libération nationale afin d’endoctriner les jeunes étudiants.”³⁸⁶ Likewise, in a letter written to the education minister, several francophone academics wrote, “Nous sommes enfin opposés à l’entreprise d’occultation systématique de la nation québécoise qu’on observe dans le document.” In the letter’s last sentence, the authors write, “Le peuple québécois n’est pas un acteur secondaire. C’est le personnage central de notre histoire

³⁸³ Margaret Macmillan, *The Uses and Abuses of History* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2008), 50.

³⁸⁴ Létourneau, 24.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

³⁸⁶ *Tribune Libre*, April 28, 2006.

nationale!”³⁸⁷ In *Le Devoir*, Denise Bombardier wrote, “faut-il que les descendants des colons français ignorent les combats de leurs aïeux, la sueur et le sang qu’ils ont dépensés pour se sortir de la misère?” In the end, many Quebecers were not ready to see the teaching of a more conciliatory and inclusive history at the expense of de-emphasizing such events as the Conquest, the 1837 Rebellions, or Conscription.

It is the conscription crisis that remains the dominant memory of the First World War for many Quebecers. On the back cover of the 2009 winter edition of the academic journal *Bulletin d’histoire politique* the editors write, “la mémoire québécoise tend à ne retenir de cet événement (the First World War) que l’opposition à la conscription.”³⁸⁸ In the same publication, *Le Bulletin* claims that the works produced on the subject of military history by Quebec’s francophone historians continue to be far behind their Anglophone counterparts in Quebec and the rest of Canada.³⁸⁹ Historian Mourad Djebabla writes, “L’histoire militaire demeure encore trop souvent l’enfant pauvre des départements d’histoire des universités québécoises.”³⁹⁰ Similarly, academic Robert Comeau, a few years earlier said, “On a complètement abandonné ça, notamment parce que plusieurs historiens croient que faire de l’histoire militaire, ça serait faire la promotion de l’unité canadienne.”³⁹¹

³⁸⁷ In *Le Devoir*, Denise Bombardier was significantly more trenchant. She wrote: Pour que les autochtones soient reconnus dans la création du pays, pour que les immigrants se sentent acceptés, faut-il que les descendants des colons français ignorent les combats de leurs aïeux, la sueur et le sang qu’ils ont dépensés pour se sortir de la misère, instruire leurs enfants et faire triompher une démocratie où le respect de l’autre a valeur suprême ? Cette détestable rectitude politique, lorsqu’elle se traduit par un tel document, relève plutôt d’une tentation intellectuellement totalitaire que de cette conscience citoyenne, louable objectif à condition de ne pas éradiquer les luttes dures, parfois injustes mais nécessaires que suppose le rapport de force entre les peuples. (*Le Devoir*, April 29 2006)

³⁸⁸ *Bulletin d’histoire politique*, 17, n.2, (2009).

³⁸⁹ Mourad Djebabla, “Dossier thématique: Le Québec et la première guerre mondiale 1914-1918”, *Bulletin d’histoire politique* 17, n.2 (2009): 18.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁹¹ *La Presse*, November 11th, 1998.

Beyond academia, most French language school textbooks written in Quebec over the last 40 years have focused primarily on the conscription crisis in telling their story of the First World War. The apparent lack of attention given to military history in the education system, particularly concerning the First and Second World Wars, is perhaps one reason why few Quebecers were interested in seeing the recent film *Passchendaele* (2008). The First World War battlefield film, which grossed \$2 million in its opening ten days in theaters across Canada, only made \$101 000 in Quebec during the same period. On the other hand, *Le Déserteur* (which opened in Quebec on the same weekend), a film that tells the story of a French Canadian Second World War conscript who deserts the Canadian army, grossed \$100 000 after its opening weekend.³⁹² In “Les deux solitudes de l’histoire militaire vues par le cinéma”, Djebabla argues that *Le Déserteur*’s popularity is a direct result of Quebecers remembering the conscription crisis and their resistance to the federal government as the defining moment of the two World Wars.³⁹³

Nevertheless, the Quebec City riots, perhaps the best example of that resistance, had been largely ignored by Quebec’s professional and amateur historical communities until the Quiet Revolution. As the social and intellectual forces changed in the 1960s, some of the amateurs, the most important being Jean Provencher, re-discovered the story of the riots. Provencher’s *Québec: sous la loi des mesures de guerre 1918* and his subsequent play *Québec, Printemps 1918* were written to honour the four victims who were deemed unfairly killed, as well as to commemorate those Quebecers who chose to

³⁹² “Passchendaele: le succès de l’autre Canada.” *Mon Cinéma*. <http://moncinema.cyberpresse.ca/nouvelles-et-critiques/nouvelles/nouvelle-cinema/6354-iPasschendaele-le-succes-de-lautre-Canada.html> (accessed April 4, 2009)

³⁹³ “Les deux solitudes de l’histoire militaire vues par le cinéma.” *Vigil.net*. <http://www.vigile.net/Les-deux-solitudes-de-l-histoire> (accessed April 5, 2009)

fight for, what the author believed, was a worthy cause. Additionally, in writing his book and play, Provencher also meant to correct the perceived historical wrong of a tragic event that seemed to have been forgotten by Quebecers. Although he claimed his works were “objective”, Provencher wrote this history with a political message and accordingly selected, interpreted, and manipulated documents in order to strengthen his argument. Since then, Quebec’s francophone historians, mostly amateurs, have parroted Provencher’s works contributing very little that is new on the topic. Consequently, although the story of the riots is widely represented today in Quebec, it continues to be told through a tragic and simplistic narrative of victimization.

Over the last forty years, Provencher’s account of the riots has greatly influenced how the event has been portrayed in the historiography but also in other media such as film and in acts of public commemoration. For example, in *Histoire 1534-2000* (2000), the most recent edition of *Histoire 1534-1968* (1968), Lacoursière, Vaugeois and Provencher write “Les Québécois se souviennent grâce à Jean Provencher des cinq morts des émeutes de 1918 à Québec.”³⁹⁴ A year after this textbook was published, Provencher’s play was performed once again at Quebec City’s Palais Montcalm. According to Louis Bélanger, “C’était gratuit...il y avait au moins deux cents personnes.”³⁹⁵ The riots were also the focus of *Béatrice Québec 1918* (2007), a novel written by Gaston Théberge. Written in the tradition of Provencher, the author dramatically portrays Quebecers as being victimized by the “Other”. Reflecting on the Easter Monday shootings, the narrator comments:

³⁹⁴ Jacques Lacoursière et al., *Canada-Québec: synthèse historique, 1534-2000* (Sillery: Septentrion, 2000), 397.

³⁹⁵ Interview with Louis Bélanger, December 18, 2006.

Je ne savais pas que l'homme pouvait faire fi de la vie ainsi, qu'il ne pouvait pas aimer la vie, qu'il pouvait détester la vie. J'ignorais que l'homme pût tirer dans le brouillard sur une foule, tirer aveuglément, ne voyant pas quelle tête était atteinte. Je ne soupçonnais pas toute la brutalité qui faisait partie de l'homme, toute la rage, toute l'animalité, toute l'indignité qui étaient en lui. La fillette insouciante que j'étais fut propulsée dans le monde des adultes avec la force d'une balle de fusil, dans le monde sans innocence et sans pitié des adultes. La candeur qui m'appartenait, ces élans d'ingénuité qui étaient miens, cette joie qui naissait dans mon intérieur, qui exultait en mon âme d'enfant, qui je croyais faire partie de ma personnalité pour toujours, se sont effacés. Je n'a jamais recouvré ce naturel qui s'est échappé de moi. Aujourd'hui encore il peut m'arriver de me réveiller la nuit parce que les soldats tirent leurs balles dans le brouillard de mes rêves, après huit décennies.³⁹⁶

Similar to Théberge's novel, the story of the riots found on the Internet, often on Quebec sovereignist websites, is also frequently written in a manner that depicts Quebecers as victims of the vilified "Other".³⁹⁷ For example, one website proclaims,

³⁹⁶ Gaston Théberge, *Béatrice Québec 1918*, (Montréal: Triptyque, 2007), 140.

³⁹⁷ See the following websites: "Album photo: activités." *Bloc Québécois' Christianne Gagnon's homepage*. <http://www.christianegagnon.qc.ca/xplore/album.asp?nosite=22&no=11279,11283,11277> (accessed May 4, 2008), "Appel à une manifestation anti-militariste." *NEFAC* <http://nefac.net/fr/node/2338> (accessed May 14, 2008), "Aujourd'hui comme hier, nous rejetons votre guerre!" *Presse-toi à Gauche*. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/10060289@N05/sets/72157604305532435/> (accessed May 19, 2008), "Cinq civils sont tués par les soldats à Québec." *McCord Museum*. www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/fr/collection/artefacts/PERS-12?Lang=2&accessnumber=PERS-12 (accessed June 15, 2006), "Commémoration des émeutes de 1918." *Québec Hebdo*. <http://www.quebechebdo.com/article-318247-Commémoration-des-emeutes-de-1918.html> (accessed April 5, 2009), "Eh Bien, Osons." *Presse-toi à Gauche* <http://www.pressegauche.org/spip.php?article1566> (accessed May 19, 2008), "Émeutes 1918 dans les villes du Québec." *Québec un pays* <http://membres.lycos.fr/quebecunpays/EMEUTES1918.htm> (accessed September 14, 2006), "Émeutes de Québec (1918)." *Wikipédia*. [http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89meute_de_Qu%C3%A9bec_\(1918\)](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89meute_de_Qu%C3%A9bec_(1918)) (accessed October 5, 2005), "Ensemble des événements de la période 1910-1919." *University of Sherbrooke* <http://bilan.usherbrooke.ca/bilan/pages/evenements/281.html> (accessed July 5, 2006), "Griefs des souverainistes québécois à l'égard du Canada." *Wikipédia*. http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Griefs_des_souverainistes_%C3%A0_l%27%C3%A9gard_du_Canada_%28liste%29 (accessed May 4, 2007), "Histoire de la Nouvelle-France d'antan au Québec contemporain." *Voxlatina*. http://www.voxlatina.com/vox_dsp3.php3?art=935&page_article=2 (accessed August 4, 2008), "Histoire du Québec." *Le Site du Québec*. <http://www.cyberjean.com/quebec/histoire.php> (accessed August 9, 2008), "La gauche antimilitariste manifeste à Québec." *Presse-toi à Gauche* <http://www.infoshop.org/fr/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=68> (accessed May 19, 2008), "La petite histoire du Québec." *Vive le Québec libre*. <http://tiguybelan.tripod.com/histoire.htm> (accessed August 10, 2008), "La première guerre mondiale (1914-1918)." *L'Odysée du Québec de 1608 à aujourd'hui* <http://cla-histoire.iquebec.com/gp/theme17.htm> (accessed August 3, 2008), "Le Non du Québec à la conscription de 1942." *Vigil.net*. <http://www.vigile.net/spip.php?page=archives&u=/archives/hist/conscription/lesageplebiscite.html> (accessed August 5, 2008), "Les Purs Canayens": Le recrutement au Canada français durant la Première

“émeutes 1918: un exemple, bien clair, où la Nation Québécoise, le peuple du Québec et le Pays du Québec doit se soumettre aux ordres du gouvernement fédéral contre sa propre volonté clairement exprimée.”³⁹⁸ Referring to the Easter Monday shootings, another site titled “Vive le Québec Libre” explains, “L’État, une fois de plus, tentait de mater par la force la résistance du peuple conquis à ses politiques impérialistes.”³⁹⁹ Moreover, the history of the conflict offered on the Wikipedia website, which is presumably more visited than most sites, demonizes Lessard and his soldiers and describes Major Mitchell as having killed the four victims after firing the machine gun at the crowd. Not surprisingly, the website only referenced one historian- Jean Provencher.⁴⁰⁰

There is much scholarly work to be done if future historians wish to go beyond the Provencher tradition. In order to better understand the conflict, they will need to look at the role which women, Quebec City Anglophones, and class tensions, among other elements, played during this important moment in Canadian history. Furthermore, historians will need to do a better job of placing the riots in the context of the larger conscription crisis which inspired isolated protests across the country, and which created divisions between not only Francophones and Anglophones but also between soldiers and civilians, farmers and urbanites, as well as Liberals and Conservatives.

guerre mondiale.” *War Museum*. http://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/index_e.aspx?detailid=18461 (accessed August 20, 2008), “Les résistances à la guerre d’hier à aujourd’hui.” *Alternatives*. <http://www.alternatives.ca/article3518.html> (accessed May 5, 2008), “L’histoire du Québec.” *Touribec*. <http://www.shopping-quebec.com/touribec/quebec02.html> (accessed August 3, 2008), “Première période: de la fédération à la révolution tranquille (1867-1960).” *République Libre*. <http://www.republiquelibre.org/cousture/QUEB.HTM> (accessed July 12, 2008), “Printemps-1918.” Ville de Québec http://207.164.89.36/fr/ma_ville/toponymie/rues/printemps_1918.shtml (accessed May 9, 2008), “Québec, Printemps 1918.” *Wikipédia*. http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qu%C3%A9bec%2C_Printemps_1918 (accessed October 5, 2005)

³⁹⁸ <http://membres.lycos.fr/quebecunpays/EMEUTES1918.htm>

³⁹⁹ <http://tiguybelan.tripod.com/histoire.htm>

⁴⁰⁰ “Émeutes de Québec (1918).” *Wikipédia*.

[http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89meute_de_Qu%C3%A9bec_\(1918\)](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89meute_de_Qu%C3%A9bec_(1918)) (accessed October 5, 2005)

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However a more nuanced story of the riots, one that would be closer to the “truth” and presumably less divisive and less political, might not be so well received as the Provencher version. Although a proponent of a complex investigation of the past, one which embraces multiple perspectives, historian Jocelyn Létourneau recognizes that a simple and powerful narrative is often best received by a general public. In reaction to the call by some Quebecers for a more complete and sophisticated examination of the past in the new Quebec history curriculum, Létourneau remarked to *Le Devoir*, “L'historien que je suis est certes en droit de souhaiter une narration plus consistante et plus complexe! Rien à craindre pourtant de voir le récit disparaître: cette histoire (the narrative of victimization) est trop puissante dans sa simplicité.”⁴⁰¹ Although Létourneau, in making these comments, was not referring specifically to Jean Provencher’s story of the Quebec City riots, he might very well have been.

⁴⁰¹ *Le Devoir*, 1 May 2006.

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