

Robert Bothwell and J.L. Granatstein

Trudeau's World

Insiders Reflect on Foreign Policy,
Trade, and Defence, 1968-84



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Introduction

THIS BOOK IS A COLLECTION of interviews done between 1986 and 1988 with individuals who were connected with, or informed about, Canadian foreign relations under Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Subsequently, the information in the interviews formed the basis, along with other research, for a book, *Pirouette: Pierre Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy*, that we published with the University of Toronto Press in 1990. Thirty years have now passed since the interviews and twenty-five and more since the book, the span of a generation. “The Trudeau government” now means something quite different to Canadians – no longer Pierre, but Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, his son, who was born in the period covered by this book. The Trudeau past is even more distant, and different, than we imagined when we published our history.

As any scholar who has done interviews knows, memory is fallible. Some of our interviewees wanted to protect themselves or settle old scores with their long-dead enemies, some quite sincerely misremembered events, and others simply could not recall them with any clarity. Unless they had memoranda close at hand (and some happily did), what most could best recall was their reaction to the personalities of those with whom they had worked or served under. Our task was to be well prepared but also resilient, in case we encountered the unexpected, able to help with chronology and names but not to lead our interlocutors where they did not want to go or into expressing views that they genuinely did not hold. We did many interviews together but often singly as circumstances dictated. Whether we worked alone or together, we did not use a tape recorder, believing that it inhibited conversation. Instead, we jotted notes and, as soon as the interview ended, wrote up a memorandum with key comments in quotes. The collected interviews are edited here for coherence and an attempted minimization of irrelevant subjects, diplomatic and military jargon, and the governmental alphabet soup of abbreviations.

The interviews ranged widely over issues and personalities, as well as the battles around the cabinet table, in international meetings, and within departments and the bureaucracy in Ottawa. Some interviews that covered several subjects and spanned many years have been divided with parts in various chapters. Those who were interviewed are indicated in **boldface** when they are mentioned in others' interviews. For *Pirouette*, we did some 180 interviews, as listed in that volume's bibliography. We have had to be very selective in this volume, reducing the quarter-million words in our original interview memoranda by some 60 percent. Copies of the original memoranda, almost all now available for research, can be found in Robert Bothwell's papers in the University of Toronto archives and in the archives of the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa.

The interviews presented here vary in length and quality, as might be expected, but many are superb in content and revealingly frank. There is repetition in the interviewees' opinions of some politicians and senior officials in Canada and elsewhere, of course, not least in the views expressed on Trudeau, Presidents Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, President Charles de Gaulle, and others. There are also some startlingly blunt assessments of the key figures. There is much on the enormous difficulties that Canada faced in dealing with the United States, the European Union, NATO, the Soviet Union, and China. There is substantial material on defence policy and, not least, on the efforts to patriate the Constitution, which involved the Thatcher government in London and the Provinces here. We have interviews that go into detail on Trudeau's Peace Initiative, his last hurrah. Unfortunately, we did not hear very much on foreign aid or the Third World problems that sometimes greatly interested Trudeau. In all, nonetheless, these interviews tell us much about Canada and the world from 1968 to 1984 and about the key departments and officials who made foreign and defence policy.

Our interviews took us where the veterans of the Trudeau era had settled. The largest number were in and around Ottawa, and after that Montreal, Vancouver, Victoria, and Calgary within Canada, and the United States, Britain, France, China, Japan, and what was then the Soviet Union outside. Interviewees who were still serving as diplomats, other public servants, or politicians who did not wish to make attributable comments were listed in *Pirouette's* bibliography by date but not name.

During the Trudeau period, virtually all the senior officials and ministers in the Privy Council Office, the Prime Minister's Office, National Defence,

and External Affairs were men, and this explains the absence of interviews with women. However, Margaret Meagher (1911-99), then residing in Nova Scotia, had been a senior diplomat for many years and was ambassador to Sweden when negotiations with the People's Republic of China on recognition occurred. Jean Wadds (1920-2011) was high commissioner in London during the patriation controversy. We erred in not interviewing these able women.

Our interviews and our book touched on Trade, with a capital T, because Trade was a very lively and obvious issue in Canadian external affairs, as it always had been and still is. We did not, however, venture into larger questions of financial policy, and we did not interview any officials from the Bank of Canada or the Finance Department.

If there was and is repetition, there are major differences in attitudes and reactions too, and these differences, though they certainly complicate the historians' task of attempting to make sense of past events, add much interest to the story. We were also very conscious of the fact that old men do forget and that there are factual mistakes in some of the interviews. We have corrected in footnotes the most egregious errors.

The interviews were conducted while Pierre Trudeau was very much alive, and his unseen presence is discernible in many of the comments from his colleagues. When we began, the Trudeau government was only three years in the past, and Trudeau himself was still a lively contemporary presence. He was not content to stay retired. Between 1987 and 1990, just as we were researching and writing, he inspired a successful campaign to derail the Mulroney government's constitutional amendments – the so-called Meech Lake affair. The Meech Lake Accord was very much on the mind of every Canadian who was interested in public affairs and, it must be admitted, on our minds as well. We tried as best we could to keep contemporary politics out of our work, but it may have affected attitudes and recollections among our subjects, depending on their contemporary view of Trudeau's constitutional activity.

The world from the perspective of the twenty-first century looks rather different from the world that Canadians knew in 1986-89. In the first place, they saw the Cold War. The historians of that day quibbled among themselves about *when* the Cold War began and *who* began it, but they did not dispute that it remained the dominant fact in international relations. Virtually nobody, including ourselves and our interviewees, realized that it was on the verge of ending. None of us had a clear memory of the world before the Cold

War, and it seemed at the time that it would go on forever. This fact places our interviews squarely in Cold War Canada, and careful readers should remember the adage, “The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.”

Trudeau's World

Pierre Elliott Trudeau came to power in April 1968, determined to make a break with the past – or what he saw as the past. “No more helpful fixers,” he quipped, a jibe at Canada’s busy role in patching, repairing, connecting, and enabling out-of-kilter parts of the international system. The fixer-in-chief was Trudeau’s predecessor, Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, who understandably took Trudeau’s remark as a slur on his forty years of patching, repairing, and enduring the idiocies of international relations.

It was not the first time that Trudeau and Pearson had differed. In 1963, private citizen Trudeau, infuriated when Pearson committed his Liberal Party to accepting American nuclear warheads for Canada’s armed forces, described him as “the defrocked pope of peace.” Pearson swallowed hard and accepted the same Trudeau as a Liberal candidate in the federal election of 1965. The issue then was not foreign policy but national unity, and Trudeau was a fierce defender of Canadian unity inside Quebec. The crisis of Quebec – the rapid rise of separatism as a political force inside that province – catapulted Trudeau into the cabinet as minister of justice, made him a contender for the Liberal leadership to succeed Pearson, and then won him that leadership. On 21 April 1968, Trudeau became prime minister and promptly called a general election for 25 June, which he won, with a parliamentary majority. The Liberals had not won a majority since 1953, and thereafter they gazed at Trudeau respectfully.

“We looked down the cabinet table,” commented Mitchell Sharp, the minister of external affairs, “and said to ourselves, ‘We’re here because he’s here.’”¹ From 1968 until he retired in 1984, Trudeau was the dominant power

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1 The full quote compared the Liberal cabinets under Lester (Mike) Pearson and Pierre Trudeau: “We [the ministers] looked down the table at Mike and we said, ‘He’s here because we’re here.’ We looked down the table at Trudeau, and said, ‘We’re here because he’s here.’” Sharp made the comment to Bothwell in 1993 or 1994, when the latter was editing Sharp’s autobiography, *Which Reminds Me ... A Memoir* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994). It was a memorable comment.

in his party. His leadership was essentially uncontested, a fact that was reflected in our interviews. There is little or nothing here of intra-party scandals or struggles: differences of opinion abound, as do disagreements over policy, but there was no question then, and no expression in the interviews, of plots and coups. Such matters were left to a later generation.

The Shape of Events

Trudeau's views and actions on foreign policy changed considerably over time. Trudeau never believed that he could shape the world as he desired, though his view of what Canada could and should do in the world changed greatly with experience. As leader of the Canadian government, he had to construct his country's reactions to events over which it had little or no control, and sometimes not even advance notice. Once he was done reacting, there might be some time and space left over to put a Canadian spin on proceedings.

Trudeau became prime minister at a time of political upheaval in the United States and Western Europe – not to mention separatism in Quebec. Latin America seemed poised on the brink of revolutionary change inspired by Fidel Castro's Cuba. In France, riots and strikes almost overthrew the government of President Charles de Gaulle. The Israeli victory in the Six-Day War of 1967 weakened the Arabs and discredited their leadership, but what would follow was most unclear. The United States had not achieved its objectives in the Vietnam War, and the Soviet Union was driving for parity in strategic arms – nuclear weapons stockpiles and the means to deliver them. At the end of the year, the Republican Richard Nixon was elected the American president, bringing with him as national security adviser a Harvard political scientist, Henry Kissinger.

Over the next five years – Trudeau's first and second terms in office – the political horizon darkened. The United States was compelled to make peace in Vietnam, leaving its anti-communist ally, South Vietnam, at the far end of an uncertain flow of aid from an unwilling Congress in Washington. Another Arab-Israeli war in October 1973 did not reproduce the clear-cut Israeli victory of 1967. The United States backed Israel in this new war, crucially replacing depleted Israeli stocks of weapons, whereas the Soviet Union supplied and advised Arab governments and threatened direct intervention to forestall the collapse of Egypt. As significant, Arab oil producers wielded the weapon of an oil boycott against the West and against the United States in particular. This was the signal, though not the cause, of an economic

earthquake that fundamentally altered relations between oil-producing and oil-consuming states.

The 1970s saw a spectacular increase in petroleum prices. Not coincidentally, the early 1970s marked the end of the decades-long rise in the American standard of living; that this would be a permanent condition would take years if not decades to be understood. Despite this setback, the American economy remained the world's largest and the United States the world's most prosperous nation. At the same time, most Western European economies were growing too, along with Japan's, meaning that Canada's gross domestic product, relative to those of France, West Germany, and Japan, was less important than it had been during the twenty years after the Second World War.

The United States abandoned the effort to regulate the international economic system at the beginning of the 1970s and instead used a series of blunt unilateral moves to shore up its own economic position, floating the US dollar and placing a series of emergency tariffs on imports. (The world adopted the term *Nikuson shokku*, or Nixon shock, from the Japanese.) The shokku did not, however, signal a fundamental change in US economic policy. The Americans had abandoned responsibility for maintaining the world economy, but they did not relinquish their leading role in shaping it. Instead, nudged by Kissinger, the United States stressed *interdependence* and, later, *globalization*, vague but positive words that defined American policy as anything but unilateral.

The economic troubles of the mid-1970s gave birth to the G7 – the Group of Seven – the United States, Japan, West Germany, France, Great Britain, and Italy, plus, at American insistence, Canada, which was the world's sixth- or seventh-largest economy at the time and, as important, the close neighbour and ally of the United States. These events, as we shall see in Chapter IV, had a major impact on Canada, and they influenced the Trudeau government's policies, both domestic and foreign.

Western Europe, North America, Australasia, and Japan formed what was called the First World – fully developed capitalist economies that as a partial consequence were also politically stable and generally liberal in character, using the term in both its economic and political senses, as they were understood at the time. Trudeau's Canada had no problem with a First World identity (or a liberal-capitalist identity). Despite occasional twitches, Canadians, and Trudeau, did not consider their country to be part of the Third (or economically undeveloped) World, especially because it was usually politically illiberal as well. The poverty and aspirations of the Third World

engaged Trudeau's sympathies, and those of many Canadians, but not enough to budge Canada from its primary role as part of the First World.

The Second World, the Communist bloc, had fallen into incoherence. The two great Communist countries, the Soviet Union and China, had divorced politically at the end of the 1950s. The Chinese Communist government spent the 1960s in political isolation, free to indulge in the economically self-defeating and politically catastrophic Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Meanwhile, most Western countries ignored or avoided China as much as they could, following a fearful United States, which treated Beijing throughout the 1950s and 1960s as the ultimate communist menace. Fortunately for the West, though not for China, the lunatic policies of Mao Zedong ensured that China remained economically chaotic and politically retarded. But it still had the world's biggest population and a large and strategically significant geography. Though economically weak, China was too large to be ignored. Pierre Trudeau and Henry Kissinger, in their different ways, were determined to modify its isolation. Canada accordingly recognized the Beijing government in 1970, and the two countries exchanged embassies. Kissinger, strongly supported by Nixon, soon arrived in Beijing and established a form of diplomatic contact that resulted in Communist China joining the United Nations. Having ended its fruitless confrontation with China, the United States could deal more confidently with the Soviet Union, which it did through the policy of *détente*.

The position of the Soviet Union differed to some extent from that of China. An oil and gas producer, it benefitted hugely from the rise in petroleum prices during the 1970s. Western Europeans welcomed new Russian supplies of oil and natural gas, despite American misgivings that dependence on Soviet supply could undermine Western solidarity. Much of the income from oil and gas sales went to feed the Soviet military-industrial complex, another negative. Yet it was not as negative as observers in the 1970s and 1980s believed. Some Canadian commentators noticed that the civilian side of the economy was obviously contracting as the Soviets strove desperately to modernize their military to cope with rapidly advancing Western technology. (They were unsuccessful, though that was not entirely clear by 1984.) At the same time, the Soviets were having increasing trouble keeping their European satellites quiescent. Ironically, their economic situation was still superior to that of the Soviet Union itself. Since they were unable to squeeze more subsidies out of their hegemonic power, the satellite governments turned to the West for loans; by 1984, they were substantially indebted, with no obvious

means of ever paying off their Western creditors. As long as oil prices remained high, the whole creaking structure could be held together, but when prices started to decline in 1981, the Soviet Union and its satellites were more and more dangerously exposed.

From the outside, the Soviet Union looked fierce and seemed dangerous. During Kissinger's *détente*, the peril receded, but relations cooled when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979, becoming glacial when Ronald Reagan was elected to the American presidency in 1980. The Trudeau Peace Initiative (Chapter IX) in 1983-84 reflected the temper of the times, which was even more hazardous than Trudeau knew or imagined.

What Trudeau did know was that Canada was on the Western side in the Cold War. At first, he underestimated what that meant. What's in it for Canada? Trudeau and his entourage asked about NATO in 1968-99. Could Canada not be more effective out of NATO or with a significantly reduced defence burden? At the time, some answered yes, whereas Trudeau himself balanced between yes and no, reluctantly convinced that Canada would be worse off if it were out – of NATO, of Europe, of the arms race, of the Cold War – than it would be as a participant in all of those things.

Key to Trudeau's change of heart and choice of political options was his attempt to reconfigure Canada's external economic connections – to move away from a dangerous dependence on the United States for trade and investment by invoking Europe and Japan, and by increasing Canada's trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific trade – what was called the Third Option (Chapter V). As Trudeau discovered, the Europeans would play ball only if Canada gave them something in return by maintaining and modernizing its defence linkage to NATO, and in particular Germany. And so the unmilitarist Trudeau found himself purchasing German tanks to keep alive a Canadian tank regiment confronting the Soviets across a line in Germany.

Seen in this perspective, Pierre Trudeau's time in office was an interval in the continuing Cold War, and not surprisingly that is what our interviews show. There were, however, other themes in Canadian foreign relations. American investment, the development of natural resources, the Autopact that established a version of free trade in automotive products across the 49th parallel – all proceeded largely independent of Cold War considerations. Relations with the Third World did have a Cold War backdrop, given a desire either to counteract Soviet influence or to shore up underdeveloped economies in order to remove the temptation of too close a relationship with the Soviet Union on the part of Third World governments.

The change that Trudeau hoped for when he became prime minister in 1968 did not occur. What changed, instead, was his conception of the world. Canada was and remained a First World country and a firm member of the Western alliance. As Trudeau came to see, however, Canada's participation in the Commonwealth and activities at and through the United Nations mitigated that fact, providing both himself and Canada with a bridge to the world outside the West.

What's in the Interviews?

Readers will expect that the interviews deal with foreign and defence policy, and up to a point that is true. Interviewees give their views on the Cold War, Ronald Reagan, and such questions as French interference in Quebec with an eye to breaking up Canada, trade, exchange rates, and so forth. However, much of the material deals not so much with policy as a finished product, as with the making of foreign and defence policy.

That reflects what actually consumed time and effort under the Trudeau governments. Trudeau and his close associates, particularly Michael Pitfield, were convinced that getting process right would, eventually, produce the right policy or, at worst, a better policy. Pitfield, and behind him Trudeau, moved the civil service, including the diplomats, around like pieces on a chessboard. The pieces, however, were intelligent and often eloquent human beings, and they did not appreciate being fed into organizational streams or becoming way stations on a policy conveyor belt. Their irritation (and it was mostly irritation) is very evident.² We think their sentiments are worth preserving as a piece of human documentation. For contemporary diplomats and general officers, some of what their predecessors experienced in the 1970s and 1980s may ring true – the shock of recognition.

As historians judging from the evidence, we sometimes felt it a miracle that any rational policy at all emerged from Trudeau's rationalistic slicing

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2 In 1984, the UK high commissioner to Ottawa, Lord Moran, put his own particular spin on Canada's Department of External Affairs (DEA) bureaucracy, which was, he said, once "widely respected in the world." Unfortunately, it had "undergone changes which are converting it all too rapidly into a huge, sluggish bureaucratic conglomerate dominated by a French-Canadian mafia, ignorant of diplomacy, who have pushed aside the leading English-speaking professionals." Paul Waldie, "Files Show What British Diplomats Really Thought of Canada in the 1980s," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 24 August 2016, A8.

and dicing. His motives were high – unexceptionable, really. But the result may have been disproportionate – disproportionately small – compared to the effort expended.

This book, therefore, aims to explain not just the *what* of Canadian foreign and defence policy, but the *how* as well. Survivors may find that we have resurrected gruesome memories of organizational issues expressed as personal conflicts. But that in our opinion is the reality of life in a world of large organizations. Although, after reading this book, one may conclude that we cannot do much with the functions and politics of bureaucracy, what is even clearer is that we cannot do without them.

I

Advisers and Ministers

PIERRE TRUDEAU SERVED FIFTEEN years and five months as Canada's prime minister, from April 1968 to June 1979, and from March 1980 to June 1984. He won three elections with a parliamentary majority and one with a minority. He was voted out of office in June 1979, resulting in a minority Progressive Conservative government. That government, led by Joe Clark, was soon defeated, first in Parliament and then in a general election.

In his fifteen years, Trudeau had four secretaries of state for external affairs (abbreviated here as SSEA): Mitchell Sharp (1968-74), Allan MacEachen (1974-76 and 1982-84), Don Jamieson (1976-79), and Mark MacGuigan (1980-82). Two, MacEachen and Jamieson, were powerful regional politicians, MacEachen for Nova Scotia and Jamieson for Newfoundland. Mitchell Sharp was a significant politician, though in a region (Greater Toronto) that was heavy with significant politicians. But Sharp's background – twenty years as a senior Ottawa bureaucrat – and reputation as a senior businessman after he left the civil service had helped clinch the Liberal leadership for Trudeau in 1968. Mark MacGuigan, considered one of the most talented Liberal backbenchers, was astounded to be appointed minister of external affairs. Others were astounded too, and though MacGuigan was by no means insignificant or unsuccessful as a minister, he was not politically powerful. Two of the four ministers are interviewed here.

By the time we conducted our interviews, Jamieson was dead. We did have two good and productive interviews with Allan MacEachen, which will eventually be available in our papers. We regret that we could not include them here.

Trudeau had come to Ottawa in 1965 with two friends, Gérard Pelletier and Jean Marchand, both of whom entered his cabinet in 1968. Pelletier, interviewed here, was arguably more influential than Marchand, both before 1965 and after. His relationship with Trudeau was always close.

To manage his government, Trudeau relied on two organizations. One, the Privy Council Office, or PCO, was a regular government department that dated back to Confederation in 1867. In the 1940s, it was significantly expanded so as to organize and regularize cabinet business. (Trudeau himself was employed in it, in 1949-50.) Its permanent head, the clerk of the privy council and secretary to the cabinet, became Canada's senior civil servant. Gordon Robertson, Trudeau's first clerk, is interviewed below.

The prime minister's personal staff was organized into the Prime Minister's Office, or PMO, whose functions were explicitly political and whose employees were not part of the civil service. The post of principal secretary was of long standing, but until the 1940s it would have seemed strange that the principal secretary also had secretaries, who would multiply and change into specialists, advisers, and, of course, more secretaries. The principal secretary eventually morphed into the chief of staff and became under Trudeau an important personage in political and official Ottawa. Because of his proximity to the prime minister, even ministers could not safely ignore him. Trudeau's first principal secretary was Marc Lalonde, who became a senior minister in Trudeau's later cabinets. Also in the PMO was Ivan Head, a former officer in External Affairs and law professor who quickly became Trudeau's main foreign policy adviser. Interviews with both Lalonde and Head follow.

The various ministers had their own offices and staffs. We include in this section part of an interview with Reeves Haggan, Sharp's departmental assistant in External Affairs, which sheds light on how Sharp (and by extension other ministers) carried out his duties and on his relations with his under secretaries, or deputy ministers, especially the formidable Marcel Cadieux. (On Cadieux, who had died by the time *Pirouette* was composed, see especially Chapters 1 and 2 of this volume.)

The confrontation between old and new, orthodox and unorthodox, played out on the struggle over NATO and defence policy that consumed the spring of 1969, and which is embodied in interviews with Ivan Head and his senior opponents. It was a battle that Trudeau won and Cadieux lost – inevitably, considering their respective positions in the governmental hierarchy. The bureaucracy was reoriented as Pitfield, supported by Trudeau, desired. Cadieux's version of professionalism gave way to a personnel policy that was directed from the centre and aimed at the general good of the civil service and more broadly, the country.

It should not be assumed that because Cadieux lost he was wrong. The conclusion is rather mixed. The foreign service endured years of tinkering, followed by a major convulsion in the early 1980s, when various foreign affairs agencies were shoehorned into a single department, headquartered in External Affairs in the Pearson Building. Doing it required a heavy commitment of time and talent, represented by two deputy ministers, Gordon Osbaldeston and Marcel Massé. The Osbaldeston interview in this chapter is very revealing; the Massé interview will eventually be opened in our papers. Pitfield's system is essentially still in force, and after forty years some of its effects are apparent. Senior civil servants move about from department to department. Peripatetic deputy ministers often arrive with no knowledge of the institutional culture of the organization they have come to head or the specific precedents and history that govern its behaviour. Not surprisingly, decisions are often taken in ignorance. Talent without knowledge is not indefinitely transferable.

As our interviews show here and in Chapter III, Canada reduced its NATO commitment and did so with scant consideration for its allies. This asserted Canada's self-interest, as defined by Canadians, a major point with Trudeau in 1968-72. But sovereignty is not purely a domestic plant. Canadian sovereignty existed – exists – in a larger world, and as Trudeau learned, there were consequences to Canada's exercise of its sovereign power. As a consequence, Trudeau ended up re-equipping the Canadian Forces, keeping some troops in Europe while demonstrating, in a variety of spheres, that Canada could indeed be useful – a helpful fixer, as it were.

Before we turn to Trudeau's policy making, we should explain what the policy was about. In 1951 and later, Canadian governments placed and sustained a reinforced army brigade and (initially) an air division in Europe. The air component had gradually dwindled, but it was still there in 1968. The army dwelt in northern Germany and operated with British forces to block (it was hoped) any Soviet offensive across the north German plain. When we say "dwelt," we mean to convey that Canada's overseas garrison included not just soldiers and air personnel, but also their wives and children – the equivalent of two small, prosperous Canadian towns. And, we should add, expensive Canadian towns. The presence of family members no doubt boosted morale, though one of the brigade commanders, Major General James Tedlie, was not sure what his troops would do if they thought their families were in danger, as they must be if war broke out. As to their military

function, in terms of an attack by a much larger Soviet army, Tedlie hoped that his troops could manage to hold out for a couple of days, using conventional weapons.¹

During the winter of 1968-69, it was this force that was the centre of a debate in Ottawa about Canada's commitment to NATO and its European allies.

HON. MARC LALONDE (1929-)

INTERVIEW | MONTREAL, 30 NOVEMBER 1987

Like Trudeau a lawyer, a Montrealer, and a fierce federalist, Lalonde worked as an adviser to Progressive Conservative justice minister Davie Fulton and in Lester Pearson's PMO. In 1968, he became Trudeau's principal secretary, a position he held until election to Parliament in 1972. He then served in a variety of key ministerial posts, most notably Justice, Energy, and Finance.

Lalonde began with his time in Trudeau's PMO

In 1968, **Trudeau** and company were "a whole bunch of amateurs who were given the Liberal Party by its members." Trudeau had very definite ideas about the way that affairs should be run. Lalonde himself had had experience in Pearson's office, which he characterized as being like a train station, where anybody could walk in but only one man knew where the trains were going. The office was perpetually in a "nice state of disorganization."

Trudeau did not want an office like that, the more so because, unlike Pearson, he was not an expert in government; he wanted an office that was more structured, more organized ...

External Affairs as a reservoir of talent

Lalonde believed that there was a great reservoir of talent in the Department of External Affairs (DEA). It had not changed in that respect with the generations; rather, circumstances had changed. The proof lay in the attraction of employment in the department. Every year, many of the most talented people

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 1 Bothwell-Granatstein interview with Major General James Tedlie, 5 March 1988, Victoria, British Columbia (not published).

in the country struggled to get in. The department was not like its earlier manifestation: in 1940-60, it was small. By the late 1960s, it was very much bigger. But there were too few challenging jobs, so first-class minds ended up as third secretaries, stamping passports. Why not move these people elsewhere to employ them in more challenging work? Lalonde expected that this opportunity would be welcomed, as it was by some, at least the people affected. But the establishment in the department saw it as an offence to the proper conduct of life. When **Allan Gotlieb** and **Max Yalden** told Marcel Cadieux that they were leaving DEA,² Cadieux told them they need not expect ever to return ...

Trudeau was determined not to be constrained by established customs or (in a non-pejorative sense) prejudices. As mentioned earlier, he wanted his office to be better organized than Pearson's, and "I was put in charge of the office to do that." As for foreign policy, "I obviously had more experience in domestic policy."

Ivan Head

Ivan Head was brought in to write speeches and to be an in-house legal expert. Lalonde then got him to take a larger and larger role, handing over more and more responsibility. True, he did not hand over the Quebec-France file. That would have been unfair to Head, who was unilingual and fresh from Alberta, and who, moreover, did not know the personalities and the context. (Lalonde said he had already handled the matter under Pearson.)

New policies for DEA

In 1968, a number of issues cried out for a fresh approach. One was the imbalance between Canada's treatment of English-speaking Commonwealth states and its virtual non-relations with the new French-speaking nations. More generally, there was the sense that Canadian foreign policy as it was

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2 Marcel Cadieux (1915-82) trained as a lawyer and joined the Department of External Affairs during the Second World War. He became USSEA in 1964 and remained in that position until 1970, when he became ambassador to the United States. The major part of Cadieux's career is ably covered by Brendan Kelly, "Marcel Cadieux, the Department of External Affairs, and Canadian International Relations: 1941-1970" (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 2016). Cadieux's relations with Trudeau himself are examined in Brendan Kelly, "The Politician and the Civil Servant: Pierre Trudeau, Marcel Cadieux, and the Department of External Affairs (1968-1970)," *International Journal* 72, 1 (March 2017): 5-27.

expounded under Pearson did not properly represent the particular Canadian national interest or, better, the national policies we wished to pursue. We also felt that English Canadians had always taken a rather snobbish attitude toward Latin America; Latin countries were banana republics ruled by dictators, and close contact with them would pervert Canada's moral standing. This attitude entirely ignored French Canada's historic ties to Latin America through missionaries and through education. Even if those things were irrelevant, how could one ignore a whole continent?

Additionally, we were coming out of the Cold War. On that score, Lalonde made no claim to have invented the wheel: productive relations with Cuba dated back to Diefenbaker. We thought we could pursue a policy that did not need to copy the Americans. In short, we should pursue our own national interest. It was this attitude that underlay the Foreign Policy Review – the complete re-evaluation of Canada's foreign policy.

Marcel Cadieux and Trudeau saw eye to eye on separatism, nationalism, Quebec-France, and similar issues. There was considerable intellectual respect between them, as well as similarity of views. Where they differed was over organization and the role of DEA in government.

But there was increased respect for DEA, and it grew out of the Quebec nationalist question in the late 1960s. In 1969-70, PMO and DEA officials met very, very regularly, with **Gordon Robertson** and **Michael Pitfield** in attendance. During the FLQ kidnapping crisis of October 1970, they found themselves meeting twelve hours a day for weeks or months on end. The experience showed how closely linked domestic politics and international relations were.

The episode “confirmed our view” that foreign policy in Canada had been developed in a vacuum without due regard for our own national interests. While pursuing world peace, we should take Canada's own interests more into account. Lalonde had developed this view in a speech he gave much later to the Ottawa branch of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs. In effect, by 1968 “we had become the boy scouts of the world.” All this made DEA pretty nervous in those years.

Quite clearly, DEA was not sure where it stood. The foreign service officers (FSOs) were demoralized by seeing Yalden and Gotlieb quitting and going to domestic departments. (From the PMO's point of view, Lalonde said, this was really an improvement in DEA's prospects.) It was interpreted as a dark plot to downgrade the department.

The Foreign Policy Review

Trudeau's early relations with DEA were not helped by the Foreign Policy Review. It became obvious that the department did not question itself enough. It wrote draft after draft of the review report, which were sent back as inadequate; they were obviously the lowest common denominator of committee work. The review became a large structural operation, with each division doing its own thing and contributing the result to the common draft. Letting just one person write the review report would have been better, Lalonde stated, Yalden or Gotlieb, for example.

Mitchell Sharp was not the man to impose novelty on DEA; he was very much a product of its environment, a junior member of the old establishment. He was not one to challenge the system. He found it extremely difficult to stand back and view his department from a distance. Lalonde, however, would not agree that Sharp did not contend for his department's interests. He argued strongly and persistently in the cabinet. On the other hand, he was a very, very loyal team player and would accept the common decision.

Department of National Defence problems

As for the Department of National Defence (DND), Lalonde shook his head. As with DEA, the PMO was trying to get DND to re-examine its policies. In 1968, defence policy was simply a series of increments: you just kept on adding new things every year without examining why. DND was very much isolated in the government, which put it at a comparative disadvantage.

The department was not always represented by strong ministers, and it was seriously handicapped by a dim-witted chief of defence staff, General Jean V. Allard. As for Deputy Minister Elgin Armstrong, Lalonde said, "I don't even remember him." There were no first-class policy people at DND. **Donald Macdonald** was a strong minister, but his successor, Jim Richardson, was out of his depth in terms of questioning the existing policy. Gilles Lamontagne was a nice, decent fellow, but as a minister he was extremely weak. Barney Danson was alright, but he was very much part of the gang: "He was not the kind of guy keen to develop a new policy."

Lalonde's only comment on **Sylvain Cloutier**, the new deputy minister in DND, was that it was "interesting that we had to create a civilian position on top of the chief of defence staff" (CDS). Fortunately, General **Jacques Dextraze** was first class as CDS, a born leader of men. Generals Gerry Thériault and Ramsey Withers were both good CDSs. No, he had not heard

that Withers had been fired, and Gilles Lamontagne would not have had the authority to do it. Perhaps Withers asked for a transfer.

With DND, it was the same process as with DEA, he said. We had to get DND out of the frame of mind that Canada had to be in everything. Trudeau developed a lot of respect for DND Minister **Léo Cadieux**, but Cadieux was stuck with Allard, a bull in a china shop: "I remember Allard coming to make presentations to cabinet committees, and it was pathetic." His style of presentation was well (though unconsciously) calculated to stimulate Trudeau's faculty for asking rational questions, not to mention his intellectual arrogance. The Cabinet Committee on Priorities and Planning (P&P) meetings on defence were "long and numerous."

France and Canada

As for France, any claim that the French embassy did not interfere in Canada's internal affairs was "bullshit." Anybody who read the story of Charles de Gaulle's 1967 visit to Canada could not believe they were not interfering.³ "We're not naive and they're not naive," Lalonde said. At the same time, it was true that not every single French bureaucrat was devoted to the cause of Quebec independence. (In July 1967, Lalonde said, most of de Gaulle's cabinet did not support his initiative.) There was a "coterie d'agitateurs au Quai d'Orsay," true believers in a separate Quebec, and the others stood around and acted noncommittal and confused. Bernard Dorin, the head of the American section at the Quai, was one of the true believers. Dorin was crazy, weird, obsessed with ideas of an Anglo-Saxon conspiracy. He would do anything to annoy, and so would his coterie ... Couve de Murville, de Gaulle's factotum, was used quite cleverly by these zealots ...

There were far-right Gaullist politicians too, such as Xavier Deniau. And Philippe Rossillon was involved through the Elysée. (Georges Pompidou as prime minister was not involved.) It was the radical Gaullists who gave the rapprochement with Quebec its impulse, and true enough, it was a costless affair for the French. It had the advantage for the French government that it kept the loonies busy. The Délégation Général du Québec in Paris also played a role.

French ambassador **Pierre-Marc Siraud** in Ottawa did not control all French activities in Canada. The consul-general in Quebec City reported

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 3 During his calamitous official visit to Canada in 1967, French president de Gaulle encouraged Quebec separatism.

directly to the Quai. The same situation obtained under Ambassador **Jacques Viot**, who was a decent fellow; he wanted things to work and did his best to make it so. But it was his successor, **Jean Béliard**, who made the real difference.

The French government was not supported by anybody. The British and the Americans thought the whole thing was tasteless and outrageous. But was Canada supported by anyone? We did not ask, Lalonde said; it was a purely Canadian affair. Was it not true that the Americans had lent us their communications from the 1970 conference of La Francophonie in Niamey? Perhaps, because we did not want the French to know our every move.

Was Quebec premier J.J. Bertrand an improvement on Daniel Johnson? Yes, because one knew that he and Julien Chouinard, the secretary-general of the Executive Council and his right-hand man, were strong and open federalists. With Claude Morin and Jacques Parizeau around, it was like the Quai d'Orsay all over again; and there was Jean-Guy Cardinal, Johnson's education minister, who collected medals from all over Africa and thought it was all for real.

HON. R. GORDON ROBERTSON (1917-2013)

INTERVIEW | OTTAWA, 19 JANUARY 1988

Robertson joined DEA in 1941, worked in Mackenzie King's PMO and Louis St. Laurent's PCO, served as deputy minister of northern affairs, and became clerk of the privy council in 1963. He held that post to 1975, when he became secretary to the cabinet for federal-provincial relations. He retired in 1979.⁴

Trudeau wanted options

On defence and foreign policy issues, Robertson began, **Trudeau** was very irritated at his inability to get either DND or DEA to really put up options. Each department was operating on the basis of well-settled policy. They weren't deliberate obstructionists, but intellectually it was very, very difficult for them to admit that there were alternatives. Robertson had remonstrated

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4 Robertson's autobiography is *Memoirs of a Very Civil Servant: Mackenzie King to Pierre Trudeau* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).