

= My Story (Julie Couillard book) =

My Story (or Mon histoire) is a tell @-@ all memoir by Canadian Julie Couillard . It was first written in French , then during summer 2008 , translated into English . Both versions were published across Canada in October 2008 .

Couillard first appeared in the national media when she dated the Minister of Foreign Affairs , Maxime Bernier . The Bernier @-@ Couillard Affair erupted in May 2008 over confidential , NATO @-@ related documents left at Couillard 's house . Media coverage , and Bernier 's reaction , left Couillard feeling victimized . To help dispel rumours regarding her life and her role with Bernier , Couillard signed a book deal .

In her book , she recounts her early years , describes her relationship with Bernier , and reveals his confidential opinions .

Intended to be released on October 14 , 2008 , the book 's release date was moved forward when that same day was selected for the Canadian federal election . Bernier dismissed the embarrassing allegations against him in her book as ridiculous . Though My Story was released eight days prior to the election , Bernier nonetheless was re @-@ elected in his district of Beauce . The English version peaked at # 6 on La Presse 's bestseller list while the French version reached # 5 . Critics found Couillard 's story self @-@ righteous and sometimes conveniently vague , but noted that it provided a unique view into the government 's inner circle .

= = Background = =

Julie Couillard began dating Conservative Party of Canada Member of Parliament , Maxime Bernier , in April 2007 . The media started covering her in August , when she wore a revealing dress to Bernier 's swearing @-@ in ceremony for his new position as Minister of Foreign Affairs . The couple had first met at a restaurant @-@ dinner with business associates . Couillard and Bernier dated until December 2007 but continued seeing each other until April 2008 . Their relationship became the subject of a political scandal which brought about intense media attention . As the scandal unfolded , Couillard decided to write an autobiography , telling her side of the story . She formally signed a contract in July with publishers , McClelland & Stewart ; and with the help of journalist , Serge Demers , a ghostwriter , she wrote My Story in French within a few months . The publisher translated the text into English .

= = Bernier @-@ Couillard affair = =

Bernier was elected as a Conservative star candidate in Quebec and became the Minister of Industry before being reassigned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in August 2007 . Though his relationship with Couillard had ended in December , they continued with occasional trysts . In April 2008 , as Bernier hurriedly departed Couillard 's home , he left behind confidential , NATO @-@ related briefing notes ; they were from the 2008 Bucharest summit . He asked Couillard to destroy them . Couillard , on the other hand , put the notes aside and forgot about them until May when she returned the notes to a foreign affairs office . Significant discussion about the affair was then voiced in both the Canadian House of Commons and the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security .

After discussions with Prime Minister of Canada , Stephen Harper , Bernier resigned as Minister of Foreign Affairs , a day before the airing of Couillard 's interview with TVA . Political commentators called the affair a threat to national security due to Bernier 's carelessness and to Couillard 's background with motorcycle biker gangs . According to Couillard , Bernier 's response to the subsequent media coverage made her feel betrayed and abandoned .

= = Content = =

The book begins as an autobiography . Couillard was born in the late @-@ 1960s in the Montreal

district of Ville @-@ Émard ; then she moved to the suburb of Lorraine when she was 4 . Her parents often fought as her mother believed that her husband was unfaithful ; the family incurred financial problems when Couillard 's father changed careers . At age 12 , Couillard was diagnosed with epilepsy . At age 17 , she bought several properties with a boyfriend . They lived together briefly before breaking up and selling the properties . Couillard then became a friend , then lover , of Gilles Giguère , a money lender who was associated with the controversial , motorcycle club , Hells Angels . In 1996 , after the police raided Giguère 's apartment and (according to Couillard) threatened him , Giguère became sullen and withdrawn : the police had charged him with conspiracy to commit murder . But two months later , they let the charge drop . Giguère was soon murdered .

In 1997 , Couillard met Stéphane Sirois , a reputed enforcer and drug dealer , member of the Rockers a Hells Angels affiliate club . They married . However , financial problems interfered with their relationship ; furthermore , Couillard had cheated on Sirois with a man named Bruno . During their divorce , Sirois became an informant for the police and entered a witness protection program . Couillard then became pregnant with Bruno 's child , and had an abortion ; they subsequently separated . Following further personal , financial problems , Couillard declared bankruptcy in 2002 . She then began an affair with a married man who abandoned her while they visited Venice , Italy . When she returned to Canada , Couillard launched a security firm , Integrated Global Solutions , along with an auto @-@ leasing business . Meanwhile , she began to date Bernard Côté , an aide to federal Minister of Public Works , Michael Fortier . Couillard then introduced Côté to Philippe Morin of the Kevlar Group , a real estate company which signed a deal with the federal government to acquire land from Kevlar . When the deal became public Côté 's involvement was considered a conflict of interest and Fortier , responsible for the actions of his staff , was forced to resign , despite Morin denying any connection between Kevlar and Couillard .

Then , in April 2007 , while attending a Conservative Party of Canada fundraising affair , Couillard was asked to consider being a candidate for the party . Later , she attended a dinner where she met Maxime Bernier ; they began dating . Bernier registered Couillard as his designated traveling companion with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order for Couillard to accompany Bernier on government business .

In her book , Couillard characterizes Bernier as intellectually lazy , preoccupied with his appearance , and as concerned that he appears gay . She writes further that Bernier privately criticized Prime Minister Stephen Harper 's eating habits and his physique . She adds that Bernier spoke with party supporters about replacing Harper as the party leader , and says that Bernier opposed the invasion of Iraq contrary to his party 's stance . Further revelations regarding Bernier include that he whispered negative comments to Couillard about members of his electoral district ; and that he did not own a laptop , yet frequently used her house and home computer as a second office .

Couillard goes on to describe the NATO document incident and the ensuing media coverage from her perspective .

= = Publication and reception = =

The original publication date for the book was October 14 , 2008 . After the Canadian federal election was called and set for that day the book 's release was re @-@ scheduled to October 6 , eight days before the election in which Bernier was seeking re @-@ election . The English version was published as a hard cover by McClelland & Stewart while the French version was released by Montreal publishers , Les Éditions de l'Homme , as a trade paperback . According to La Presse , 17 @,@ 000 copies were printed ; 5 @,@ 000 sold in the first two weeks . In the Montreal market , the book was listed on the bestseller list at # 6 for two weeks while the French version spent one week at # 5 .

In response to the book , Bernier dismissed the contents as " soap @-@ opera politics and completely ridiculous " and denied ever criticizing Harper or constituents . The Ottawa Citizen reviewer , Chris Cobb , and The Globe and Mail 's , Christie Blatchford called Couillard 's story self @-@ righteous , contradictory , and conveniently vague . Cobb commented that " viewed through a

political lens , it 's an entertaining page @-@ turner " as it provides " a rare glimpse inside the closed , controlled society that is the Harper government . " Additionally , writer , William Johnson , said the book story unfolds like pulp fiction or a soap opera and compares Couillard to the abused heroine in Justine who does not learn from her calamities .

Bernier went on to win his election in Beauce with 62 % of the vote . Harper won re @-@ election as prime @-@ minister ; he did not appoint Bernier to a cabinet position . Stemming from Couillard 's actions during the entire affair , the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) launched investigations on how she obtained the secret documents ; on whether Couillard 's mother was offered a patronage appointment by a Conservative Party official to the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada ; and on whether there was influence peddling during the land sale between the Kevlar Group and Public Works .