

Cuba

The largest Caribbean island is located 90 miles southeast of Florida. It has about 10 million people over 44,200 square miles.

Cuba was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492 and governed by the Spanish for most of the next four hundred years. The United States took control during the Spanish-American war and kept it until the Republic of Cuba was established in 1902. It continued to be directly involved until 1934. The present communist government was established by revolution in 1959 and the revolutionary commander, Fidel Castro, has been Cuba's undisputed leader since.

Castro sent his first trade mission to Canada in 1960 and the exchange grew rapidly after the United States broke off trade with Cuba. Canadian exports—principally industrial equipment, breeding bulls, frozen semen and feed grains—went from \$20 million in the mid-1960s to \$250 million in 1976. In 1975 Industry, Trade and Commerce Minister Alastair Gillespie led a trade mission to Cuba, and despite Cuba's shortage of foreign currency reserves, exports have continued to grow. Canada does not send materials to Cuba that are considered strategic by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and in recent years its exports have been mostly wheat and other cereals, vegetables and vegetable preparations. Total exports in 1982 amounted to almost \$325 million, with wheat alone accounting for \$124 million.

Canada's import levels are much lower, their value totaling almost \$95 million with raw and refined sugar, fish and other seafood, tobacco, cocoa and chocolate, the principal components.

Canada ceased its aid program to Cuba at the time of Cuba's involvement in Angola and its trade relations, though lively, are controlled by the Cuban government and conducted through government trading organizations.



The OAS

The International Union of American States (which would become the Organization of American States), established in 1890, is the oldest international regional organization in the world.

It is now an agent of the United Nations, governed by its own charter adopted in 1948 and amended by the Protocol of Buenos Aires in 1967.

It is usually thought of as all the Latin American countries plus the United States, but in recent decades it has acquired many English-speaking members from the Caribbean as well as the Dutch-speaking delegation from Surinam and the French-speaking one from Haiti.

Canada became a Permanent Observer in 1972 as a first step in strengthening its ties with Latin America and the Caribbean. It doesn't vote or participate in OAS debates, but it has a full-time representation led by an ambassador. Spain and

Italy also have ambassadors and Guyana, Israel, the Netherlands, France, the German Federal Republic, Belgium, Japan, Portugal, Egypt, Switzerland, the Vatican, Greece, Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Korea and Morocco have observers.

Canada is also an active participant in the:

- Postal Union of the Americas and Spain
- Inter-American Statistical Institute
- Pan American Institute of Geography and History
- Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
- Pan American Health Organization
- Inter-American Development Bank
- Pan American Railway Congress Association
- Inter-American Telecommunications Conference.