

# THE GOOD FIGHT

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MARCEL CADIEUX AND CANADIAN DIPLOMACY

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BRENDAN KELLY



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*Robert Bothwell and John English*

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# THE BIRTH OF A FRENCH CANADIAN NATIONALIST, 1915–41

In an old christening custom that is all but forgotten today, Joseph David Roméo Marcel Cadieux was marked from birth by a traditional French Canadian Catholicism. As a boy, he was named after Saint Joseph. The Hebraic David was the first name of his godfather, his paternal grandfather, a Montreal plasterer. Marcel's father, Roméo, joined the Royal Mail and married Berthe Patenaude in 1914. She was one of more than a dozen children of Arthur Patenaude, a "gentleman" landowner whose family had deep roots in what had once been the Seigneurie of Longueuil, on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River directly across from Montreal. Marcel was born in Montreal on 17 June 1915; his sister, Madeleine, in 1918. The family of four was small by contemporary standards, when French Canadian nationalists applauded their race's high birth rate as a "revenge of the cradle,"\* but his many relatives nonetheless transformed the Cadieux foyer into what Cadieux called "a real French-Canadian home."<sup>1</sup>

Most of Cadieux's youth was spent in a duplex at 10782 boulevard Saint-Laurent in Ahuntsic, a working-class district in north Montreal. Although Roméo worked long hours for little pay, he was proud to be a federal employee. The post office demanded honesty and discipline, traits that Marcel inherited. In return, it offered stability, security, and a recognized place in the community. Roméo's savings provided his son with the education he

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\* "revanche du berceau"

himself never had, and Marcel was expected to profit from it: anything less than top grades was unacceptable. From 1925 to 1939, the Cadieux family spent part of the summer with relatives in Lowell, Massachusetts. They were some of the 900,000 French Canadians who immigrated to the United States between 1840 and 1930, largely to work in the textile mills of New England. The young Marcel never felt that he and his American kin were separated by the Canada-US border or even that they lived in different countries: “In the part of Lowell where my relatives lived, people spoke French, as we did at home; and on Sundays in church, the rites and sermons were just the same as we were used to.”<sup>2</sup>

Growing up in Montreal, Canada’s largest city at the time, Cadieux would have been well aware that it was divided along racial, class, and religious lines: its French-speaking citizens (60 percent of the Greater Montreal population in 1931) generally lived to the east of boulevard Saint-Laurent (called the Main) and were largely working class and Catholic. The English (les Anglais) were mostly west of the Main. They came in all varieties – Jewish near the Main, Irish Catholic in Lachine, Protestant and usually wealthy in the suburb of Westmount. In the north end, the population was heavily francophone, over 80 percent so in Ahuntsic itself. The English-speaking minority dominated business and high finance, whose headquarters were on rue Saint-Jacques, which the English knew as St. James Street. In 1906, the French academic André Siegfried observed that some visitors could spend weeks frequenting Montreal’s hotels, banks, shops, and train stations without the slightest awareness of its French majority, a group that English-speaking society affected to ignore.<sup>3</sup>

## A CLASSICAL AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

The education of Quebec’s French Canadians was in the hands of the Catholic Church, which also dispensed charity and provided health-related services. The church ran the schools, the classical colleges, and the two French-language universities, giving it a pulpit from which to warn students against the dangers of such unholy “isms” as liberalism, materialism, and communism. From 1930 to 1933, Cadieux attended École Supérieure Saint-Louis in the city’s central Mile End neighbourhood. It was possibly here that he met Paul Tremblay, a native of Chicoutimi whom he

called the constant companion of his youth.<sup>4</sup> Both from the working class, Cadieux and Tremblay viewed education as the best way to improve their lot. But their personalities differed, as evidenced by a school debate on the Rebellion of 1837–38 in Lower Canada. Whereas Tremblay’s presentation was elegant, Cadieux’s was aggressive. It was also convincing: “He has all the qualities of a good speaker, especially the art of persuasion,”\* a school reporter noted of Cadieux.<sup>5</sup>

In 1933, Cadieux and Tremblay transferred to the Externat classique de Saint-Sulpice, which was run by the Compagnie des prêtres de Saint-Sulpice. Because the Sulpicians wanted to help the less affluent families of north Montreal, where the college was located, theirs was not a traditional boarding school but an *externat* (day school), with fees of only ten dollars a month.<sup>6</sup> Founded in 1927 as Collège André Grasset (a name it resumed in 1942), after a Canadian-born priest martyred during the French Revolution, it was Quebec’s twenty-fourth classical college. Its purpose was to prepare a select minority of young French Canadian men for training as priests, doctors, and lawyers. The classical curriculum focused on Latin, Greek, religion, and philosophy, giving short shrift to science and economics. To make the subject matter more relevant to their students’ desire for upward mobility, the Sulpicians paid special attention to English, mathematics, history, and geography.<sup>7</sup> Yet the school lacked the status of Quebec’s other classical colleges, notably the upper-class Jesuit Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf, where the young Pierre Trudeau was a student.

The classical curriculum fostered the seventeenth-century ideal of the virtuous and cultured individual, leading to Cadieux’s lifelong interest in art, architecture, literature, and philosophy. The path to virtue was through the study of the catechism and Catholic apologetics, daily attendance at Mass, frequent confession, and the recitation of the rosary.<sup>8</sup> The school year began with a retreat during which, as Cadieux recalled, students were subjected to “sermon after sermon on sin, repentance, death. I was [neither] particularly religious nor areligious. But there must have been a wild, contrary strain in me. I never felt [less] like praying, meditating and repenting ... than on these occasions.”<sup>9</sup> He was nonetheless devout, his thinking

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\* “Il possède toutes les qualités d’un bon orateur, surtout l’art de la persuasion.”

formed by Saint Thomas Aquinas, for him the greatest philosopher. As he wrote in this period, echoing a fundamental tenet of Christian theology, “One does not seek truth by reason alone but with one’s entire being”<sup>\*10</sup> The Sulpicians also expected their students to display a strong work ethic. In 1935–36, Cadieux graduated first in his class, with 97.50 percent in the history of philosophy, his best subject.<sup>11</sup> He and his classmates were awarded the baccalauréat ès arts (BA) by the Université de Montréal, with which the Externat classique de Saint-Sulpice was affiliated.

At this time (1934–36), Cadieux and Tremblay took night classes together through the Université de Montréal’s École des sciences sociales, économiques et politiques. The university was housed in a large building at the intersection of rues Saint-Denis and Sainte-Catherine in the Quartier Latin, which was also home to cafés, bookstores, the École polytechnique, the École des hautes études commerciales, and the Bibliothèque Saint-Sulpice. In 1928, the university had announced the construction of a new campus on the north slope of Mount Royal, but the Great Depression delayed its opening until 1943.

The Depression was a precarious time for Montreal’s working class. However, the mail still had to be delivered, keeping Roméo in his job. In 1933, nearly a third of Montrealers were on relief (higher for French Canadians), but he and his family were not among them. Marcel’s tuition, though not cheap, remained within Roméo’s means. The école’s courses included political science, hygiene, human geography, economic policy, and Canadian external policy.<sup>12</sup> Some of Cadieux’s professors had to moonlight. For example, Jean Bruchési, who taught political science, economic policy, and external policy, was also a journalist and a history professor at the Externat classique de Saint-Sulpice. Nevertheless, the classes, solidly anchored in the real world, complemented Cadieux’s more abstract classical training. In the spring of 1936, he received his degree in social, economic, and political studies (LSEP).

That fall, Cadieux and Tremblay enrolled in law school at the Université de Montréal. The three-year program cost \$160 per annum and offered a wide range of courses.<sup>13</sup> Echoing a common complaint among

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\* “On ne va pas à la vérité par l’esprit seul mais de tout son être.”

his classmates, Cadieux noted that his professors were practising lawyers who focused more on their clients than on their students and thus gave slapdash lectures. They repeated their material year after year, with increasing boredom. For example, Judge Louis Loranger, who taught a course in civil law, seemed determined not to listen to his own lectures lest he put himself to sleep. According to Cadieux, the law was presented not as a science but as a set of tricks through which any reasonably intelligent young man could win his cases and thus a living. Passing an exam simply required students to regurgitate the views of their professors, which were almost never original. The root of the problem, in Cadieux's opinion, was French Canadian poverty. His professors, poorly paid, prioritized their non-academic careers. Small wonder that their lectures were uninspired, their exams interminable, and their grades inflated (Cadieux received 20 out of 20 in constitutional law and 29 out of 30 in maritime law – unusually high marks in any system). He pronounced the Université de Montréal “a gigantic sham: a conspiracy to keep up appearances.”\*<sup>14</sup>

## NATIONALIST STIRRINGS

Although Cadieux was critical of his education at the Université de Montréal, the institution strengthened his French Canadian identity by uniting the “élite” (a favourite word of the period) of the classical colleges. He and Tremblay found that their fellow university students were well read, with only a smattering of science but good training in philosophy, especially the great Catholic thinkers. Thus, Quebec could be expected to produce original intellectuals who would foster a unique spiritual climate. This student elite was also nationalistic in that it served as the brain trust of the French Canadian nation, one that “develops the doctrines that ensure its preservation and the focusing of its resources.”†<sup>15</sup>

French Canadian nationalism had been shaped by such defining events as the Conquest of 1760, the Rebellion of 1837–38, and the formation of the autonomous French-majority province of Quebec in 1867.<sup>16</sup> An

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\* “une gigantesque fumisterie: une conspiration pour sauver les apparences”

† “élabore les doctrines qui assurent sa conservation et l'orientation de ses énergies”

ultramontane Catholic Church preached survival based on language and religion, with religion the key to protecting a distinct French-Catholic identity. Although Quebec adapted well to the federal system by asserting its provincial autonomy, French Canadian minorities outside the province suffered from opposition to French or Catholic education, the “schools question” that so roiled politics in Manitoba and then Ontario. At the same time, the *nationalistes* opposed Canadian involvement in such imperial adventures as the Boer War. Henri Bourassa, once a Liberal MP, founded the nationalist newspaper *Le Devoir*, both to defend Quebec’s Catholic and French identity and to promote the equality of English and French Canadians throughout Canada. Nationalism also had an economic dimension. Capital – that is, business – spoke English, and the Quebec Liberal government (1897–1936) relied on it to expand the economy and to create employment by developing the province’s natural resources. The economic misery of the Great Depression cast doubt on this policy of accommodation to “foreign” (non-francophone) investment. The Liberal Party split on this issue (among others) and opened the door to a coalition of Conservatives and nationalist Liberals in the new Union Nationale party, headed by the charismatic Maurice Duplessis. After winning the provincial election of 1936, Duplessis then proceeded to govern much as his predecessor had done. The idealism of the nationalists, whom Duplessis dismissed as “fanatics or extremists,” was officially discarded.<sup>17</sup>

Although French Canadian nationalists differed among themselves about many issues, they all supported the preservation of their distinct cultural community. Marcel Cadieux admired three nationalists in particular: Léopold Richer, Édouard Montpetit, and Lionel Groulx. Richer was parliamentary correspondent to the Franco-Ontarian newspaper *Le Droit* (1927–37) and then to *Le Devoir* (1937–44). A gifted essayist and journalist, he criticized the lack of French Canadian influence in Ottawa, defended provincial autonomy, and promoted Canadian neutrality as Europe drifted toward another world war.<sup>18</sup> As a bulwark against involvement in the conflict, he cited the 1931 Statute of Westminster,\* in international law. Though lamentably

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\* “l'événement capital du siècle”

unknown to most Canadians, it had granted independence to the dominions.<sup>19</sup> Richer believed that they should take advantage of it and stay out of the next war.

Édouard Montpetit taught Cadieux both civics and political and social economy at the Université de Montréal. A well-connected lawyer, he received a Quebec government grant to study economics in Paris, where he became, according to one of his intellectual heirs, the first professional French Canadian economist.<sup>20</sup> Cultured and an able communicator, he had taught at the École des hautes études commerciales since its opening in 1910. In 1920, he founded the Université de Montréal's École des sciences sociales, économiques et politiques, which he would head until 1950. Vexed by the economic inferiority of French Canadians, Montpetit argued that they could best preserve their traditional values by embracing business and finance: "The national question is an economic question ... Economic conquest must be for us the reality of tomorrow."<sup>\*21</sup> Although his nationalist political economy was more popular than scientific, it appealed to Cadieux, who believed that Montpetit had good reason to shout his message from every rooftop. "We are so poor,"<sup>†</sup> he lamented of his fellow French Canadians.<sup>22</sup>

But Cadieux's greatest nationalist hero was Lionel Groulx. Born in Vaudreuil, Quebec, in 1878, Groulx was ordained a priest in 1903 and taught at the Collège de Valleyfield until 1915, when he was appointed to the Université de Montréal's first chair in Canadian history. Troubled by Quebec's urbanization and industrial growth, he upheld tradition as an antidote to modernity. For Groulx, Catholicism defined French Canadians, his *petit peuple* whose history he interpreted as a providential struggle for survival in English-speaking and Protestant North America. As he made clear in his racist novel *L'Appel de la race* (1922), a cautionary tale about a mixed marriage, English Canadian Catholics simply did not make the cut (to say nothing of Jews). From 1920 to 1928, he edited *L'Action française*, an influential nationalist magazine, flirting in a 1922 article with

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\* "La question nationale est une question économique ... La conquête économique doit être pour nous la réalité de demain."

† "Nous sommes si pauvres."

the idea of an independent “French state on the St. Lawrence,”\* only to deny for the rest of his life that he was a separatist.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, he was deeply committed to French Canadian minorities outside Quebec.<sup>24</sup> By making history a source of national pride, Groulx exerted a major influence on French Canadian youth, whom he anointed the saviours of the nation. In June 1937, Cadieux and Tremblay were among the young people who packed the Quebec City Coliseum, the site of the Deuxième Congrès de la langue française au Canada, to hear Groulx famously declare, “Whether they like it or not, we shall have our French state.”†<sup>25</sup> He seems to have meant a strong French state within Canada, but the comment, like so many of his statements, was ambiguous. “A fantastic success”‡ was how Cadieux described the audience’s response to Groulx’s speech, adding, “Young people love him because he has understood them and expressed in his work their yearning for independence, for freedom.”§<sup>26</sup>

The 1930s were a period of considerable intellectual ferment in Quebec, especially among French Canadian students, who, seeing their futures blighted by the Depression, exhibited a strong collective identity.<sup>27</sup> In 1932, protesting Prime Minister R.B. Bennett’s disregard for French Canadian influence in Ottawa, André Laurendeau and a group of former classmates from Collège Sainte-Marie published a “Manifeste de la jeune génération” (Manifesto of the young generation), which would gather seventy-five thousand signatures. It called for equitable representation in the federal civil service, the “refrancization”¶ of Quebec, and an end to the economic subordination of the province’s French Canadians.<sup>28</sup> Inspired by Groulx, Jeune-Canada, as the group became known, also had an anti-Semitic strain and an interest in an independent “Laurentia.”# This dream was shared by a few other French-speaking Quebecers in the 1930s, including members of the Jeunesses Patriotes, the Jeunes Laurentiens, and contributors to

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\* “État français du St. Laurent”

† “Qu’où le veuille ou qu’où ne le veuille pas, notre État français, nous l’aurons.”

‡ “Un succès fou”

§ “Les jeunes l’aiment parce qu’il les a compris et qu’il a traduit dans son oeuvre leurs aspirations à l’indépendance, à la liberté.”

¶ “refrancisation”

# “Laurentie”

the magazine *Vivre* (1934–35) and the newspaper *La Nation* (1936–38).<sup>29</sup> Although many French Canadian students were attracted to independence, the idea remained on the fringes of Quebec society.

In 1935, Cadieux and Tremblay arrived on the Quebec intellectual scene with an article titled “Démocratie” (Democracy). It was printed in *La Relève*, a monthly journal founded in 1934 by another group of Collège Sainte-Marie graduates, notably Paul Beaulieu. Because *La Relève* was strongly influenced by the French Catholic Revival and the philosopher Jacques Maritain, it has been portrayed as a rare manifestation of the Christian left in conservative Quebec. As one scholar suggests, however, the journal was initially part of the Catholic and nationalist mainstream.<sup>30</sup> Expressing the spirit of the age, many of its contributors criticized democracy, whose failure to solve the Depression seemed to presage the end of that political system. In arguments that afford some insight into Cadieux’s dim view of politics, both then and later, he and Tremblay listed what they saw as democracy’s many defects, including the myth that the will of the majority always produced good results. Nor was there any relation between the collective interest and the electoral promises that politicians made but never kept. But democracy’s greatest flaw according to Cadieux and Tremblay (who ignored the existence of civil services, which at least at the federal level in this period was trying to expand on the basis of merit rather than patronage) was its inability to furnish governments with “an organization that allows them continuity of views and of action.”\* The unfortunate result was the excessive growth of party machinery and a wilful ignorance of the “familial and social contingencies which far more than the vote shape the individual.”†<sup>31</sup>

Between 1937 and 1941, Cadieux and Tremblay would publish over fifty articles of varying length in Quebec newspapers and journals, but they never again attacked democracy. The most notable venues for their publications were *Le Quartier Latin*, *L’Attaque*, and *L’Action nationale*. *Le Quartier Latin*, the Université de Montréal’s student newspaper, was marked by a traditional French Canadian nationalism and Catholicism,

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\* “un organisme qui leur permette la continuité de vues et d’action”

† “contingences familiales et sociales qui bien plus que le vote déterminent l’homme”

anti-communism, and a dislike of politicians.<sup>32</sup> Partisan politics divided French Canadians and weakened their collective voice. What little insight we have into Cadieux and Tremblay's political views comes from their association with *L'Attaque*, a weekly anti-Duplessis newspaper. By 1939, they were also contributing to *L'Action nationale*, the successor to Groulx's *L'Action française* of the 1920s.

Although Cadieux and Tremblay's articles were eclectic, they generally dealt with culture, religion, and a moderate French Canadian nationalism. The Rebellion of 1837–38, a nationalist totem, did not escape their skepticism. They stressed that the conflation of French Canadian interests in 1837 with those of 1937 was largely imaginary. The only way to judge the rebellion was to weigh its results, among which British repression and the unjust Act of Union of 1840 loomed largest. "Of the three symbolic, historic and concrete aspects of the rebellion," they wrote, "only one really interests us, the last of which, it seems, does not allow for approval."<sup>33</sup>

In 1938, Cadieux and Tremblay appeared in a special issue of *Le Quartier Latin* on nationalism alongside Groulx, Montpetit, and François Hertel, the pseudonym of Jesuit priest Rodolphe Dubé, whose book *Leur inquiétude* (1936) had captured the restlessness and separatist leanings of French Canadian youth. Cadieux and Tremblay wrote on the economy, specifically foreign (that is, anglophone) investment: "If we consider the importance of economics in the destiny of a people, there is reason to fear the disastrous consequences of this foreign control."<sup>†</sup> Citing the case of Arvida, a town in the Saguenay region founded by Alcoa (Aluminum Company of America), they lamented that their compatriots were forced to live and work in an alien environment. Recognizing that the lack of French Canadian capital was to blame, they wanted Quebec to attract French and Belgian funds and to pass laws that punished abuses by foreign investors. These piecemeal economic reforms were part of a larger whole: "A Quebec

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\* "Des trois aspects symbolique, historique et actuel de la rébellion un seul nous intéresse vraiment, le dernier qui, semble-t-il, ne permet pas l'approbation."

† "Si l'on songe à l'importance de l'économie dans la destinée d'un peuple, il y a lieu d'être effrayé des conséquences désastreuses de cette emprise étrangère chez nous."

economic order that gives precedence to French Canadian priorities will remain only a dream for a very long time.”\*<sup>34</sup>

Like all French Canadian nationalists, Cadieux and Tremblay opposed Canadian involvement in another “European” war. The First World War, which had led to conscription and killed sixty thousand Canadians, was seared into the collective memory of French Canada. Returning to power in 1935, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, backed by Ernest Lapointe, his Quebec lieutenant, tried to avoid antagonizing the province by promising that the Canadian Parliament (not London) would decide whether Canada took part in any future conflict. By 1939, however, war was imminent. When a militaristic British magazine criticized the service record of French Canadians, Cadieux and Tremblay retaliated in *Le Quartier Latin*: “For the moment, let us content ourselves with noting that English military gentlemen have the art of saying exactly what is needed to make us deny them the pleasure of counting EVEN ONE French Canadian battalion in the future Canadian army. We will remember.”†<sup>35</sup> Writing under a pseudonym in *L’Attaque*, they went even farther, saying that none but England’s enemies were interested in attacking Canada and that they would do so only if Canada continued to rearm instead of minding its own business.<sup>36</sup> It was a simplistic argument, but one that reflected the widespread isolationist mood of French-speaking Quebecers, especially among youth raised on stories of the 1917 conscription crisis.

After their 1935 *La Relève* piece on democracy, Cadieux and Tremblay published no essays that were longer than a page, which explains why some of their views seem superficial. In the spring of 1939, however, they contributed a two-part scholarly article to *L’Action nationale* on the nineteenth-century nationalist and littérateur Étienne Parent (1802–74). After the failure of the 1837 rebellion, this controversial figure had argued that French Canadians should seek peaceful constitutional reform. Cadieux

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\* “Nous ne pouvons rêver, pour longtemps encore, que l’économique québécoise [sic] favorise l’établissement d’un ordre national.”

† “Contentons-nous, pour le moment, de remarquer que messieurs les militaires anglais ont l’art de dire juste ce qu’il faut pour que nous les privions du plaisir de compter UN SEUL bataillon canadien-français dans la future armée canadienne. Nous nous souviendrons.”

and Tremblay's preference for the thoughtful and moderate Parent over his rival, the impulsive and unyielding Louis-Joseph Papineau, was a comment on their own nationalism. A "guide of the national conscience,"\* according to Cadieux and Tremblay, Parent viewed every problem from the perspective of French Canada's survival and development, and believed that English and French Canadians could establish a mutually beneficial collaboration.<sup>37</sup> Lecturing on such topics as religion, education, and – prophetically – industry, commerce, and political economy, Parent was the first "theoretician"† of French Canadian nationalism: "Before him *national feeling* served as *national doctrine*."<sup>‡38</sup>

In the spring of 1939, with Europe on the brink of war, Cadieux and Tremblay sat the examination for their law degree. Cadieux passed with flying colours, winning the Lieutenant Governor's Medal for the top mark, as Pierre Trudeau would do, and graduating from the Université de Montréal with great distinction. Unlike Trudeau, however, he was not awarded the Governor General's Medal.<sup>39</sup> He had earned his degree in civil law (LL.L.), but before he could practise, he needed to pass the bar exam, which he wrote in Quebec City in early July. Uncertain of his success, he asked Roméo to pray to his favourite saint.<sup>40</sup> When, two days later, Marcel learned to his relief that he had passed, he joked about his new title and empty pockets, as well as his near miss on the exam, in a parsimoniously worded telegram home: "Lawyer without cases. I was scared."<sup>§41</sup> As Cadieux stepped off the train in Montreal, Roméo proudly greeted him by the French title for lawyers: "*Maitre*."<sup>42</sup>

Rather than practise law, however, Cadieux wanted to study in Paris, a dream for most French Canadian students but a reality for only those with private means or scanty public funding. Poor but bright, Cadieux was named one of seventeen provincial scholars in the Boursiers de la province program.<sup>43</sup> On 1 September 1939, however, Germany invaded Poland. Two days later, Britain and France declared war on Germany; on 10 September, Canada did the same. With Paris ruled out, Cadieux

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\* "directeur de conscience nationale"

† "théoricien"

‡ "Avant lui le *sentiment national* tenait lieu de *doctrine nationale*."

§ "Avocat sans causes. J'ai eu peur."

considered Harvard, but it refused to recognize his degrees. Ultimately, he and Tremblay decided to study constitutional law at McGill. Two factors seem to have influenced their choice: at McGill, they could improve both their imperfect English and their knowledge of Canadian law. It would seem that both were considering careers in the federal civil service.

### THE ASPIRING DIPLOMAT

Despite his previous isolationist comments, Cadieux was probably not too disturbed by Canada's entry into the war, since on 11 September 1939 he wrote to the Department of External Affairs, inquiring about job prospects.<sup>44</sup> His instinct regarding potential openings was correct. With only 33 officers out of a total staff of 174, the DEA was too small to handle the massive increase to its workload that war would bring. The under-secretary of state for external affairs, Dr. O.D. Skelton, himself informed Cadieux that the department had scheduled an open competition for third secretaries, the lowest diplomatic rank.<sup>45</sup>

A career in the DEA was a strange choice for Cadieux, the federal civil service being unilingual. Perhaps his interest reflected a desire to see the world, which had been frustrated by the war. Significantly, both Cadieux and Tremblay would credit their former professor Jean Bruchési, who had become a senior provincial bureaucrat in charge of culture, for inspiring them to become diplomats.<sup>46</sup> The “professor-journalist-traveller,”\* to quote one scholar's description of Bruchési, had studied diplomacy at l'École libre des sciences politiques in Paris and travelled frequently to Europe.<sup>47</sup> After 1918, Canada had assumed a new prominence on the international stage, which naturally generated career opportunities. Aware of this, Bruchési had written, “At a certain age, the young man must leave home and cast his eyes toward other horizons lest he have nothing to gaze upon, like a new Narcissus, but himself.”†<sup>48</sup> His book *Aux marches de l'Europe* (1932) has been praised as one of the finest travelogues in French Canadian

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\* “professeur-journaliste-voyageur”

† “Arrivé à un certain âge, il faut que le jeune homme sorte de chez soi, ouvre les yeux sur d'autres horizons sous peine de n'avoir plus à contempler, nouveau Narcisse, que son unique personne.”

literature.<sup>49</sup> As Tremblay recalled, in a statement that no doubt echoed Cadieux's sentiments, "Mr. Bruchési gave me the taste for 'elsewhere.'"<sup>50</sup>

But there was more than mere wanderlust in their desire to become diplomats. As Cadieux explained forty years later, he wanted to establish a French Canadian presence in the civil service. He also believed in democracy, federalism, and the Commonwealth, the new name for Britain and its autonomous dominions.<sup>51</sup> The DEA sought candidates between twenty-two and thirty years old, with advanced degrees in political economy, political science, history, or law. By the October 1939 deadline, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) had received over 350 applications from Canadians at home and abroad, soon narrowed down to about 50, including those of Cadieux and Tremblay. As previously mentioned, while writing the DEA exam in 1940, Cadieux tackled the problem of Canadian unity, arguing that national cohesiveness hinged on an improved place in Confederation for French Canadians. This bold answer captured his nationalism and implicitly confirmed his desire to promote a French Canadian contingent in the civil service.

The war had a major political impact on Quebec. Premier Duplessis called a snap election for 25 October 1939 on the issue of provincial autonomy, which he claimed had been eroding and was now threatened by the federal invocation of the powerful War Measures Act. He also raised the spectre of conscription, which King had promised earlier that month not to impose. In what has been described as "perhaps Canadian history's greatest turning of the political tables," Quebec's federal ministers, Ernest Lapointe, Lucien Cardin, and Charles Gavan (Chubby) Power, threatened to resign if the Union Nationale won the election.<sup>52</sup> Faced with having no voice in Canada's wartime cabinet, which might then renege on its opposition to conscription, Quebecers abandoned Duplessis and voted overwhelmingly for Adélard Godbout's Liberal Party.

The first months of the war were eventful for the aspiring diplomats Cadieux and Tremblay. They attended McGill during the day and practised law in the evening, each working out of his own home. At McGill, they studied under F.R. Scott, a Canadian nationalist and constitutional expert.

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\* "M. Bruchési m'a donné le goût de 'ailleurs.'"

During the 1930s, he had urged Canadian neutrality in war. A socialist who had co-founded the League of Social Reconstruction, Scott was also closely affiliated with the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, a new national party established in 1932. His nationalism would have appealed to Cadieux and Tremblay but not his socialism and centralism. Working under him, however, led them to cultivate a broader and impressively even-handed understanding of the Canadian state. In December 1939, they launched a ten-part series in *L'Attaque*, which illuminates their views on the constitution, their decision to become federal civil servants, and their French Canadian nationalism.

As Cadieux and Tremblay noted in one of these articles, though Canada was a British state, from its internal laws to its external policy, a third of its population was descended from the founders of the old “Kingdom of the St. Lawrence,”\* that is, they were French Canadians, who expected to be treated as equals. While not exactly hostile to Britain, the authors stressed, Quebec was clearly less attached to it than was the rest of Canada, a major reason for the compromises that dominated Canadian politics. But Cadieux and Tremblay took hope from the emerging nationalist movement in English Canada (led by such men as Scott and historians Frank Underhill and Arthur Lower), which sought a truly national policy. This “neo-canadianism”† was the wave of the future: “The national unity so desired will only be achieved on the foundations of a Canadian policy ... and Canadian above all.”‡<sup>53</sup>

A Canadian policy was possible only because Canada was finally sovereign. As Cadieux and Tremblay saw it, Canada needed to stop seeking inspiration from Britain, France, and especially the United States. It should devise policies focused on its own needs and resources. French Canadians had traditionally limited their contribution to the Canadian state to the bare minimum. But that state now belonged to its citizens. If French Canadians failed to embrace the new national project, their English-speaking compatriots would assume that their ambitions ended at Cornwall

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\* “Royaume du St. Laurent”

† “néo-canadianisme”

‡ “L’unité nationale tant souhaitée ne s’effectuera que sur les bases d’une politique canadienne ... et canadienne avant tout.”

and the Gaspé. As Cadieux and Tremblay warned, “The ‘Quebec Reserve’ is not a fanciful phrase, it was coined to refer to a certain French Canadian abstentionism from Canadian politics.”\*<sup>54</sup>

Canada was also a federal state. Because federalism protected them, French Canadians had developed, in Cadieux and Tremblay’s view, an irrational attachment to the letter of the constitution, which had become a kind of “Ark of the Covenant”<sup>†</sup> for them. But the world had changed since 1867. The Canadian state, once a fairly remote agent in the lives of its citizens, was under increasing pressure to provide them with health and unemployment insurance. Such new inventions as the radio, the automobile, and the airplane had reduced the distance between Canada’s regions. Whereas English Canadians recognized that some constitutional adjustment and centralization were in order, most French Canadians, to Cadieux and Tremblay’s regret, refused to consider even the most reasonable recommendations. (In 1937, for example, when Ottawa established the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, Duplessis rejected its authority.) Federalism was “a way of life, not a prison.”<sup>‡</sup> If French Canadians wanted to play a part in improving the system, they had to distinguish between their cherished rights (which had to be defended at all costs) and the letter of the constitution (which did not).<sup>§</sup> In taking this position, the authors distanced themselves from the obsession with provincial autonomy that characterized many French Canadian nationalists.

To Cadieux and Tremblay, Canada was a “dualistic state.”<sup>§</sup> Ignoring the role of Indigenous peoples in Canadian history (as was common at the time), they stressed that both French and English Canadians had founded, colonized, and developed the country. Whereas French Canadians believed they were entitled to equal treatment from coast to coast, English Canadians tended to restrict their political status to Quebec. Yet French Canadians had been the first Europeans to settle and to explore Canada; they had fought to defend it; they had championed responsible government; and

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\* “La ‘Réserve Québécoise’ n’est pas une expression inventée, elle a été créée pour désigner un certain abstentionnisme canadien-français dans la politique canadienne.”

† “l’Arche d’alliance”

‡ “un mode de vie, non pas une prison”

§ “état dualiste”

they had supported Confederation. The constitution, however, recognized French Canadian rights within Quebec and (to a lesser extent) the central government, but not elsewhere. As Cadieux and Tremblay believed, national unity depended on a true dualism: “When the majority recognizes that we are just as Canadian as they are, when throughout the country, in all the provinces, we have the same rights as they do, when the majority ceases to take advantage of its numerical superiority to oppress us, it will be time to speak of goodwill and of ... Canadian unity.”\*<sup>56</sup>

From September 1939, the King government had pursued a war of “limited liability,” including voluntary enlistment, industrial production, and the training of air personnel in Canada under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. This cautious response appealed to French Canadians but not to Ontario Liberal premier Mitch Hepburn. His government’s relations with King’s were so strained that it passed a resolution in January 1940 “regretting that the Federal Government at Ottawa has made so little effort to prosecute Canada’s duty in the war in the vigorous manner the people of Canada desire to see.”<sup>57</sup> King seized on the motion to call an election for 26 March 1940. Cadieux and Tremblay implicitly suggested that Quebeckers keep King’s Liberals in power. In the most recent provincial election, Quebeckers had rejected a movement of “discord and separation”<sup>†</sup> from the rest of Canada. Now was not the time to surrender their freedom to a Conservative-dominated “union” government, which would pursue a policy that was “nefarious and full of dangers for internal peace.”<sup>‡58</sup> They need not have worried: no Tory was elected in Quebec, all but three of whose sixty-five seats went Liberal. The King government, which also dominated the results in the rest of Canada, won an overwhelming majority.

By April 1940, the DEA was ready to interview the thirty or so candidates who had received a mark of 72.0 or better on its written exam. Although

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\* “Lorsque la majorité reconnaîtra que nous sommes canadiens au même titre qu’elle, lorsque dans tout le pays, dans toutes les provinces, nous aurons les mêmes droits qu’elle, lorsque la majorité cessera de se prévaloir de sa supériorité numérique pour nous opprimer, il sera temps de parler de bonne entente et de ... l’unité canadienne.”

† “discord et de séparation”

‡ “néfaste et pleine de dangers pour la paix intérieure”

Tremblay was invited to Ottawa for the oral examination, Cadieux, inexplicably, given his grade of 76.4, was not. He complained to Speaker of the House Pierre Casgrain, whose private secretary, Fernand Corbin, raised his case with the CSC. The commission contacted Skelton, who replied that the DEA wanted to finish scrutinizing the chosen candidates before it considered others.<sup>59</sup> Cadieux was ultimately granted an interview that spring. On that occasion, as we know, Skelton asked him just one thing: whether he had answered the question on national unity.

Cadieux may have believed that his essay, which raised the possibility of Quebec separation, had offended Skelton or the DEA, but this seems unlikely. As one of the five senior departmental officers who had graded the exams (perhaps Skelton himself) noted, Cadieux's text had been "limited almost wholly to [a] consideration of [the] relations of French-speaking Canada to the rest of the country" and, though "not original," had been "clear and moderate within those lines."<sup>60</sup> In other words, Cadieux's answer was judged inoffensive but narrow. He received a score of 73.0 on his oral interview, but what particularly hurt his candidacy was his mark for education and experience: 60.6. Although his total score of 70.3 exceeded the 70.0 that was necessary to succeed in the competition, he ranked fourteenth on the eligibility list and so was not among the ten officers whom the DEA hired in 1940.<sup>61</sup> Three French Canadians, however, were: Jules Léger, Paul Beaulieu (of *La Relève* fame), and Tremblay.

It must have pained Cadieux in July 1940 to see his friend begin the career to which they had both aspired, especially since the joint law office "Cadieux & Tremblay Avocats" had recently opened on rue Saint-Jacques, only a few blocks from Montreal's Palais de justice. Roméo, who was eager for Marcel to establish himself in the profession, furnished the new office and drummed up its business through the network of family contacts. As Cadieux began life as a full-time lawyer, one wonders if he recalled, as he would in later years, the advice that Maximilien Caron, the future dean of law at the Université de Montréal, had given students: "Devote yourselves to the Law as an intellectual pursuit, and the Law will take care of you."<sup>62</sup> Acting accordingly, Cadieux wrote lectures on international and Roman law, and began work on an annotated study of Quebec civil law.<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, he remained passionate about the question of French Canada and its relationship to the rest of the country. In August 1940, he

and Tremblay were among the roughly forty intellectuals who were invited by *L'Action nationale* (edited by André Laurendeau) to respond to a survey on whether a distinctive French Canadian culture existed and, if it did, what its orientation should be. They were to take into account the American, English Canadian, and French influences on the province. Published in November, Cadieux and Tremblay's essay was the first of the series to appear. Using the iconic French Canadian village as a lens, it argued that French Canadians did in fact have a culture, one that was Christian, Western, conservative, and more literary than scientific but dependent on practical American innovations and large doses of English economic, legal, and political influence. French Canadians needed to master the economic forces that a culture required to develop. Similarly, they should stay true to their Catholic vocation and French intellectual heritage. Finally, they needed to disengage from English and especially American foreign investment. To overcome their inability to create the material foundation of their culture, they should turn to their English Canadian "compatriots"\* for help. In return, they would remain in the vanguard of the Canadian nationalist movement. "From this collaboration where each group will give the best of itself," the authors concluded, "will perhaps one day be born that Canadian soul which we are seeking."<sup>†64</sup> It was a conciliatory message rarely heard in *L'Action nationale*.

The potential for genuine co-operation between English and French Canadians and a broadening of Quebec's outlook had attracted Cadieux and Tremblay since the start of the war, when they first applied to the DEA. By 1941, they were more convinced than ever of its necessity. In February, for example, Cadieux directed an issue of *Jeunesse*, the official organ of the *Jeunesse indépendante catholique*, an organization for the French Canadian professional classes under the umbrella of the *Association catholique de la jeunesse canadienne-française*. For the headline, Cadieux borrowed the title of one of Montpetit's books: "Pour une doctrine" (For a doctrine). For a long time, he opined, national doctrine had meant Quebec doctrine. Thanks to the Depression and the Second World War, however, French

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\* "compatriotes"

† "De cette collaboration où chaque groupe donnera le meilleur de lui-même, naitra peut-être un jour cette âme canadienne dont nous sommes à la recherche."

Canadians now understood that their material security and social stability could be affected by disturbances outside Quebec. This new conception of the national interest, Cadieux believed, would consider the French Canadian fact in all its complexity: Quebec, the oft-forgotten French Canadians who lived outside it, and especially French-English solidarity within Canada. The country's problems, from the war to wheat, were as important to French Canada's survival as responsible government had been a century before. As a result, Cadieux called for the urgent establishment of a national doctrine in the truest sense of the term.<sup>65</sup>

Eager to promote this message, Cadieux and Tremblay published an entire essay on Canadian dualism in the March 1941 issue of the *Revue trimestrielle canadienne*, the journal of the graduates of the *École polytechnique*.<sup>66</sup> The next month, their article "Notre fédéralisme est-il viable?" (Is our federalism viable?) appeared in *Le Quartier Latin*. In answering yes, they expressed, probably for the first time, their opposition to separatism, which would abandon French Canadians outside Quebec, was impractical economically, and would weaken the province politically. Federalism was the only real alternative. Since English and French Canadians viewed the federal system differently, mutual understanding and sacrifice were required. Confederation was not a "consummated and permanent compromise,"\* but a "ceaseless work of conciliation."<sup>†67</sup> This essay attracted the attention of, among others, Roger Brossard, a professor at the Université de Montréal and future judge on the Quebec Court of Appeal, who praised its moderation, regretting that he could not say the same about certain other pieces in that issue of the student newspaper.<sup>68</sup>

In June 1941, the DEA announced another competition for third secretaries. The advertisement was identical to that of 1939, with one exception: since Canada planned to open new diplomatic missions in South America, applicants needed to be fluent in either Spanish or Portuguese. Because Cadieux's grasp of Spanish was weak, he took a crash course in the language. One wonders if he had received early notice of the competition from Tremblay. If so, his strongly pro-Canadian articles in 1941 may have been a deliberate attempt to curry favour with the DEA. Nevertheless, it

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\* "compromis consommé et définitif"

† "oeuvre de conciliation à réaliser sans cesse"

had taken courage to advance views that, though acceptable to mainstream French Canadian society, were obnoxious to its more nationalistic youth. In any case, leaving nothing to chance in his second application to the DEA, Cadieux kept Pierre Casgrain, now secretary of state, informed of it through Fernand Corbin.

In mid-July, Cadieux took the DEA's written exam, which tested his knowledge of both the Spanish language and international affairs. He believed that, though his performance in the Spanish section had been uneven, his second exam had been much stronger than his first. Two weeks later, he was granted an interview. Although questioned for barely fifteen minutes, he found the panel of judges more sympathetic than before (it did not include Skelton, who had died that January). His friends in the DEA intimated that his chances were good. Corbin promised Cadieux that he would look into his case and ask Casgrain to take a personal interest in it.<sup>69</sup> In August 1941, Cadieux was hired by the DEA, one of only five officers that year. Though the nature and extent of any intervention by Corbin and Casgrain is unclear, it seems that Cadieux did not earn his place in the DEA entirely by merit. As he told Casgrain,

For over two years I aspired to this position into which I am settling and I am sure that your influential patronage especially favoured my candidacy. Young people are in need of help and of sympathy. They do not always have the good fortune to win the support of a protector who knows like you how to take an interest in their case and to facilitate the fulfillment of their most cherished desires.\*<sup>70</sup>

The formalities of praise and thanksgiving were behind him. Cadieux now had the job of his dreams. It was up to him to make something of it.

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\* “J’ambitionnais cette situation dans laquelle je m’installe depuis plus de deux ans et je suis assuré que votre haut patronage a singulièrement favorisé ma candidature. Les jeunes ont besoin d’aide et de sympathie. Ils n’ont pas toujours la bonne fortune de se recommander à un protecteur qui sache comme vous s’intéresser à leur cas et leur faciliter la réalisation de leurs désirs les plus chers.”

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