

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN - SAND DUNES AND SUNSHINE, MAYAN RUINS AND MATADORES ... BUT WHY, REALLY, ARE WE THERE?

Why are 246 Canadians employed in 18 Canadian Embassies and High Commissions in that part of the world? (Plus there are 11 Honorary Consuls.) What are the key issues facing them? How, if at all, are these issues affecting them? What changes are foreseen in Canada's representation in that geographic area?

These were the questions that were asked of CLAUDE CHARLAND, the Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for Latin America and the Caribbean.

To analyze the area, it is best, he noted, to deal with each of the three areas separately. Each has its own particular, unique concerns.

CENTRAL AMERICA

(We have two embassies in this area - Guatemala and San José - with 19 Canada-based staff.)

Up until recently, Canada's presence here was limited. Then, the political turbulence, the human rights violations and the local conflicts caused the media, Parliament, academic groups, church groups and others to focus on this area. Consequently, Canada's interests and presence were increased.

Politically, our policy is: "We do not believe in a military solution for Central America" (Allan MacEachen), thus aid and negotiations are the key. In 1981, we tripled our aid assistance to Central America and said that it would be increased further once the Contadora objectives of reconciliation had been achieved. (Contadora is a small island off Panama where four countries - Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela and Panama - met a few years ago and have been involved in trying to stabilize the countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica and Nicaragua.) Canada feels this remains the only viable instrument with the potential for achieving reconciliation.

In terms of aid, our three main recipients are: Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. (We have suspended bilateral development assistance to Guatemala and El Salvador, but we do maintain non-governmental organization and multilateral assistance.)

Immigration, because of the political unrest, is also a key area now and Canada has agreed to accept 2,500 refugees a year from Central America.

THE CARIBBEAN

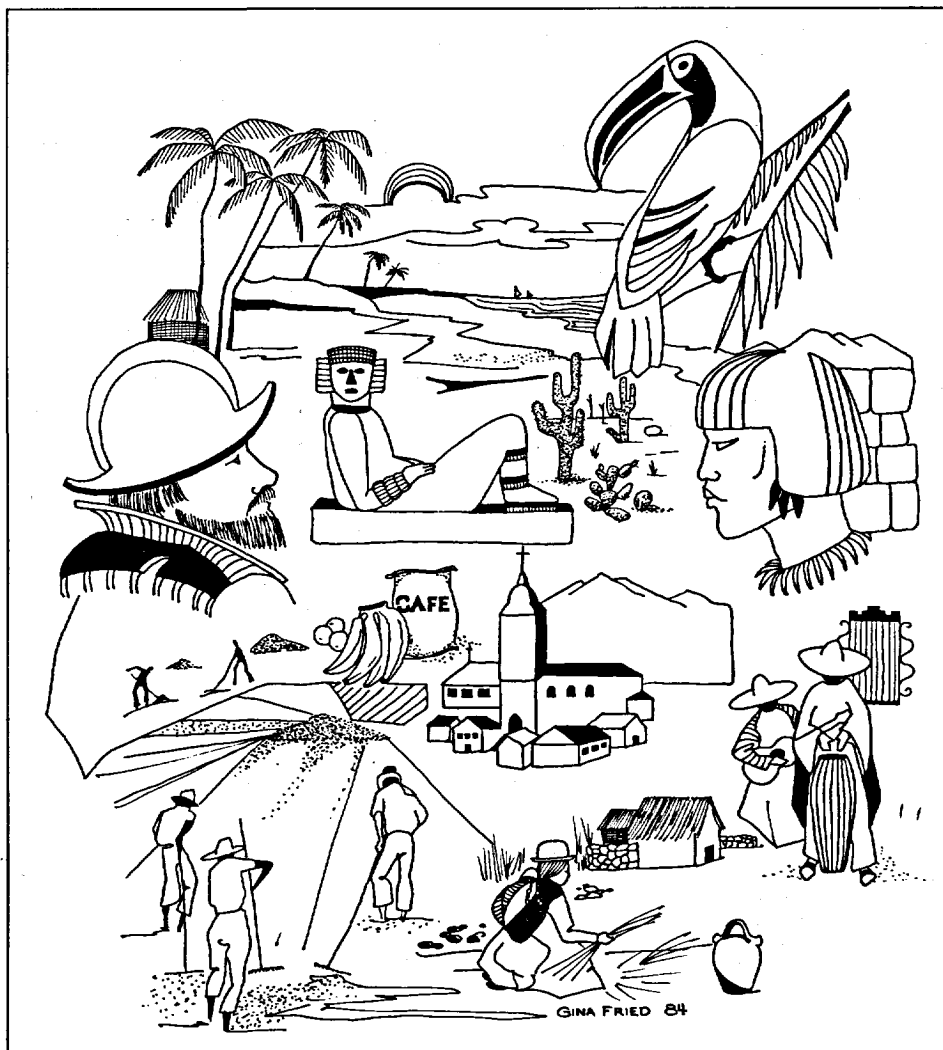
(We have 5 chanceries in this area - Havana, Port au Prince, Kingston, Port of Spain and Bridgetown - and 86 Canada-based staff.)

Traditionally the primary activities between Canada and the Caribbean were trade (rum and sugar for lumber and cod fish) and Canadian investments. Then, in 1980, a review of our relations revealed that we had an important stake in the political stability and security in that region. We decided not to

get involved in the security aspects, but rather to use "developmental assistance" as our principle policy instrument.

Grenada, in October 1983, provided a test of what our policy meant and we ended up not by "policing", but rather by providing assistance in terms of training their coast guard and proposing to train and offer technical assistance to their police.

So now the key issues facing Canadians there are aid, immigration, trade plus the promotion of economic co-operation and integration. →



Gina Fried and her husband, Jonathan, returned last August from their first posting, to Brasilia, Brazil. Having heard that she was an accomplished artist (and as it turns out, also a jewellery designer and silver sculptor) Gina was approached and asked if she might have any artwork depicting life in Latin America that could be used in our publication. Although she had nothing that was appropriate at that time, she said that she would enjoy the challenge of creating something specifically for us. The result speaks for itself - a striking, impressive composite embodying various aspects of Latin American life. Many thanks Gina.